

## Instruction Words

Assignment and exam questions include a topic and instruction words which indicate how you are to address the topic. Below is a list of some instruction words you may encounter, with their meanings. It is intended as a guide only and further clarification should be sought from your class tutor if you are unsure what is expected.

| Instruction Word          | Meaning  |
|---------------------------|--|
| <b>Account for</b>        | Give reasons, explain why it happened.   |
| <b>Analyse</b>            | Break the subject up into its main ideas, and describe the relationships between them. Focus on 'how' and 'why'. Do not simply describe or summarise.                |
| <b>Argue</b>              | Present a convincing, soundly reasoned case for and/or against.  |
| <b>Assess</b>             | Critically judge the value of a subject.   |
| <b>Comment on</b>         | Discuss, explain, and give your opinion on the ideas expressed. Use analogies or examples to support your response.  |
| <b>Compare</b>            | Look for similarities between the things mentioned. Emphasise similarities but mention differences where appropriate.  |
| <b>Contrast</b>           | Stress the differences between the things mentioned.   |
| <b>Critically analyse</b> | Break up the subject into its main ideas and identify the underlying assumptions and questions that are NOT being asked.   |
| <b>Criticise</b>          | Make a judgement about the merit or truth of the facts or views mentioned, discussing both positive points and limitations. Support with evidence.                   |
| <b>Define</b>             | Clearly state the exact meaning. Give the limits of the definition.  |
| <b>Describe</b>           | Give a detailed account of the characteristics of a subject, or retell the essential features of a story.  |
| <b>Discuss</b>            | Analyse a subject from different points of view and come to a well-reasoned conclusion.  |
| <b>Evaluate</b>           | Examine the various sides of a subject, citing positive and negative features. Then make a judgment as to its significance, relevance, value, importance or quality. |
| <b>Examine</b>            | Inspect in detail and investigate the implications.  |

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| <b>Explain</b>    | Make clear the details; show the reason for, or underlying cause of, or the means by which something occurs. You may provide examples to support the explanation. |
| <b>Illustrate</b> | Use examples. Or where appropriate, provide a figure or diagram.  |
| <b>Indicate</b>   | Point out, make known or show.  |
| <b>Integrate</b>  | Join together in a logical way.   |
| <b>Interpret</b>  | Translate, solve, or comment on a subject, usually giving your judgement about it.  |
| <b>Justify</b>    | Provide evidence or give reasons for decisions or conclusions. Should be presented in a way that will convince the reader or listener.                            |
| <b>Outline</b>    | Give the main features or general principles of a subject. Leave out minor details.   |
| <b>Prove</b>      | Show the truth of a statement by logical argument, experiment or test.  |
| <b>Relate</b>     | Show the connection between the things mentioned in the question.   |
| <b>Review</b>     | Provide a summary, usually a critical one. A review usually also implies commenting on the important aspects of the questions.                                    |
| <b>State</b>      | Present the main points in a brief and clear sequence, usually omitting details or examples.  |
| <b>Summarise</b>  | Give the main points in order of importance or trace the argument briefly.  |
| <b>Trace</b>      | Identify and describe the development or history of something from some point, or from its origin.  |