Widening Participation

Academic Assignment

Student Handbook

Cohort 2015-17
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Introduction:
Welcome to the University of York Academic Assignment Student Handbook and Congratulations on getting this far. You are about to embark on the final part of your journey with your Widening Participation programme, by joining us at our Summer School. Whilst at the Summer School, you will meet your tutor and get started on your academic assignment. More details about the assignment follow in the next section.

Key Dates

*End of May/Start of June:* Receive Student Handbook and assignment title

*28th/29th June:* Academic Assignment Summer School

*5th July:* Deadline for first draft of the Academic Assignment *(Midday deadline)*

*10th July:* Feedback on the draft Academic Assignment

*19th July:* Submission of final Academic Assignment *(9:00am deadline)*

*21st July:* Receive results

Key Contacts

**Next Step York**
Heather Lysiak

**Pathways to Medicine**
Alexandra Murphy
Your tutor is: .........................................................................................................................

Your tutor can be contacted via the Brightside e-mentoring website.

**The Academic Assignment**

The Academic Assignment is a compulsory condition of you obtaining your alternative offer to study at the University of York. You will be given a choice of two questions in advance of the Summer School and work with an academic tutor to complete your assignment. If you complete your assignment successfully, you will be eligible to receive your alternative offer for an undergraduate degree course at the University of York (up to an equivalent of 2 A level grades below the normal offer, or 2 points below in the International Baccalaureate Diploma or one grade below in a BTEC National Diploma).

Your tutor will be specially trained to guide you through the process of an Academic Assignment, from researching and collecting credible sources, to writing in an academic style appropriate to university level, to how to reference correctly.

**Assessment**

You will submit a **draft** of your Academic Assignment by **Wednesday 5th July** via the Brightside database and via email to **nextstepyork@york.ac.uk** or **pathways@hyms.ac.uk** depending on which scheme you are enrolled on. Your tutor will provide detailed feedback to help you improve your writing and referencing. **It is important that you take on board the feedback your tutor**
gives you and ask if you are unsure about anything. You will then have 9 days before you submit your final assignment. This will be marked and your results will be available shortly afterwards.

For the final assessment:

- You will be given a mark of between 1 and 5 for each of the Learning Outcomes listed below.
- Scores for each of the 7 Learning Outcome will be given in whole numbers only. The marks will be added together and divided by 7 to give the overall pass mark.
- You need to achieve a 3.5 or above to pass the Academic Assignment.
- Students scoring a 1 for any of the Learning Outcomes will not be able to pass the Academic Assignment.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Description of progress towards achieving the Level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Learning outcome met and surpassed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Learning outcome met</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Learning outcome partially met, but has left out some important elements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Learning outcome not met, but demonstrates some progress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Very little evidence of addressing the learning outcome</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Your tutor will mark your assignment, which will also be marked by another academic in your subject area. They will be using the marking criteria you will find in Appendix (i) which align to the following Learning Outcomes. Please
ensure that you read through the marking criteria and apply it to your own work before you submit your assignment. You will be strongly encouraged to do this during your degree so we are giving you some practice now.

**Learning Outcomes**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Skill area</th>
<th>On successful completion of the assignment, students will be able to demonstrate:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Knowledge and Understanding</strong></td>
<td>1. Knowledge of a specific topic through the inclusion of relevant, accurate information.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Sufficient understanding of the complexity of a topic by summarising information in their own words.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Critical skills</strong></td>
<td>3. The ability to present a clear, focussed argument which answers the question set through linked ideas.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Research skills</strong></td>
<td>4. The ability to select appropriate evidence to support their argument from primary and secondary texts and websites.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5. The ability to cite and reference source materials correctly.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Communication skills</strong></td>
<td>6. The ability to structure their assignment appropriately including a focussed introduction, clear paragraphing and convincing conclusion.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7. The ability to present work appropriately for an academic audience i.e. appropriate use of graphic information, correct tone, accurate language and required format.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Academic Assignment Learning Outcomes (2017)*

**Other Support Available**

As well as help from an experienced tutor, during the Summer School you will receive Academic Skills Sessions which will introduce you to the skills required for writing at university level. This will include a session with one of our librarians who will talk to you about how to use Google Scholar to search for credible sources to use in your assignment. The sessions will also cover
academic writing, academic integrity and basic referencing techniques. Your tutor will support you through referencing your work. A session on Academic Writing will cover the features of academic writing and what it means to write critically.

