

Brief for the Individual Writing Assessment

I. Outline

The Individual Writing Assessment (IWA) represents **50%** of the final mark for the Academic Skills course. This assignment is to be completed individually. You are entitled and encouraged to discuss the subject matter with fellow students, as long as the submitted piece represents your own work and ideas.

You have a **choice of two questions and two formats** in which to submit your work. Details are outlined below.

Whichever format you choose, your paper should be **1500 words in length** (with 10% variance above or below) and should be prepared and submitted in adherence with the guidelines outlined below. In order to complete the paper effectively, you will need to undertake research, critically review collected material, and then formulate and present your ideas in writing, using appropriate evidence. We do not expect a personal reflective account. All the guidance and information needed to successfully complete this assignment will be provided in class and online during weeks 1 to 5 of the course. Full participation in the course, during and outside of class, will help you to successfully complete this assignment.

2. Topic

Choose **one** of the two following questions.

Note: you must make it clear on the cover sheet of your paper which of the questions you are attempting.

- i. To what extent are **students** responsible for academic feedback at university?
- ii. To what extent are **tutors** responsible for academic feedback at university?

3. Format

You have the choice of two different formats in which to present your paper. Whilst different in format, whichever style you choose to present your work, both will be marked using the same assessment criteria. It is important you choose a format that will best represent your work and efforts, skills and future studies. If you would like to discuss this with the team prior to submission, please contact Alice (alice.c.smith@ed.ac.uk) or Jenna (jenna.mann@ed.ac.uk).

i. **Essay**

We would expect to see an essay format, written in continuous prose with a clear

- introduction
- main body
- conclusion
- bibliography

ii. **Report**

We would expect to see a report format, written in continuous prose with an

- abstract (not counted in word count)
- introduction
- research methodology
- key findings & discussion
- conclusion
- reference list

It is important that your paper has the following:

- a **cover sheet** that includes: course title, question title, your full name, the name of your Student Tutor, the date of submission, and word count (excluding references, abstract, tables and cover sheet).
- prepared in A4-size and saved as a Microsoft Word document
- written in continuous prose as per guidance in Week 2
- word processed using Arial or Helvetica, font size 12
- text should be double-spaced with one inch (2.5 cms) margins on left and right hand sides of each page
- page numbers at bottom right of each page
- your full name included within a footer at bottom of each page
- a **bibliography** (essay) or **reference list** (report) compiled alphabetically using the Harvard referencing system as per guidance in Week 3

4. Suggested reading

The resources outlined below provide a useful place to begin your research and reflection around academic feedback and are available through the University of Edinburgh Library. If you are not using a university computer, you may need to login with your EASE credentials to access resources.

The following resources are listed alphabetically, not by order of importance.

- Beaumont, C., Moscrop, C., and Canning, S. (2014) 'Easing the transition from school to HE: scaffolding the development of self-regulated learning through a dialogic approach to feedback', *Journal of Further and Higher Education* [Online] Available at: <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/0309877X.2014.953460> (Accessed 30 May 2018).
- Boud, D. and Molloy, E. (2013) 'Rethinking models of feedback for learning: the challenge of design', *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*, vol.38, no.3, pp. 698-712 [Online] Available at: <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/02602938.2012.691462> (Accessed 30 May 2018).
- Nicol, D.J. and Macfarlane-Dick, D. (2006) 'Formative assessment and self-regulated learning: a model and seven principles of good feedback practice', *Studies in Higher Education*, vol.52, no.3, pp. 199-218 [Online] Available at: <https://www.tandfonline.com.ezproxy.is.ed.ac.uk/doi/full/10.1080/03075070600572090> (Accessed 30 May 2018).
- Nicol, D. (2014) Guiding Principles for Peer Review: Unlocking Learners' Evaluative Skills. In *Advances and Innovation in University Assessment and Feedback*. Kreber, C., Anderson, C., Entwistle, N. and McArthur, J. (Eds) Edinburgh Scholarship [Online] Available at: <http://edinburgh.universitypressscholarship.com.ezproxy.is.ed.ac.uk/view/10.3366/edinburgh/9780748694549.001.0001/upso-9780748694549> (Accessed 30 May 2018).
- O'Donovan, B., Rust, C., and Price, M. (2015) 'A scholarly approach to solving the feedback dilemma in practice', *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*, [Online] Available at: <https://srhe.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/02602938.2015.1052774> (Accessed 30 May 2018).
- Orsmond, P., Maw, S.J, Park, J.R., Gomez, S., and Crook, A.C. (2013) 'Moving feedback forward: theory to practice.' *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*, 38(2), pp 240-252 [Online] Available at: <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/02602938.2011.625472> (Accessed 30 May 2018).
- Zimbardi, K., Colthorpe, K., Dekker, A., Engstrom, C., Bugarcic, A., Worthy, P., Victor, R., Chunduri, P., Lluka, L. and Long, P. (2017) 'Are they using my feedback? The extent of students' feedback use has a large impact on subsequent academic performance.' *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*, vol.42, no.4, pp. 625-644 [Online] Available at: <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/02602938.2016.1174187> (Accessed 30 May 2018)

Although we have selected resources that are both accessible and relevant, it is likely that you will encounter unfamiliar terminology or ideas: this is something to be expected within higher education. There will be regular opportunities during the Academic Skills course to discuss the content of the literature and to seek clarification.

