LEVEL 4, 5,6 AND 7 ACCREDITED DIPLOMA STUDENT HANDBOOK

REQUIRED READING FOR ALL STUDENTS on ACCREDITED LEVEL 4,5,6 AND 7 PROGRAMMES

Update August 2019

Letter of Introduction from the Directors of Oxford Learning College

Dear Student,

We would like to take this opportunity to warmly welcome you to your course. At Oxford Learning College, we seek to ensure that all students have an enjoyable and productive relationship with the College, grow both academically and personally and leave satisfied.

By enrolling and taking responsibility for your learning, you have started on a path that will interest and challenge in equal measures and allow you to develop, grow and leave with knowledge and skills that will be of great use to you in the working environment.

We wish you the best of luck on your journey!

Darren Wood and Deborah Coombe

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1.Getting Started

Important Notice: This handbook is required reading for all students.

This handbook has been written to help you settle into your course and get started. You should check the handbook regularly for updates; the cover page indicates the date of last revision. Updates will be uploaded on the system for students to have access.

This section will give you a brief overview of how your course runs and important information that you need to know before you start. Later in the handbook, there will be more detailed sections.

As you prepare your plan for studying and further for submitting an assignment, you need to read the handbook again as there is valuable advice here to help you succeed.

Your learning and completion of your course remains your responsibility, including the liaising with your tutor and the planning and submitting of work at regular times during your course. However, the level of support can often be restricted, in order to adhere to Awarding Body policies.

Getting in touch with Student Services

Most students will already have spoken to student services during the enrolment process. Remember, Student Services are here to help you! If you have any problems with your account, and payment of course fees or any technical issues, Student Services is your first point of contact except for questions of an academic nature regarding your course.

If your question is academic related, you will need to communicate with your tutor directly as she/he will be the expert in terms of the academic content of your course and materials. It is the requirement of the Awarding Bodies that qualified Academic professionals are to provide all levels of academic advice.

You can contact Student Services between 9AM and 5PM (GMT) from Monday to Friday. If you leave a message outside of these times, Student Services will get back to you as soon as possible on the next working day. The quickest way to get in touch with student services is to use the following methods:

- Telephone 01865 595 263
- ‘Ask A Question’ Link on Campus

All telephone calls to and from Student Services are recorded for training purposes.

Software

You are not required to have any specialised software to complete your course. Course materials can be accessed by any standard web browser. We recommend that you use Mozilla Firefox, Google Chrome or Internet Explorer, ensuring you have the latest version installed. We cannot guarantee course materials will run correctly on other lesser known browsers.

Your assignments need to be uploaded in Microsoft Word format, either .doc or .docx; any other format will not be accepted when you upload your work. If you do not have Word, or would prefer not to use it, then you can use a free alternative, such as Libre Office or Apache Open Office, both of which can save documents in the required Microsoft Word format.

If you have chosen to order a copy of your Course Materials in PDF, you will need to use either Adobe Digital Editions or BlueFire Reader to access the PDF. Please kindly note, the PDF version of your course will be restricted to use on one device and will not be printable.

The Accredited Courses in brief

Most of the courses offered are accredited by the Centre for Interactive Education (CIE) Global; see http://www.cieglobal.co.uk, or a comparable Awarding Body. The courses will consist of a number of units, and in general you will be asked to complete an assignment for submission to your tutor after each unit for marking. Please note, when you view the CIE Global website, don't be alarmed if you don't see your course listed. This will be because many of our courses are Accredited by the CIE as "customized" courses, written in a way for on-line students.

Once a tutor has marked your work he/she will provide feedback accordingly and at some stage in the process, the College's quality assurance team become involved to ensure work that is submitted is of the level required by the Awarding Body and that tutors are consistent and fair. The quality assurance team (known as Internal Verifiers/IVs) are very unlikely to liaise with you directly. They will liaise with your tutor. If the IV feels the level of quality expected has not been met, he/she will liaise with your tutor, who will liaise with you in turn.

It is expected that each Level should take between 12 and 24 months to successfully complete. You will have been informed already of the duration of your individual course. Except for BTEC (see below), there is some flexibility in terms of the deadline date should you encounter any difficulty, giving you flexibility and control over your studies. We do, however, recommend for continuity and confidence to aim for the 12 or 24 months.

