This academic tip sheet explains:
- why we assess student learning
- the benefits of assessment
- how to approach assessments
- the critical thinking needed for assessments

**WHY DO WE ASSESS STUDENT LEARNING?**
Assessment enables your lecturer or tutor to see how well you’re achieving the unit outcomes. Through your assessments your lecturer/tutor can provide you with feedback that can help you improve your performance. Your work can also be given a score/grade.

**HOW TO APPROACH AN ASSESSMENT**
You should approach your assessments positively, starting the day you begin classes.

**Preparation**
- Read all the assessment tasks you’re required to submit. It helps to photocopy them and scrawl notes.
- After your first lecture/tutorial look at your first assessment closely.
- Check that you understand the directions and key terms. Are any becoming clearer?
- When your lecturer/tutor explains the assessment, take lots of notes so when you read them later it’ll be clear what you need to do.
- Ask questions. If you looked at the assessment earlier, you may be better prepared.
- Figure out what you know already; re-read lecture/tutorial/workshop notes and do some basic research and reading.
- Approach your lecturer/tutor to sort out any ambiguous terms or to clarify any issues in the content/format/presentation. Do this by identifying specific issues and asking well thought out questions. Don’t expect others to interpret the question for you.

**NOTE:** Doing this by email means your lecturer has time to answer and you’ll have a written record of the response.

**SEMESTER PLANNING**
- Put all your assessment due dates for all units onto a calendar/wall planner.
- Make a date to complete the first draft of each assessment.
- Make a date to complete final drafts of each assessment.
- Look at the ‘total picture’ and make adjustments so that you don’t have any periods when you’ll be overloaded.

**RESEARCHING YOUR ASSESSMENT**
- Think about what skills and knowledge you already have and identify any gaps.
- What skills do you need to develop? What do you still need to find out?
- Consider the direction of your assessment. What approach are you going to take?
- Set boundaries and limits for the amount of studying/research/development.
- Consider time management techniques, especially if you have a tendency to procrastinate.
- Acknowledge that there may be ‘chaos’ at first as you develop skills, search for information or generally get started on your approach.

**WRITING YOUR ASSESSMENT**
- Ensure that you have something worthwhile to say.
- Be clear about the purpose of the writing.
- Develop a thesis or focus statement, if required.
- Write a plan for your assessment. Make sure this fits the conventions of the form of assessment you’re completing, e.g. essay, report, case study.
- Consider your point of view in relation to the assessment.
- Check your sources carefully. Are they credible and reliable? Be especially critical of internet material.
- Check your lecturer’s/tutor’s expectations for requested writing style. Do you need to use first or third person? In most cases avoid a ‘journalistic’ style of writing, that is, avoid generalisations, emotive words, colloquial expressions, and sentence fragments. Make sure you write using a proper paragraph structure and check spelling.
- Write a draft and edit it. You may prepare several drafts before being satisfied that the assignment is completed. Edit your final draft carefully and check spelling, grammar and referencing.
- Be aware of your reading audience. Is your writing interesting, relevant and meaningful for your reader?
- If you need to prepare a title, make sure it matches the content of your assessment.
- Present your assessment with an assignment cover sheet if requested.

**NOTE:** If at any stage you’re having problems, talk to your lecturer/tutor and/or your learning adviser or peer mentor. There’s no shortage of help at ECU!
Critical Thinking
Assessments involve critical thinking. This can occur when you are:

- planning and thinking about your task
- identifying and locating sources of information
- deciding on the relevance of the information
- applying the information to the set task
- establishing and expressing your main ideas
- preparing a well-reasoned argument appropriate to the task
- suspending your own assumptions and biases in the communication of ideas
- integrating the evidence collected with your conclusions
- organising your information so that it’s clear, logically expressed and convincing
- expressing your material in an appropriate framework, e.g. report, essay
- reviewing your material to make sure you’ve covered all significant parts of the topic, i.e. you’ve addressed the question comprehensively
- addressing your readers or audience and their expectations, and writing appropriately (style and language)

Assessment Checklist

- Have you got a plan for completing all assessments for the semester?
- Did you closely analyse the assessment task?
- Have you read the set texts and references and taken notes?
- Are you clear about your approach to the assessment?
- Did you read and research widely?
- Have you made an assessment/essay/report plan?
- Have you written a draft and edited it carefully?
- Have you addressed the assessment task?
- Did you submit the assessment on time and in the correct format?
- Have you kept a copy of your assessment?

Want help with your study? If so, please contact our Academic Skills Centre to find out how we can assist you.

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