5. Submission arrangements

The deadline for submitting the IWA is **9am on Monday 9 July (Week 6)**. Your paper should be saved as a Microsoft Word document with the title that uses the following format:

firstnamesurname-iwa.doc (or docx etc)

Please submit your work on the Academic Skills assessment page on [Learn](#). Details of how to submit your paper will also be advised in class and on the course site during week 4.

5. One-to-one Writing Session with RLF Fellows

During Weeks 4 and 5 of the course, on Friday 29 June or Monday 2 July, you will have a one-to-one Writing Session with a Fellow from the Royal Literary Fund (RLF). This is designed to support the development of your academic writing skills and an opportunity for formative feedback in advance of the Individual Writing Assessment submission later Week 6.

All Fellows are professional writers who are placed in UK universities to support students with their writing, so this is an excellent opportunity to gain some valuable guidance for good writing practice.

You will be able to book an appointment on the course website.

6. Marking, feedback and assessment criteria

Your assignment will be marked by a member of the Academic Skills course team. Assuming you submit your paper by the deadline of 9 am on Monday 9 July you will receive feedback on the afternoon of Thursday 19 July (week 7). This will include your mark out of 50 and an opportunity to discuss your feedback with your marker. Your paper will be marked against the assessment criteria outlined in Appendix I.

Appendix I. Assessment criteria for the Individual Writing Assessment

Student name:

Marker name:

Date:

Comments

I. CRITICAL THINKING AND EVIDENCE

I.1 RELEVANCE

We want to see that you have addressed the question. We are looking for content to be directly relevant to the question (within the short word count there is little room for wandering off topic). We are looking for you to make regular and explicit connections to the question throughout the work.

- (5) The impression given is that the topic question remained at the forefront of your mind throughout the preparation of the paper. The question is clearly addressed and content was relevant throughout.
- (3) Although the paper drifts off topic or lacks explicit connection to the question at times, content is generally relevant.
- (1) Large sections of the paper drift away from the topic or fails to make explicit the relevance of what is being discussed. This might be due to misinterpretation of the question, or perhaps you lost sight of the question.
- (0) You have not answered the question (or have addressed an alternative question).

I.2 CRITICAL REFLECTION

We want to see that you have critically reflected on the question, that you have spent time giving careful thought to the subject and have taken a position in response to the question.

- (5) It is clear that you have critically considered the question. You have made an effort to get to grips with the topic and have achieved depth in your response. This is convincing and impressive work.
- (3) You have evidently spent time reflecting on the subject although could have gone into more depth. Perhaps there is a tendency towards description rather than analysis. More analysis or interpretation would have provided a more convincing answer.
- (1) It is unclear that you have spent very much time reflecting on the question. Your response lacks depth and analysis (it skims the surface). There might be some description however your response lacks interpretation and thought.
- (0) You have not attempted to critically reflect on the topic. You have written the paper without engaging with the subject.

I.3 UNDERSTANDING AND INTERPRETATION

We want to see that you have grasped the key themes from the literature and the topic.

- (5) It is clear that you have read widely and this contributes to an impressive understanding of the topic.
- (3) You have demonstrated an understanding of some themes although perhaps there was some misinterpretation or an overly narrow focus.
- (1) It is not clear that you have grasped the main themes of the topic or have read sufficiently widely and critically.
- (0) You have not demonstrated any understanding of the topic.

I.4 SUPPORTING EVIDENCE

We want to see that you have used appropriate evidence effectively, which in turn makes for a convincing discussion of the topic.

- (5) Content is supported by evidence wherever appropriate with regular reference to the literature; you have clearly grasped how to draw on evidence to support ideas. This is impressive work.
- (3) There is regular use of supporting evidence, however it is lacking on a number of occasions where it was needed to support an argument. Nevertheless, this is a decent first effort.

- (1) Your paper includes some limited supporting evidence although it is generally lacking. This feels like a token effort.
- (0) Your paper does not include any evidence of appropriate quality or relevance to the topic.

1.5 QUALITY OF SUPPORTING EVIDENCE

We want to see that you have used evidence (text or images) that is relevant and appropriate for academic study.

- (5) Your essay/report demonstrates a broad range of evidence that is consistently relevant and of sufficient quality for academic work.
- (3) The range of evidence in your essay/report is mostly relevant and of sufficient academic quality.
- (1) With a few exceptions, your essay/report lacks reference to appropriate supporting evidence.
- (0) Your paper does not include any evidence of appropriate quality or relevance to the topic.