If your course is a BTEC HNC/HND qualification, the Awarding Body is Pearson/Edexcel. This qualification has a maximum duration of 12 months for HNC and 24 months for HND. You need to complete all assignments and achieve a pass grade or higher within this period to complete the qualification.

If your course is an ATHE qualification, the restrictions in terms of duration are very similar to BTEC with some flexibility.

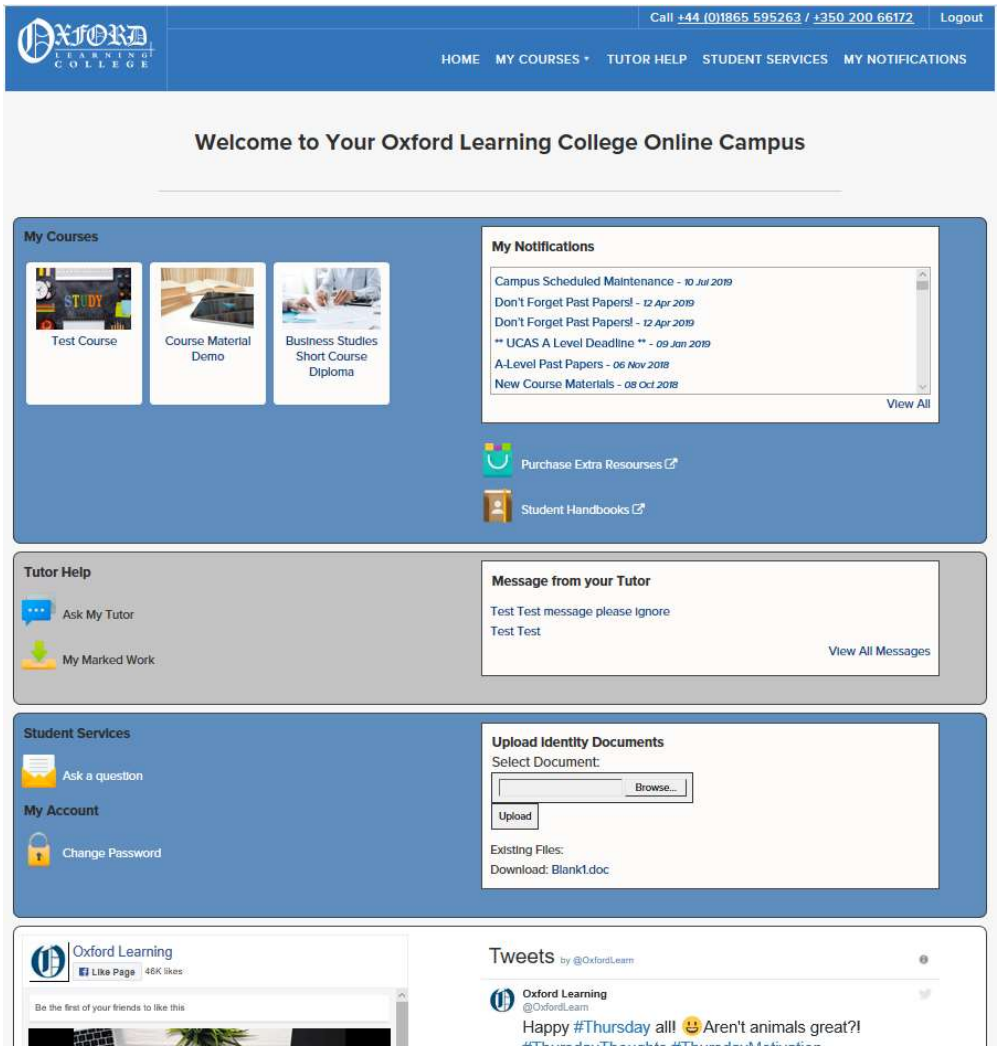
As a rule, there is no mechanism to extend the period of study beyond the 12 months; nor pause or suspend studies. Only if there are extreme mitigating circumstances e.g. serious illness or injury resulting in prolonged convalescence, can any alteration in the study program time scale be considered. In the event of a serious event occurring, representations should be made in writing to the Director of Academic Studies via Student Services, as soon as possible. Any decision made may be restricted by Awarding Body policy.

Campus – Your on-line environment

Campus is Oxford Learning College's Virtual Learning Environment (VLE). Campus is where most your time studying will be spent and is where you access your course materials and contact your tutors or Student Services.

