

Understanding Criteria Sheets

Most assignments are marked according to a set of criteria, often supplied to students as a matrix. It is important to look at these criteria to tell exactly what you need to do in an assignment.

What is a Criteria Sheet?

The term 'criterion' means standard. The plural of this word is 'criteria'. These sheets therefore outline the standards against which your tutors mark your assignments. This enables the tutors to mark all of the assignments in the same way and also give students some clear feedback on what they can do to improve their work.

How to Read a Criteria Sheet

If you look at a criteria sheet, you will see that it is structured as a table with one column (usually on the left hand side) that describes each criterion and then along the row next to it other columns give descriptions of what assignments would be like at different standards. The column with the highest standards is usually next to the criteria column.

Look at the example in *Figure 1*. One of the criteria the tutors will use to mark this assignment will be Research and Referencing. An assignment that reaches a High Distinction in this criterion must have a **large range of sources** (books, articles etc) that are **appropriate** to the assignment, each of those sources are **cited in the essay** and each of these sources are **listed in the reference list** at the end of the assignment. The citations and the reference list are **all formatted correctly** according to the style of referencing used.

Criteria sheets enable tutors to mark all assignments the same way and give feedback to students on how they can improve in their work.

On the other hand, if an assignment only has **just enough sources** cited and referenced in the essay and there are **some minor mistakes** in the way the citations and references are formatted, then this assignment will be marked at a Credit level in this criterion.

UNIT: ASSIGNMENT NAME		CRITERIA SHEET				
Criteria	7 High Distinction	6 Distinction	5 Credit	4 Pass	3 Fail	
RESEARCH AND REFERENCING (total 4 marks)	Well-judged selection of range of sources; all sources appropriately acknowledged; referencing consistently accurate.	Substantial number and range of sources; all sources appropriately acknowledged; high level of accuracy in referencing.	Significant number of sources with attempt to give a range; all sources acknowledged; only minor inaccuracies in referencing.	Adequate number and range of sources; most sources acknowledged; some minor inaccuracies in referencing.	Unsatisfactory number and range of sources; many sources not acknowledged; major inaccuracies in referencing.	

Figure 1

Sometimes marks are allocated to different criteria. Criteria that are considered to be very important will be allocated more marks than others that are considered to be less significant. In the assignment in *Figure 1* there are 4 marks out of a total of 20 allocated to the criterion of Research and Referencing. An assignment that has achieved a High Distinction in this criterion would receive all 4 marks whereas an assignment that has achieved a Credit in this criterion would receive 2.5 marks out of 4.

However, not all units allocate marks to criteria quite so strictly and criteria sheets may be used only as an indicator of where a student did well in an assignment and where the student can improve.

What do Criteria Cover?

The criteria by which tutors mark assignments usually cover four main areas – content, analysis, structure and presentation.

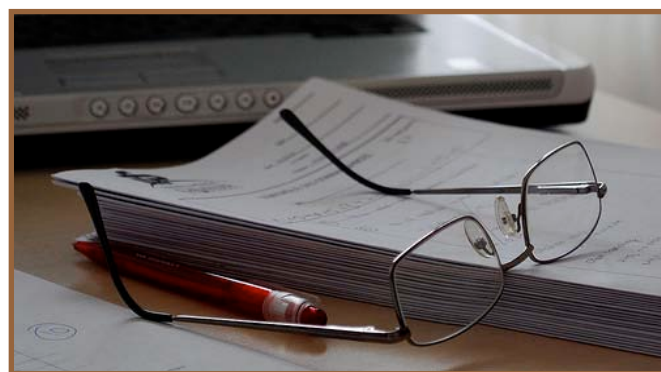
Content

The content of your assignment refers to the information you have found in your research. Tutors are looking for information from a wide range of sources (books, articles, websites, reports, etc). These sources should be from the academic literature (focusing on the theories and research on a subject) which means that the Internet is not considered to be a good source of academic information and should be used sparingly. For an assignment of around 1500 - 2000 words, it is accepted that you would use about 10 - 15 sources. However, you need to check with your lecturer about the specific needs of your assignment.

Critical Thinking

Critical thinking (also may be referred to as analysis, argument or reasoning) refers to your ability to make connections between the information you have found in your research and the task you have been asked to

complete in your assignment. It is not enough just to describe what you have researched. You are expected to explain how or why this information is relevant to the aims of your assignment. This is what is meant by using evidence.



Structure

Your tutor is expecting your assignment to be written following the principles of good academic writing. This means it should have a clear introduction, body and conclusion. It should be written (or presented) in a formal, objective tone. It should use evidence to back up the points you are making and that evidence should be cited and referenced in the proper format.

Presentation

In a written assignment, presentation includes using correct grammar and spelling and sentence structure. It also involves formatting your assignment appropriately. Generally assignments should be double spaced and use a 12 point font. However, you should check with your tutors to see if there are any particular requirements for any of your units.

PHOTO REFERENCES

¹Olga_[FR], 'Grading exams', In:

http://farm4.static.flickr.com/3188/3052908465_3de64f274d.jpg, ed, 2008.