Guidance for Completing the Academic Assignment

Format and Layout

The Academic Assignment should:

- Be no longer than 1,500 words (this does not include diagrams, tables, images, graphs or references)
- Have all diagrams, tables, images and graphs clearly labelled and referenced correctly

All Academic Assignments must be:

- Your own work
- Word processed
- Submitted on time to your tutor via Brightside attachment and via email to nextstepyork@york.ac.uk / pathways@hyms.ac.uk
- In a font size of 12, left-justified with a line-spacing of 1.5

You should pay particular attention to ensuring:

- Your grammar and spelling are correct (do not rely on computer grammar and spelling checkers, proofreading by reading your work out loud will help you considerably)
● You have completed the Cover Sheet (see Appendix (ii)) on the front of your Academic Assignment. Your assignment will not be accepted if this is missing

● You have referenced correctly. This includes using in-text citations and including a reference list / bibliography at the end of your work. Your tutor will give you guidance on this but there is further information later in this handbook and also on www.york.ac.uk/integrity (ensure you know which referencing style you should be using)

● Your final submission does not have any Word ‘track changes’ or ‘comments’ left in it. Your tutor can give you guidance on how to ensure these are removed.

**Academic Assignment Submission**

Your draft assignment and your final assignment should be submitted as a Brightside message attachment to your tutor and via email to nextstepyork@york.ac.uk / pathways@hyms.ac.uk (depending on which programme you are on.) Late submissions are not allowed and will result in your work not being marked.

**Academic Integrity**

All assignments are submitted through Turnitin to check for unacceptable matches within the text. Turnitin is text-matching software that helps to highlight where a student’s assignment unacceptably matches with text from elsewhere. Should your draft assignment indicate you need further advice on
how to integrate sources and referencing, your tutor will discuss this further with you. Please do not worry if there is a match between the text in your assignment and the sources you have used. This is all part of the process of learning how to summarise and reference correctly.

Please note: Students will only be able to submit one full draft of their assignment on the date stipulated. Tutors will not able to comment on any further full drafts.

Extensions

In order for your marks to be processed in time for A-Level Results Day, there will be no opportunity to extend the deadline date of your Academic Assignment.

Academic Assignment Results

You will receive your results in the days following the final marking session. This session is taking place on the 20th July.

Academic Assignment Summer School and Meeting your Tutor

You will meet your tutor on the first morning of the Summer School and talk to them about starting your assignment. After the Summer School, they will support you via Brightside through every step of completing your assignment. Your tutor will be trained in one-to-one tutoring and will have lots of experience in teaching. Remember, they will also have a lot of experience writing assignments. You are encouraged to ask them questions - no question
is too small. They remember what it is like to start university and get used to independent study. However, do remember that you are being assessed on your efforts in working independently and your assignment must be all your own work.

**Getting Started with Your Academic Assignment**

**Skills Areas**

The Academic Assignment is assessed on key skills areas relating to finding credible sources, writing academically, referencing, structuring and planning. Prior to attending the Summer School you will be sent two questions from which to choose what you will write your assignment on. *Do not worry if you cannot decide before the Summer School as you will be given plenty of opportunity to explore your options with your tutor.* Your question might have a list of suggested resources to get you started. But this is not always the case and your tutor is on hand to guide you with this part of the assignment process.

**Finding Credible Sources**

New students often need help finding good quality information. During the Summer School, you will attend a session on digital literacy skills but our library also provides some very useful resources to help you search for good quality information and how to evaluate it once you find it:

[http://subjectguides.york.ac.uk/skills/home](http://subjectguides.york.ac.uk/skills/home).

