Group and individual tasks

# Chapter 7: Writing assignments, reports and dissertations

## Examiner’s feedback

The examiner’s comments would probably be something as follows.

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| **Criterion** | **Essay 1** | **Essay 2** | **Essay 3** |
| **Demonstration of critical thinking skills** | No significant depth of discussion on relevant issues. Very ‘factual’ with no room for discussion. | Use of words such as ‘Clearly’, ‘Most obviously’, ‘*must* logically be ... ’ and ‘who must have rushed everything’ often signposts to the lecturer that the student is making wide assumptions – this is not a good thing to do. We do not have the two essays (referred to in the question) to see, so we cannot say anything for certain.The points made are not really discussed in any detail. For example, the statement ‘the student who failed did not put much effort into their work’ *might not be true*: they may have put a great deal of effort into their work, but their work might have been irrelevant. | Some good insight and thinking described here – ‘Referencing will get … them higher marks, as they are showing proof of what they have written’: explains *why* particular items are important. Tries to present some debate regarding how soft and harsh examiners might be.  |
| **Relevance and content** | Largely irrelevant: the content on attendance is not relevant and yet this forms much of the essay’s content.There are significant areas of content missing from this essay (e.g. the criteria being used to assess this piece of work).The essay is largely about attendance and time management, which are important contributors to learning, but are not the main issues to consider when writing an essay. | Points made are relevant.  | ‘Is it credible? If so, why?’Insightful comment recognising the importance of critical thinking skills.Content throughout is succinct and explained well.Mention is made of the academic skills (understanding, analysis, application) expected. This essay makes the same comment about attendance that Essay 1, but reference is appropriately brief. |
| **Use of examples** | Ideas are explained reasonably well. | Ideas are explained quite well, though specific examples would have helped. | No real specific examples given. |
| **Support provided by citations and theory** | None. | None. | One quotation. |
| **Grammar and spelling** | Regular mistakes (e.g. ‘they’re’ vs ‘their’, ‘you have wrote’ vs ‘you have written’. | Spelling and grammar are good. | Grammar and spelling mistakes throughout – ‘misinterpreting’, ‘more simple’ vs ‘simpler’.Sentence ‘Due to lack of structure, good body and to sum it up at the end will not have or a very poor conclusion’ needs rewriting. Never start a sentence/phrase with ‘Due to a … ’ and ‘will not have or a very bad’… is missing the word ‘or *have* a very bad…’. ‘Referencing will get you them … ’The English is not great here.  |
| **Structure** | No introduction and no effective conclusion. The student does say ‘Finally to conclude’ but then introduces new content, so this is not a conclusion. | No introduction.For each paragraph, the student gives an overall comment and then explains it in more detail. This is how paragraphs should be structured.There is a concluding paragraph which summarises the essay nicely (even if the language used elsewhere in the essay seems to imply a lot more certainty). | No introduction. Body includes separate paragraphs for Conclusion is present, though very brief. |
| **Taking account of the audience** | The language used is explained well. | The audience will be clear about what the student is trying to say. Some good explanations. | Clear and well-written (ignoring the grammar and spelling issues referred to separately). |
| **Academic style** | Written in a very informal manner – ‘The first thing that *springs to mind is … ”* is something that you might say to a friend but not find in a written academic essay. This would be too conversational in the eyes of many academics. | ‘All good essays are structured like this …’ is something you might say in a conversation rather than in an essay for an academic lecturer.  | ‘What I mean by simple is … ‘ is probably a little too conversational for some. Might have been better to say ‘*For example*, a simple essay might not use sophisticated … ’.‘I have talked to you about … ‘ is probably better phrased in the passive: ‘This essay has … ‘  |
| **Overall comment** | *Very poor. Many key areas missed and some aspects irrelevant.* | *Content is fairly good, but depth of argument is lacking. References? Evidence for argument?*  | *Few references. Some debate presented. Evidence given (citations, examples) in one or two places.* |
| **Indication of mark** | Bad fail. | Moderate mark – maybe mid-50s. | Reasonable mark – low to mid-60s. |