Once you have enrolled and received your log-in details, you will be able to log into Campus.

A screenshot of the Campus homepage can be seen below:



A full guide on how to use Campus and all the areas open to you on the system can be found ready for downloading on the Student Handbook page.

Contacting your Tutor

You can contact your tutor, using the Ask a Question link. When you send a message to your tutor, it opens a message thread that you can come back to review your responses. You will also get an email notification when your tutor responds back to you. Make sure you log into Campus to respond, as tutors cannot contact you via email.

The messages threads will remain open for the duration of your course, so you can refer to them at any point.

We recommend you contact your tutor in the first instance, just to introduce yourself. Do this by using the Ask a Question link.

Asking for help

We are here to help! If you have any problems at any point during your course, you can contact us for assistance. Student Services and your Tutors are on hand to help you, but have distinct and separate roles. To help you get help quicker, please see the following breakdown of who to contact:

Tutors should be contacted for the following reasons:

- Academic Questions about course materials
- Questions about assignments
- Guidance on the course

Student Services should be contacted for the following reasons:

- Technical problems
- Fee payments
- Password/login issues
- Course material glitches, eg typos.
- Change of circumstances/address/contact details
- Referencing Assistance

Portfolio

Students are required to keep a digital portfolio throughout their time on the course.

Its purpose is to give your studies a central reference point and it may be requested by the College or your Tutor at any point during your course. A portfolio can be expanded to your needs, but should contain the following as a minimum:

- Course notes copies
- Copies of your assignments
- Copies of your annotated assignments, when returned by your tutor
- A reference list

Assignments

To complete your course, you must complete all assignments in consecutive order. At the end of each unit, you will be required to complete an assessment before moving onto the next unit. You will be able to find the Assessment Criteria for each unit in the Assessment Materials document on Campus, so ensure you read these before you start your assignment.

There are several different formats for assignments. You will find specific instructions for each assignment in your course documents.

Unless otherwise specified, your assignment should be under 3,000 words, with a +/- 10% academic allowance. This means you should aim to complete your assignment with a final word count in the range of 2,700-3,300. This allowance only applies to the main body of the text and does not include titles, references or Bibliographies.

Your work will be graded on a scale of Distinction, Merit, Pass, or Referred (criteria not met). You have two submissions per assignment.

Your work will be scanned for plagiarised content and, if plagiarised content is found to exceed 10% of the total content of the assignment your work may be marked as a referral/fail.

Deadlines

We do not set deadlines for student to have completed their assignments. However, we strongly encourage students to work with their tutors to develop realistic, self-imposed deadlines. You can use the study planner (see schedule icon) to set your deadlines, track your progress and schedule study and assignment writing sessions. There is further planning advice later in this handbook for you (chapter 3).

Referencing

You are expected to use the Harvard Referencing System throughout your work, including intertextual references and providing a reference list at the end of your assignment.

Below, you can see two acceptable ways to reference, the first references a claim, the second references a quote.

"In addition, by comparison of gender, life expectancy is higher for women than for men almost everywhere in whole world (Kalban 2002, PP.45)."

"According to Kalban (2002, PP.45), "*Today, males have greater mortality than females throughout the world.*"

Referencing at the end of the assignment needs to be done in a specific way. You can see an example of how to reference the above quote below.

Kalban, B.B., 2002. *Why Men Die Younger: Causes of Mortality Differences by Sex*. [PDF], Schaumburg, Illinois): Society of Actuaries. Available at: https://www.soa.org/news-and-publications/publications/otherpublications/monographs/m-li01-1-toc.aspx [Accessed 1 July 2014].

A more detailed explanation of the Harvard Referencing System and templates for commonly used sources can be found later in the handbook.

2.Working with your Tutor

You will have support throughout the duration of your course from your tutor, who has a great deal of experience and knowledge in the subject matter. All Oxford Learning College Tutors are trained in delivering distance learning courses and will be able to assist you.

What your tutor can do for you

Your tutor can provide advice on how to help you work through the course materials, answer your questions, and guide you through challenging concepts.

What your tutor can't do for you

Your tutor cannot plan or complete your assignments for you, in part or in whole. They cannot proofread your assignments prior to submission and cannot simply "give you the answers". A large part of the course is based on independent research and development, if a tutor was to help you in the above matters, the assessor would be obliged to "refer" you.