You can also look at the university’s Subject Guide for your chosen subject
area, so that you become familiar with the different types of credible resources available to you. These can be found here: 
http://subjectguides.york.ac.uk/subjectguides.

During the Summer School you will receive a USB stick on which to store journal articles etc.

Selecting sources of information

You are strongly encouraged to use a range of sources - these will include journal articles and e-books and possibly newspapers, wikis, blogs, credible websites or media broadcasts. There are a range of open access resources such as the Directory of Open Access Journals: http://www.doaj.org/ ; Online Books page: http://digital.library.upenn.edu/books/ ; and Project Gutenberg: http://www.gutenberg.org/wiki/Main_Page.

Google Scholar

We highly recommend the use of Google Scholar (in fact, make Google Scholar your best friend when you go to university!). You might want to familiarise yourself with how it works before you meet your tutor. For example:

▪ Try entering search terms in both Google and Google Scholar and see how the results compare
▪ There are several Google search options available using the drop-down menu e.g. Google finance
▪ Make use of My Library to ‘Save’ individual sources in one
place for later (you need to be signed into a Google account to use it). Also consider using the ‘cited by’ link under each listing. This allows you to find even more information about the topic. The ‘All n versions’ ($n$=number) may be useful if you are unable to access the main source listed.

- If there is a line underneath the author’s name (underneath the title of the source), this is a hyperlink to a very useful page that tells you the titles of other things that author has written and who that author may have written other sources with.

**Academic Writing**

During the Summer School you will attend a session on writing and will look at a couple of examples of writing. It is important to know that the new skills you are trying out build upon what you have already been doing and are therefore not radically different. However, there are distinctive features of academic writing which need to be thought about. Take a look at this website to familiarise yourself with these features of academic writing:


**Referencing**

Prior to attending the Summer School, you are likely to be relatively new to academic integrity and basic referencing. You will be guided through referencing by your tutor who has had years of experience in using referencing. Past participants of the Summer School have reported that having
the chance to reference before they attend university was one of the most valuable skills they learned. Referencing means that when writing your assignment you will use other people’s ideas and build on them, so it is essential to acknowledge other people’s work by referencing them appropriately.

There are lots of different referencing styles that are used in academic writing and the preferred styles vary between universities, academic disciplines, and book and journal publishers. The Referencing Tree (Fig.1) gives you an idea about the different styles.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Referencing Family Tree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Author-Date</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The author and year of publication appear in brackets in-text with full referencing details in a bibliography or reference list at the end of the assignment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Footnote</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This style uses consecutive numbering with superscript numbers in the text connecting to footnotes at the bottom of the page. A full bibliography or reference list is included at the end of assignment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Numerical</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This style uses numbers in the text connecting to bracketed or superscript references that can recur. When a source is mentioned multiple times, the same number is used.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Fig. 1: The Referencing Family Tree

The referencing style you will be using within your discipline and more information on referencing in general can be found here: www.york.ac.uk/integrity.

There will also be a session on referencing during the Summer School. There is lots of good advice in the literature about when a reference is and is not needed. For example, Neville (2010, p. 19) gives six scenarios of when to reference:

1. To inform the reader of the source of tables, statistics, diagrams, photographs and other illustrations included in your assignment
2. When describing or discussing a theory, model, practice or example associated with a particular writer; or using their work to illustrate examples in your text
3. To give weight or credibility to an argument supported by you in your assignment
4. When giving emphasis to a particular theory, model or practice that has found a measure of agreement and support amongst commentators
5. To inform the reader of the sources of direct quotations or definitions in your assignment
6. When paraphrasing another person’s work, which is outside the realm of common knowledge, and that you feel is particularly significant, or likely to be a subject of debate.

It is important that you do not struggle whilst writing your assignment.
Remember your tutor is there to answer any questions you may have.

