Answer Guidance

# Chapter 4: Academic writing and assessment

## Activity answer guidance

### Activity 4.1

Look at various types of writing (e.g., newspapers, magazines, journals, textbooks) and reflect on how they are written. Are they written in the first person or do they use a style that is more removed? Are they formal or informal in tone? Why are they adopting a specific style? Who are they writing for? Where are they being published: hard copy, online, or both?

What difference does this make to how you read them? It is important to understand that different styles are needed in different circumstances and to consider this in your own writing.

#### **Answer guidance:**

*Undertaking a literature search will provide you with many different kinds of sources. Some will be available to buy or to borrow in hard copy from the library, but some will only be available online. Either of these can be a good quality source. Some sources are very informal and are aimed at the general public, such as newspapers, magazine articles, or certain websites. These will often not contain any references to back up their discussion, which means it is just their opinion and not evidence-based. You may even notice they are biased toward a certain perspective, for example, political favouritism or promoting a certain product. Be cautious when using health websites aimed at the general public, instead of healthcare professionals. If you want to use these as a source then make sure you can see references to support the discussion. Academic sources will also appear in a variety of formats. A reflective piece may be written in the first person and say “I saw this, I felt this, I learnt this” and so on. However, a piece of research or a literature review would almost certainly be written in the third person and not say “I” but perhaps “the author”, or not even refer to the author at all.*

### Activity 4.3

Familiarise yourself with your own module, field, and course handbooks to ensure that you understand how assessments are planned and undertaken at your own university. What different types of assessment will you be required to undertake over the duration of your course?

#### Answer guidance:

*When you start university you will usually have an induction where you are shown the university virtual learning environment- an online site housing all your course materials. This is usually divided up into modules and may also have an organisational site containing all the useful information about your course, such as a training plan or calendar, and a course handbook. This will contain a breakdown of each module and your assessments for the duration of your course. Some courses may purely assess through assignments and exams but others may also include presentations, posters, dissertations, portfolios, patchwork assessments, or even blogs or health resources. Taking a blended approach means that you will be assessed in a variety of ways, and not just on your academic writing skills. Each module will also have more detail regarding its own assessment. It is really important to access all this information, as well as any facilitated sessions about your assessment, to ensure you are able to thoroughly plan and develop your submission. There may also be additional help available from the library or learning centre, to help you develop your skills around literature searching, academic writing, referencing, and proofreading.*

## Case study answer guidance

### Case Study 4.1: Josh

Josh was a first-year adult nursing student. He had achieved the academic requirements for admission to his nursing programme easily, with A level grades of A, A, B in English, psychology, and philosophy respectively. He approached the deadline for his first assignment with confidence, knowing how easily he had always found it to construct a logical, coherent argument on paper. The aim of the assignment was to explore the concepts of communication and therapeutic relationship-building in relation to a patient he had cared for. In preparing to write the essay, Josh found not just the recommended reading in the library but also several journal articles, which covered different aspects of the subjects.

Approximately four weeks prior to submission, Josh’s academic advisor emailed Josh to suggest a tutorial to discuss the assignment. At this point, Josh had not written much so could not see the point in wasting her time. He responded accordingly and said that he would contact her when he had more written down on paper. However, time moved on and Josh’s essay was flowing well so he decided to submit it without contacting his academic adviser again.

When Josh received his feedback he was astonished and furious to see that he had failed. He thought there must have been some mistake as he had cited more than thirty sources of information and raised some issues that none of the other students in his cohort had even thought to include. However, when he read through the marker’s comments he understood that although he had undertaken a high-quality theoretical exploration and identified his patient in the introduction, he had not attempted to relate the evidence to his patient’s care and had not reflected on his own personal learning at any point. Josh realised that his academic advisor would have advised him about these omissions and he kicked himself for not making use of her support.

Josh addressed the marker’s comments well, having sought advice from his academic advisor, and achieved 83% for his second attempt. However, because it was a second submission his mark was reduced to 40% and he had to pay a £70 resubmission fee, which he could ill-afford. He was determined not to make the same mistake again.

How does Josh’s experience compare to your own? What can you learn from his mistakes?

### Answer guidance:

 *Josh was very confident in approaching this assessment as he often receives high grades and he allowed plenty of time to do the work and studied hard.*

 *However, it is really important to develop an assessment plan before proceeding, ensuring you include the assessment learning outcomes.*

 *In this instance, Josh felt he had a good understanding of the concepts he needed to include- communication and therapeutic relationship building. These are complex topics so he was right to read widely and ensure he had a good evidence base.*

 *Josh did not address the learning outcome relating to reflection on his practice-based learning. He needed to link the theory to practice to demonstrate application and reflection on action.*

 *It would have been a good idea to take the support offered- your marker will often offer email or telephone support, as well as group drop-ins or one-to-one support (check your university policy on assessment support early in your course).*

 *Josh was furious to see that he had failed, and this is a common reaction when seeing a grade that is lower than expected. If you have worked hard then it is natural to feel you deserved more and to want to blame someone else.*

 *However, it is vital that you stop, take a breath and read your feedback carefully, perhaps even writing some notes or a reflection to aid your personal development. If you feel especially upset you may want to wait 24 hours and then come back to the feedback in order to read it in a more objective way.*

 *Your marker does not want you to fail, they want you to do well. So, their feedback should hopefully have some feedforward comments to help you develop your academic writing and submit a much better piece of work in future submissions.*

 *Check your university policy on resubmissions to ensure you access any support available and submit correctly.*