How to make the most of your tutor interaction

When contacting your tutor, you will get the best results and quickest responses if you can format your question in a clear, concise manner that allows your tutor to see exactly what you are struggling with.

If you are stuck on something, before contacting your tutor try working through the course materials that cover the concept before sending the question. If you are still stuck, then ask your tutor for help, making sure to include the following in your message:

- Unit Number
- Page numbers (If applicable)
- Your question
- An explanation of your understanding of the topic (to allow your tutor to identify any errors and check your progress)

The reason we ask for these details is to allow your tutor to answer to your question as directly and as quickly as possible, which minimizes the time before you can progress on your course. Consider the following two questions.

Question 1.

Hi, I don't really understand Business Management, can you help?

Thanks, Student A

Question 2.

Hi, I don't understand how Ansoff's concepts of Strategic management might not apply to a modern global business, as indicated on page 200, Unit 7 of the course materials. Can you help?

Thanks, Student B

The first question lets the tutor know that you need help, but requires the tutor to ask a number of questions before they understand what you need help with, to which you will have to respond before they can answer your question. This delay means they cannot help you to progress at an optimal pace.

The second question is much better, because it lets the tutor know exactly where you are, which concept you are working on and why you are having difficulties with it. This means their response can be directed at your question, so you will receive an answer much more quickly and you can move on in your studies.

Appropriate contact with your tutor

Oxford College takes interaction between students and Tutors very seriously and regularly reviews messages to ensure that standards are being maintained and to check that all contact is appropriate. All messages are logged and saved on Campus.

Oxford College requires all parties to be polite, respectful and courteous at all times and will not tolerate rude, offensive or discriminatory language.

Students are not permitted to share contact details or to contact tutors outside of the College messaging system. Tutors are instructed to ignore messages from students that are not from the Campus system.

In the rare event that the Campus messaging system is unavailable, student services will facilitate communications between tutors and students.

3.Planning your studies

Introduction

To make the most of your time on the course and to help you achieve the best possible results, we strongly advise students to take time at the start of the course to carefully develop a study plan.

Plans can range from simple target dates for completion of units, to very specific breakdowns and timetables of daily study. There is no one-size-fits-all plan, you will need to work out which plan works best for you.

As a rule of thumb, if you are highly self-motivated or have extensive experience around study, you can use a simpler plan. If you find that you struggle to motivate yourself, or find it difficult to concentrate, then you may benefit from a more detailed timetable. We'll go into detail on how to create a variety of plans shortly.

What to consider when planning

The key points to consider when planning are:

- Length of course
- Study time suggested to you
- Assignments
- Tutor marking time and IV quality assurance time – can be up to 1 month depending upon your assignment and the level of work you have submitted.

To give you an idea for a Level 5 programme:

We would expect you to take no longer than 24 months from enrolment for a Level 5 course (for BTEC level 5 courses this is mandatory). This can seem like a very long time, but it is critical that you do not waste time as your concentration and focus can be impeded as a result. Try to think of time as a limited resource – you only have so much of it, so you need to make the most of it.

Each module has a recommended study time of c60 hours in total. Check what the recommended study time is for your course. This represents the suggested amount of time that a student takes to study the course materials, research their assignment, and produce their final draft for upload. Depending on your aptitude, experience and previous study, this figure may be higher or lower. It is more important to have high quality and productive study time than to have 60 hours of unproductive studying.

When setting out your plan, you should ensure that you are realistic when setting goals. You may want to throw yourself into the course headfirst – and we in no way want to discourage your enthusiasm! – but you should consider if you can sustain the initial rate of work. A two-year course is a marathon

rather than a sprint and pacing yourself will mean you don't risk becoming burnt out. Another thing to consider is possible changes in your lifestyle, don't assume that you will have the same amount of time available to you in 18 months that you currently do.

Finally, we suggest breaking down studying into 3 main sections. Reading and comprehension of the course materials, research and preparation for the assignment and writing the assignment.

4.Studying

This section is an overview of how you will be studying your course materials. All students learn differently, so not all parts will be suitable for your personal requirements. However, this section outlines 'best practices', which will be beneficial in part or whole for most students.

Remember that your notes will form part of your course portfolio, which may be requested by the College or your Tutor. Your portfolio can also be used as part of your Continuous Development Plan (CPD).

Study environment

Whenever possible, you should try to set aside a designated study environment in which you are able to focus entirely on your studies. Some of the key features you should aim to achieve with your study environment are:

- Quiet – If you can find a quiet spot in your home, that is relatively isolated, you will find that focusing on your course will be easier than when in an environment where you are being interrupted. It's fine to have music playing, provided that you don't get distracted. If finding somewhere quiet in your home isn't possible, then consider going to a local library, or similar quiet space where you can work in peace.

- Minimise interruptions – Try to make sure that you won't be disturbed when you are studying. Interruptions don't just mean having a noisy household, but also include other forms of distractions, such as social media notifications, phone calls or texts, television etc... The easiest way to deal with this is to turn your phone OFF. Unless you have an urgent need to have your phone on, it will prove a distraction. Stay logged out of social media sites and switch off the TV.

- Make your study environment a single purpose environment - This means that your study space is set aside for no other purpose but to study. By doing so, you will ensure that you associate the environment with studying and will be able to focus on the task at hand much more quickly, thus minimising wasted time. Granted, this isn't always possible in terms of physical space, but you can employ the same

principles to other aspects of studying. For example, when studying online, you should shape your online environment along the same lines. Only visit websites relevant to your studies, keep out of Twitter or Facebook.

- Comfort – Making your study area comfortable will mean that you will be less distracted and will be able to turn all your attention to the task at hand. Before you start your study session, assemble all the things you will need to enable you to study uninterrupted, such as a cup of tea, snacks, blanket etc. Having these to hand will mean you will be comfortable and don't need to start studying.

- Lighting – Whilst natural light is the best option, it isn't always possible to have the benefit of it. Ensure that you have adequate lighting and are not having to squint to study.

Study methods

Throughout the duration of your course, it is recommended that you make the most of your studies by using study tools to help your learning process. Remember, regardless of whether you prefer low tech pen and paper or a high tech digital method, backing up your notes is essential. If you keep paper notes, creating a duplicate set can be a great revision exercise and having a separate copy will mean that if your notes are lost or damaged, you have a back-up set.

Likewise, if you prefer digital notes, having a backup of your notes is essential. Regularly back up your notes to a spare memory stick or use a cloud service such as Dropbox or Evernote

Making notes is mandatory for online learning, but ensure that the notes you make are useful.

At Oxford Learning College, all study materials are presented in written format, either online or in Paper/PDF form. You will be required to read through the materials and carry out additional research or self-assessment exercises where directed to do so in the text.

Pen and Paper

The simplest tool that you will use and probably the most common, making pen and paper notes is how most students start learning. Before you start taking notes, check the learning outcomes for the unit. Whilst we *don't* recommend that you use these to skip sections of the materials, they can be used to give you an idea of the particularly important areas of the module. This allows you to make sure your notes are focused on the correct details and concepts.

When making notes, you should make sure that your notes are clear and detailed, but concise. Beware of excessive note taking, as this can be

counterproductive. You do not want to find yourself copying out the course materials verbatim.

A good idea is to review your notes regularly and re-write them in a clearer and easier to read format. As well as making your notes more useful and accessible, you will also find that you are revising the course topics as you go.

Students commonly use highlighters to select sections of interest. While this can be useful to direct your attention to important parts, it is best used in moderation.

Flowcharts

Flowcharts are best used to demonstrate a linear process and can be useful as learning tools because they allow you to breakdown a process step-by-step until you have retained the information.

Mind maps

Mind maps are a flexible visual tool, allowing you to split complex concepts into simpler sections or link different subjects together. A particularly good tool for visual learners, Mind maps can be used as part of a brainstorming session, revision exercise or summary of a Unit. They are also particularly useful in helping to plan an assignment by letting you see a visual representation of the concepts you need to include.