**Academic Integrity**

At the University of York, we are very committed to academic integrity and supporting students in avoiding academic misconduct. There are different forms of academic misconduct: cheating, collusion, commissioning (e.g. using essay mills), deception, fabrication, personation and plagiarism. This handbook looks at plagiarism, but you can learn more about academic integrity from our website: [http://www.york.ac.uk/integrity/integrity.html](http://www.york.ac.uk/integrity/integrity.html)

**Avoiding Plagiarism**

Plagiarism is defined by the university as:

*The presentation of ideas, material, or scholarship sourced from the work of another individual, group or entity - or from the student’s own work previously submitted for assessment - without sufficient acknowledgement* (York, 2014).

A large proportion of plagiarism in students’ work is due to poor referencing technique and not understanding how to use source material effectively, rather than deliberate attempts to pass off other people’s work as their own. To reduce the risk of unintentionally committing plagiarism, you need to understand how to quote and summarise effectively and know what citation information to use when using source material in different ways. Your tutor will offer you guidance on doing this but below is some information on using
quotes in academic work.

*Quotations*

Generally, direct quotes (word for word copies of what someone else has said or written) should be used sparingly and where it is inappropriate to put what is said into your own words. For example, a controversial statement or a highly evocative description of something. Direct quotes should be placed in speech marks (""”) and page numbers must be included. Quotations of less than 40 words are usually included as part of a sentence or paragraph and quotations of more than 40 words are given on a new line without quotation marks and the margins indented.

*Summarising*

It is better to summarise than to quote when drawing together ideas, explanations or facts from a number of sources. Summarising effectively involves:

- Putting the material into your own words by using different vocabulary, word order and grammar
- Retaining your own writing voice
- Shortening longer pieces of information
- Always referencing the source or sources from which the material originates.
- It often helps to cover the material you are reading and write your summary from memory.
If students summarise material from a single source and refer to specific content – such as statistics – and/or from a single page or small range of pages, they should include the page number(s) in their citation.

Planning and Structuring an Assignment

You are likely to have had some experience of planning and structuring an essay before, and the basics are much the same. However, the key thing with essay writing is to ensure you have *addressed and answered the question*. This is where it helps to plan your essay in advance and learn to structure an argument well.

For the Academic Assignment, you need to ensure that you write a focused introduction, have clear paragraphs and a convincing conclusion. Your tutor will be there to discuss your plan with you and to help you structure your assignment in the most appropriate way.

Proofreading and Editing: Making the most of Feedback

Your tutor will mark a draft of your work and will be on hand to comment on various sections of your work during the time you are working on your assignment. It is important to take note of their feedback as the tutor has had considerable experience in both writing and marking essays.

Remember that it is important to proofread your work well. Read it out loud to
yourself to make sure it sounds good and that you have punctuated well. Proofreading and editing go hand in hand. If something looks wrong, it will need editing to improve it. Ask your tutor if you are uncertain.

Use the Checklist on the following page when you are in the final stages of your Academic Assignment.
# Academic Assignment Checklist

To be successful in your Academic Assignment, you need to ensure you meet the learning outcomes set out on page 5 and 6 of your Student Handbook (please ask your tutor if you are unsure). You also need to ensure that you have followed the formatting guidelines as set out on page 7. The following is a useful checklist – please use it when you are finishing your assignment.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The title is at the top of my essay, on the first page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I have not used contracted verbs such as can’t (should be cannot)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wasn’t (should be was not)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have included page numbers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have made sure I have answered the question (the title)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I cover a range of arguments and not just one viewpoint</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My essay is analytical and not just descriptive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My essay has a clear introduction and conclusion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have written in clear paragraphs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There are no new points in my conclusion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The content is accurate and relevant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There is a clear structure to my essay</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The essay is within the word limit (1500, not including tables, graphs or references)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have used a range of credible and reliable sources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I acknowledge all sources and provide a list of references at the end of my work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have referenced quotes correctly (see <a href="http://www.york.ac.uk/integrity/referencing.html">www.york.ac.uk/integrity/referencing.html</a>)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have checked my grammar and spell-checked my work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have proofread my work by reading it out loud to catch as many errors as possible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have edited carefully</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have completed the cover sheet as required</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendices

(i) Marking Matrix

(ii) Cover Sheet