2. STRUCTURE AND PRESENTATION

2.1 INTRODUCTION

We want to see that your paper includes a clear introductory section (including an abstract if in report format) that ‘sets the scene’ and demonstrates your interpretation of the question by providing: key background information to the topic; definitions of key terms where appropriate; and a clear demonstration of intent for the paper.

- (3) Your introduction provides all of the stipulated characteristics and ‘sets the scene’ effectively.
- (2) Your introduction includes most, but not all of the stipulated characteristics.
- (1) You have included an introduction but it lacks many of the stipulated characteristics.
- (0) No introduction has been offered – you have simply ‘launched into’ discussion.

2.2 MAIN BODY

We want to see that your work includes a clear main body including: the key ideas you have chosen to explore; logical progression of content; paragraphs (including headings if in report format); consistency with what is outlined in the introduction.

- (3) The main body matches all of the expected characteristics.
- (2) The main body includes most, but not all of the characteristics above.
- (1) The main body lacks many of the characteristics stipulated above.
- (0) No distinct main body was offered – for instance, it is hard to see where the introduction ends and the conclusion begins.

2.3 CONCLUSION

We want your paper to include a clearly identified conclusion that: summarises the key arguments covered within your paper; does not introduce new material; makes a concluding statement that links back to the original question; is consistent with the introduction and draws the paper to a natural close.

- (3) Your conclusion fulfils all the criteria listed above, drawing the paper to a natural close.
- (2) Your conclusion matches most, but not all of the characteristics above.
- (1) You have offered a conclusion but it lacks many of the characteristics stipulated above.
- (0) You have not offered a conclusion, or it is difficult to determine when the main body ends and the conclusion begins.

2.4 BIBLIOGRAPHY (essay) / REFERENCE LIST (report)

The bibliographical/reference information should be prepared using the Harvard referencing style, as per guidance in Week 3 of the course. This should include references presented in the appropriate format (with particular attention to the accuracy of web-based resources) and listed alphabetically.

- (3)** References are prepared exactly as stipulated (or very close to the ideal). You have clearly spent some time constructing the references and have grasped the function of a bibliography.
- (2)** Despite some errors, you have made a reasonable effort to correctly prepare references have grasped the function of a bibliography or reference list.
- (1)** The bibliography/reference list looks to be a token effort, possibly a hastily prepared list. Alternatively, it might be correctly prepared but very short or is inconsistent with citations in the text.
- (0)** The paper does not include a bibliography/reference list.

2.5 CITATION STYLE

We want to see that sources of evidence are acknowledged in the text, using Harvard citation style as per guidance in Week 3 of the course.

- (3)** You have grasped when and how to cite sources and, with only one or two exceptions, have used the Harvard citation style effectively.
- (2)** Overall, you have made a good effort to cite sources, even if it has not always been done successfully or when required.
- (1)** You have attempted to cite sources from time-to-time and with variable success.
- (0)** You have not made any effort to cite evidence within the text.

2.6 GRAMMAR

We want to read a paper with good grammar, including spelling and punctuation, which helps the communication of your ideas.

- (3)** There are few grammatical errors and your paper seems to have been carefully proof-read thoroughly before submission, which makes it easy for the reader to understand your ideas.
- (2)** Your paper generally shows good use of grammar with some occasional mistakes.
- (1)** The frequency of basic mistakes suggests that you did not proof read the paper carefully prior to submission. At times it is difficult to understand your ideas.
- (0)** Your paper is littered with grammatical errors and you have paid little attention to grammar, spelling or punctuation. Generally it is difficult to understand your ideas.

2.7 LANGUAGE

We want to see that the language used in your work is neutral, non-emotive, passive and contributes to a positive 'reader experience'.

- (3)** Your work matches all of the criteria.
- (2)** Although not consistently the case, your work generally matches the criteria.
- (1)** Your work is let down by regular examples of writing that does meet the above criteria and as such is not in an academic style.
- (0)** You seem to have ignored the guidance offered – this is not academic writing.

2.8 CONTINUOUS PROSE AND CLARITY

We want your paper to be easy to read. The use of continuous prose and short, clear, succinct sentences demonstrates clarity of thought.

- (3) Your use of continuous prose helps the paper to flow. The use of short sentences helps the reader to follow your arguments.
- (2) You have made a good effort to write with clarity, even if at times it becomes disjointed or long-winded. Nevertheless, it is generally possible to follow your ideas.
- (1) Your paper is let down by a lack of continuous prose or long rambling sentences that are hard to follow. The impression is that you are unclear of the point you wish to make.
- (0) Your writing in this paper is disjointed and contributes towards a poor reader experience. It is difficult to understand your ideas.

2.9 FORMAT

We want to see that your work matches the format in the Brief (section 3):

- (1) Your work is consistent every stipulated criterion in the format section of the brief.
- (0) Your work does not match all of the guidelines as detailed in the format section of the brief.

Mark out of 50:
