

APPRENTICESHIPS
LEARNING PACKAGE
HOW TO
WRITE AN
ASSIGNMENT

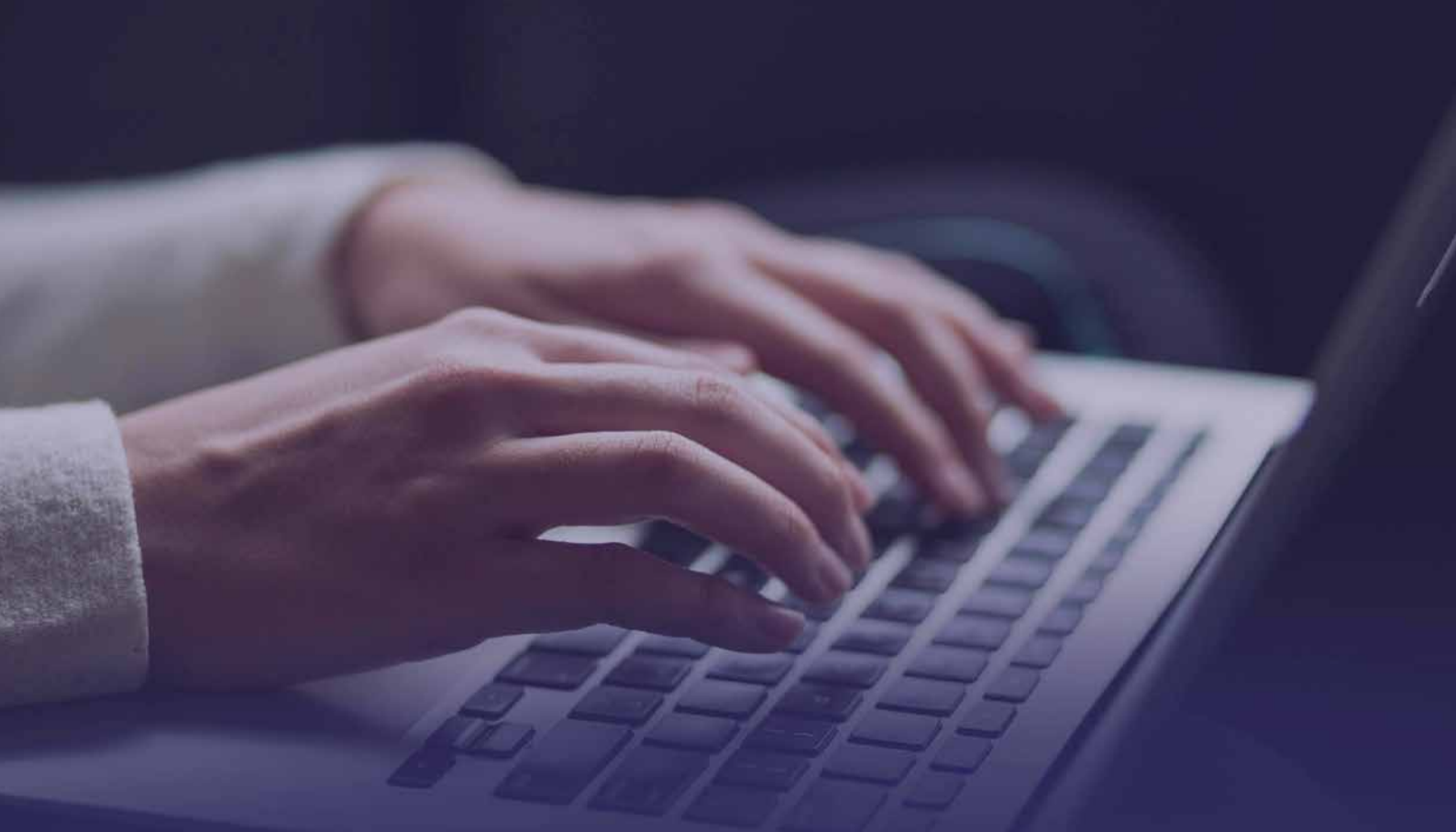
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How to write an assignment

This Learning Package is designed to take you from complete ignorance of assignments, academic writing and referencing to being confident you know what is expected of you, how you will write the assignment and what the final process is for getting it approved by CMI.



WHAT IS AN ASSIGNMENT?

There are six assignments that you will complete over the course of your apprenticeship.

Criteria

Each assignment assesses one of the six study units you will have enrolled in.

Appendices

The assignment is a 2,500 – 3,000 word essay. However, you will not be confronted by a blank page; the assignment is broken down into Tasks and these Tasks are then broken down into Assessment Criteria (in future 'AC').

Consideration

When looked at from this angle the assignments should not seem so threatening. The difficulty in fact comes from fitting in all you want to say into each AC.

WHERE DO I BEGIN?

The place to start is the Study Centre. From there you can enrol on the Study Unit and download the Assignment Brief and Good Practice Guide.

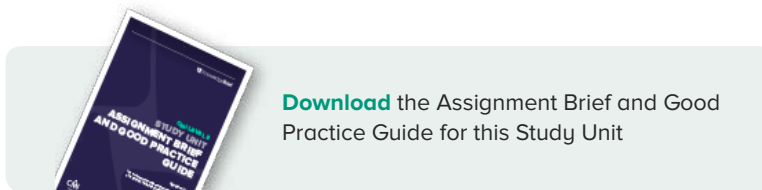
Assignment Brief

The Assignment Brief will outline what is needed from the assignment, how many tasks there are, what they want, how many ACs are in each task and what actual questions you are to answer.

Good Practice Guide

In addition, the Good Practice Guide will give you some inspiration on what sources to read and what you could include in your answer for the specific AC. The Good Practice Guide groups the ACs by Learning Outcome.

Go to the StudyCentre on KBPRO® and look out for the link below:



Learning Outcome

The Learning Outcome is a broader goal for the programme. It is the ACs you must focus on for passing the individual assignments.

Theoretical framework and sources

The theoretical framework and sources can be found in the KB Techniques. When you enrol on a study unit, you will be able to see a list of Techniques which are relevant to that assignment. This is where you will find the most relevant information and you need to use these Techniques when writing your assignment. Some are more directly relevant than others but they all contribute to building your broader understanding of the theme of the unit. Answering the CPD questions associated with these Techniques will help you apply that knowledge to your everyday practice and personal experience. The lists of techniques in the units are not exhaustive; they are the best place to start but you can go beyond them.

ASSIGNMENT BRIEF AND STYLE GUIDE

What the assignment is + What question you are answering + 20 recommended Techniques



TECHNIQUES

Read all pages (Technique Overview, Business Evidence, Business Application, Professional Tools, Further Reading) + Answer CPD question + Think how the Technique is relevant to your assignment



PERSONAL EXPERIENCE

This should have informed all your reading
What examples from your work life are relevant to the assignment?
How can you change what you do in light of what you have learned?

+

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Taken from Techniques
Think how each theory and each author is applicable to your leadership and management role

=

ASSIGNMENT

is broken down into **Tasks**



TASKS

There are usually 3 or 4 Tasks per assignment
Each roughly 1,000 words
A broad goal which unifies the **Assessment Criteria**



ASSESSMENT CRITERIA

Usually between 4-6
Each roughly 200 words
These are specific questions which use the **CMI command words**

THE LEARNING CYCLE

Assignment Cycle

The Assignment Cycle can be adjusted to your preferred style from sending initial incomplete drafts to your Learning Advisor for early feedback, to aiming for a few full drafts before finalising. Your Learning Advisor will contribute by giving feedback. This could be broad comments on trends in your writing style to improve or make more of, or it could be detailed notes on wording and referencing. In light of these comments you, together with your Learning Advisor, will find your way to complete the CMI assignments.

Practice

We know from experience it is best if you write something for your Learning Advisor on a regular basis and at minimum once a month. Your Learning Advisor will help you set deadlines. These are based on our experience about how to best get you to the finish line. This cycle is designed to make sure you produce the best work possible and make sure that this work will meet CMI's standards.

Experience

Usually, after three or four months of continuous learning and application, the level of your first essay should reach CMI standards and your assignment will be ready for CMI verification.

It is very normal to experience a bit of frustration during the first one or two assignments. This is also why you can expect your first assignments to take longer to complete than the latter ones. However, they do not get harder as you progress through the course. Once you have had practice writing assignments and are comfortable with the Learning Cycle, the last few assignments you write will be a lot easier.

WHAT TO WRITE

The assignment is a chance for you to discuss an aspect of leadership and management: you will use the academic knowledge, tools and methodologies you have learned from the platform to improve your management skills.

The assignments are:

- Focused on the task at hand
- Written in an objective style
- Backed up with academic theory

FOCUS

One of the main problems faced when first tackling an assignment like this is the temptation to write as much as possible. You will have lots of personal experience to draw on and having read the relevant techniques, you will be keen to deploy many different theories.

However, always keep rigorously focused on the question in the AC: ask 'does this sentence directly contribute to answering the question at hand or provide evidence to support another sentence which does?' If the answer is no, it shouldn't be in there. In many cases you will be making an argument for a way of working so be sure to keep that argument tight and reinforced with examples.

When reading the AC there will be command words. The final CMI verification is centred around these command words. Make sure you focus on the command word in the AC when you write your answer.

COMMAND WORDS

Here is a selection of some of the more common command words:

Command Word	Explanation
Analyse	Break the subject or complex situation(s) into separate parts and examine each part in detail; identify the main issues and show how the main ideas are related to practice and why they are important.
Assess	A reasoned judgement of the individual elements including the standard, quality, value or importance of something, informed by relevant facts/rationale.
Construct	Build something by putting together its constituent parts in a clear and justified way.
Describe	Provide an extended range of detailed factual information about the topic or item in a logical way.
Develop	Take forward or build upon previous information/answers given in the assignment.
Discuss	Give a detailed account of a topic or issue using a range of views/opinions perspectives of a contrasting nature. Contrast of differing opinions is a very important part of this command word.
Evaluate	Examine strengths and weaknesses, arguments for and against and/or similarities and differences. Judge the evidence from the different perspectives and make a valid conclusion or reasoned judgement. Apply current research or theories to support the evaluation.
Explain	Make something clear to someone by describing or revealing relevant information in more detail.
Identify	Ascertain the origin, nature or definitive characteristics of some-things.
Review	Provide a judgement of something based on your expertise or in light of new information.

STYLE

The CMI wants you to write in an objective, academic style. The assignment is more like a report than a story or a diary. Indeed, in many cases the assignment will ask you to write a report to senior management.

When approaching this style of writing there are a few things to bear in mind:

- Do not use colloquialisms (“a bunch of” “a couple of” “I’ve no clue” “that’s dead on”).
- Do not use exclamations – if your sentence has or sounds like it could have an exclamation mark at the end of the sentence, get rid of it.
- Do not use abbreviations (didn’t; hasn’t; wasn’t) spell out the words in full.
- Some phrases usually indicate that you have not really explained something properly – often “of course”; “obviously”; “clearly” mean ‘there was a connection here but I’m not explaining it in detail’. If you see these terms in your assignment, go back and ask yourself what they refer to, then replace them with an explanation. This helps make your answer clearer and more precise.
- The assignments will benefit from your personal experience. However, be sure to treat this experience in an objective fashion. Do not fall into the trap of just describing your day-to-day management experience.
- Similarly avoid expressions about how you feel and your emotions. This is an objective managerial report. It may be that your emotional state is relevant to the question being asked but, in that case, be sure to treat it objectively. For example, do not say “Writing assignments makes me very stressed” but rather “Formal assessment, like CMI assignments, add to stress levels”. Think about how your emotions represent universal managerial problems and opportunities.
- Similarly, do not offer speculation – vague conjectures or possibilities – either make an argument with evidence from your personal experience or the academic literature or don’t do anything. Conjectures look bad, arguments are good. Terms like maybe, perhaps, might have, possibly etc. usually lurk behind conjectures.
- When presenting your argument, be sure of yourself. It is very tempting to put in equivocations (/be that”). However, these add unnecessary words to your assignment and makes your argument weaker and less succinct. Beware of these phrases creeping in and be sure of yourself.

THEORY

Arguments

As mentioned before, the arguments you make in your assignments need to be based either on your personal experience or theory. So, you should always be deploying a theoretical framework to support your experience.

What are the sources for this theory?

All of the information on KBPRO® is derived from reliable, authoritative academic sources. You can use these with confidence. The Knowledge Centre and the Techniques you find there should be thought of as a living textbook. The most recent academic research on leadership and management is synthesised and presented in an accessible and easily digested format. It is authoritative, as all the information on the platform has been approved by CMI. You can rely on KBPRO® to present the best and most relevant excerpts from the vast and constantly changing corpus of academic writing on leadership and management.

Other sources

You can also use any good source that you find outside KBPRO® but it has to be of the same standard as the sources on KBPRO®; that is to say a reliable authoritative source such as peer-reviewed journals, academic books and similar. If you are unsure, ask your Learning Advisor.

HOW TO REFERENCE

As you will be including references to academic literature, you will need to ensure that you attribute the right thoughts to the right authors. We expect, although it obviously changes from assignment to assignment, that you will include about three references in each AC.

Too few references mean one of two things:

- 1 You have not read or engaged with the literature and are just giving your opinion.
- 2 You have read and are using the literature but are not referencing properly and so are plagiarising.

Neither is good so let's look at how to reference.

HARVARD REFERENCING SYSTEM

We ask you to use the Harvard referencing system which is the same one used on the KBPRO® platform. In the text you will need to provide the author's surname and date of publication of their work and at the end of your assignment you will need to provide a full bibliography.

Here follows a few examples of referencing in text and for the bibliography all examples have been taken from the Technique Learning Organisation.

Reference	Explanation
In text	Single author: “The term was first popularised by the influential business thinker Peter Senge (1990) in his seminal book ‘The Fifth Discipline.’” “This holistic thinking has subsequently been established as essential to integrating learning into all organisational activities (Yeo, 2005).” Note: that you only need to mention the surname of the author once, either in the text of your assignment or in the reference.
	Two authors: “This permeates all organisational activities, structures, processes, climate and values, leading to an enhanced ability to react quickly to opportunities and threats (Probst and Buchel, 1997).” Note: that you put the reference at the end of the sentence.
	More than two authors: “Managers would frequently reward those employees providing information that positively helped the firm to stay ahead of competitors (Daft et al., 2010).” Note: in this case you need only put the surname of the lead author followed by et al. (et alia Latin for ‘and others’).
	Direct quotation: Remember that ‘an organisation’s survival depends on its ability to learn at the same pace as or faster than changes in its environment’ (Burnes, 2009: p. 151). When you are quoting directly from a source use single quotation marks and state the page number in your reference. You will not do this often as it is better to put what the academics say into your own words, rather than quote them verbatim.
	Bibliography: When you have completed your assignment you will need to compile a bibliography or reference list of all sources that you cited. This will have more information about the sources than appeared in the text.

Reference

Explanation

Reference list

When citing a Technique follow this format:

Burnes, B. (2009) *Managing Change*. Essex, Pearson. Cited from Knowledge Brief article: Corporate/Organisational Culture (2018)

For all other cases use:

Burnes, B. (2009) *Managing Change*. 5th Ed. Essex, Pearson Education.

Daft, R.L., Murphy, J. and Willmott, H. (2010) *Organization Theory and Design*. Mason, OH, Cengage Learning.

Probst, G. and Buchel, B. (1997). *Organizational Learning*. Prentice Hall, London.

Senge, P. (1990) *The Fifth Discipline: The Art and Practice of the Learning Organisation*. New York, NY, Doubleday.

Yeo, R.K. (2005) Revisiting the Roots of Learning Organisation: A Synthesis of the Learning Organisation Literature. *The Learning Organisation*, 12 (4), 368-82.

If you have any further questions about referencing and how to format your bibliography, please speak to your **Learning Advisor**.

EXTRAS

Recap

Once you have written your assignment in your own style, referenced your theoretical framework correctly and illustrated your point with examples from your own personal experience you will want to submit your work in the correct format.

Point of reference

The Good Practice Guide, that you downloaded from the relevant Study Unit page in the Study Centre, will outline how to present your assignment.

Check

You will have a title page on which you write the assignment title, your name, your learner number (which we will provide you with) and the word count.

Assessment Criteria (AC)

Throughout the assignment you will have to write out the question that each AC is asking you – although this does not count towards your total word limit.

Bibliography

At the end of the assignment you should write out the bibliography as explained in the reference section.

Appendices relevance

You are allowed to include Appendices if relevant. This will be a very rare occurrence, as you are not allowed to include information vital to the assignment in the Appendix. If you feel your assignment needs an Appendix, please talk to your Learning Advisor.

VERIFICATION BY CMI

When the level of your assignment matches CMI requirements (bear in mind: we are talking of CMI standards, not absolute terms of quality), your Learning Advisor will let you know. You can then submit your assignment for CMI verification by uploading it on the platform. CMI will review your work within 30 days and will either approve the assignment or send it back with corrections. If the assignment is approved, congratulations! Your essay has passed the assignment and you can work on the next one. If CMI send it back, you will have the opportunity to redraft your work in light of the feedback from CMI and resubmit it.

FINAL CHECKLIST

For the final assignment which will be sent for internal verification, make sure that you can tick all these points before submitting.

Remember that you can send incomplete drafts to your learning advisor at any point, but for your final assignment you will be able to answer yes to all the questions below.

Checklist

Tick when completed

- Have I met formalities; word count, format, etc.?
- Have I addressed all the Tasks?
- Have I addressed all the AC (if you have not covered every AC, your assignment will not pass)?
- Have I checked the Command Words required for each Task/AC and is my text addressing the right one?
- Have I referenced enough and consistently, according to the Harvard style?
- Have I used an objective voice/tone?
- Is my style a professional 'business report' rather than a personal story?
- Have I balanced the use of theories/techniques with my experience and covered both?
- Have I read my assignment out loud – do the arguments and sentence flow and build up or are they disjointed?
- Is there value in what I've produced for both myself and my organisation?

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