

Understanding the task



University of
Southern
Queensland

Task sheets and marking rubrics

For most assessments at university, you will be provided with a task sheet and marking rubric (marking criteria). The task sheet provides information about the assessment task. It also outlines key information such as the due date, the word limit, learning objectives, formatting and style requirements, submission details, and referencing requirements. Most task sheets will be accompanied by a marking rubric, which provides an overview of how each component of the assessment task will be marked. Marking rubrics provide a summary of the requirements associated with each grade (e.g. High Distinction, Distinction, Credit, etc). They also outline the weighting allocated to each component of the assessment. Task sheets and marking rubrics are essential documents in the planning, drafting, and reviewing of your assessment item.

Unpacking the task

Understanding exactly what is expected of you when reading an assessment task can be overwhelming. However, by identifying the Topic, Task, and Limiting words, you can break the task down into clear instructions.

Topic Words	Task Words	Limiting Words
Topic words are the concepts that you must research and write about. Topic words tell you ' <i>what</i> ' to write about.	Task words tell you the approach or structure you need to use to complete the assignment. Task words tell you ' <i>how</i> ' to complete your assignment. Task words are often verbs or 'doing words'.	Limiting words define the scope or boundaries of the assignment. Limiting words tell you what to include, and/or what not to include, in your writing.

Task words

You will encounter a variety of task words during your studies. Each task word has a specific meaning that tells you how you should write about the topic. The below table outlines several common task words and their definitions.

Task word	Definition	Example
Analyse	Consider the different elements of a concept, statement, or situation. Show connections and correlations between these components.	Analyse the political, social, and economic impacts of climate change.
Compare and contrast	Show the similarities and differences between two or more theories, concepts, arguments, or ideas.	Compare and contrast transactional leadership and transformational leadership.
Define	Provide a clear and precise meaning of a concept, theory, or topic.	Define globalisation as it relates to its influence on contemporary Australian society.

Discuss	Provide an analysis of a topic by using evidence to present relevant theories, and different perspectives, statistics, and expert opinions.	Discuss how cyberbullying contributes to mental illness in children and young people.
Evaluate	Review both positive and negative aspects of a concept.	Evaluate the impact of inclusive teaching practices on student behaviour.
Justify	Provide evidence that supports an argument or demonstrate why a decision was made.	Justify how your recommendations meet a minimum of four Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).
Summarise	Provide an overview or brief description of a topic.	Summarise the process of reflection in relation to Gibbs' Reflective Cycle.

Unpacking the task exemplar

Below you will find two examples of assignment tasks where the Topic, Task, and Limiting words have been identified.

This assignment requires you to critically analyse a social justice issue. Explain how the issue develops at the micro, mezzo, and macro level. Further, discuss the human rights concerns and underlying forms of oppression that are relevant to the issue.

Topic words

Task words

Limiting words

By considering these aspects of understanding the task, you can create clear, well-structured assignments that meet the task criteria.

Tips for success

- Read the assessment task sheet and marking rubric carefully and thoroughly
- Highlight or make note of key information and details such as the due date, word limit, formatting and referencing requirements, and submission requirements.
- Break the task down by identifying the Topic, Task, and Limiting words.
- Seek guidance early if you are unsure of any task requirements.

Further support

Contact your student learning advisors via the Support for Learning team here:

supportforlearning@unisq.edu.au

Ph: +07 4631 2372