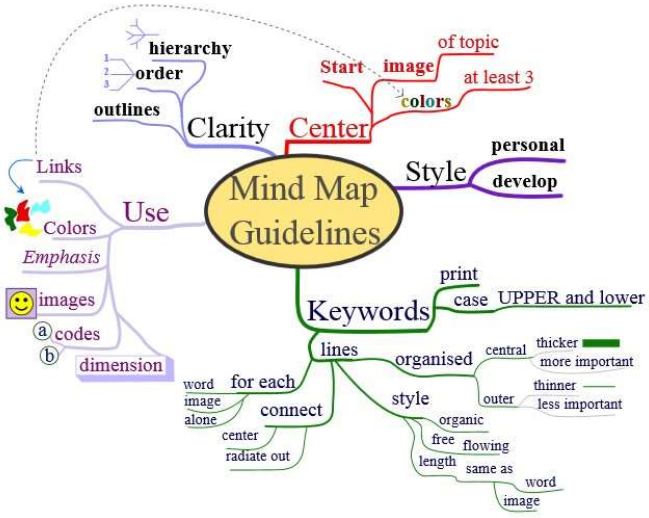


Figure 3 - Example of a Mind Map. Source: Wikimedia

Flashcards

Flashcards are small cards that can be bought from stationers or made at home. They are designed to be used to create extremely concise notes for reference and revision purposes. Best used in short sessions, flash cards let you go over important topics in a short space of time, meaning that you can carry out micro study sessions when you have five minutes to spare. They can also be useful when working on an assignment, to remind you of the key points you need to make.

There are a wid e variety of study methods open to you and **not all of them will prove effective for your style of learning.** It is strongly advised that you **establish the method of study that works best for your needs** and **review it regularly** to make sure that you are getting the most benefit. Page **19** of **41**

Research

Throughout your course, you will be expected to 'read around' the topic at hand, in order to gain a better understanding. This means that you will be expected to do additional reading on the subject, in addition to the course materials. This applies particularly if you are seeking to earn Merit or Distinction grades. Some Units will have recommended reading lists, whilst others will expect you to conduct more independent research.

Sources

Because you are studying on a Higher Education course, you are expected to read and use high quality, valid sources of information. This means that you should look for reputable, reliable and impartial sources whenever possible.

Reputable – Sources should be examined to ensure that they are reputable. By reputable, we mean that the source can be regarded as an accurate and have a claim to be an authority on the subject. You can check this by examining some of the following points:

- Credentials – What are the credentials of the source and are they relevant to the subject at hand?
  Example: Looking for information on management practices.
  The Chartered Institute of Personnel Development has a longestablished history of conducting research and training in the field of Human Resources and Management. Its credentials are better than a personal blog of a Manager or CEO.

- Information – What is the origin of the information used in the source? Is it anecdotal evidence or a peer reviewed study?
  Example: Looking for information on public health.
  The 1970 British Cohort Study is produced by the Centre for Longitudinal Studies. It measures a variety of information at regular

intervals from 17,000 individuals and publishes the results in peer reviewed journals. The information is more likely to be correct than an online survey on a health website.

Reliable - Sources need to be reliable. By this, we mean that the sources can be relied upon to provide an accurate source of information. You can check this by examining the following points:

- Author of the Source **–** Who is the author of the source? If they are known, are they likely to be a trustworthy source? If they are unknown or anonymous, can you guarantee that the information is accurate?
  Example:
  Wikipedia is an open encyclopedia, meaning that nearly anyone can amend, adjust and add information. As such, you cannot guarantee that the information presented is reliable or from a reliable source. Please see the note on Wikipedia later in this section.

Impartial – It is important that whenever possible you use information that has an impartial origin. By impartial, we mean that the information can reasonably be expected to be free from bias in its collection, review and presentation. You are permitted to use sources that are not impartial, but you must be able to show why the information is relevant to the discussion and that you understand the limitations of the source. You can check whether a source is likely to be impartial by examining the following points:

- Relationship to the information- Does the source have an interest or agenda in collecting, presenting or manipulating the information to reflect a particular viewpoint? If so, then you may find that the information presented is not accurate

Example: Looking for information on Public Health

Would a Pharmaceutical, Fast Food or Tobacco company have an interest in presenting research that shows particular health effects in relation to their products? Would an independently funded study have reason to 'cherry pick' information that supports a particular conclusion? If so, is the resulting data impartial and is it still useful?

Remember: You need to ensure that your source meets more than one of these criteria – just one is not sufficient.

A note on Wikipedia

Wikipedia can be a fantastic source of information and a good place to get a brief introduction to a new subject area. However, you should avoid presenting information or sources that are taken from Wikipedia for the following reasons:

1. The information may be inaccurate, unreliable or drawn from a poor source.
2. The information may be written to support a particular viewpoint.
3. Information can be changed between your usage of it as a source and your Tutor checking your work. This would then look like you had either incorrectly used a source or were dishonest in presenting information. Both outcomes would reduce your marks.

Finding sources

In addition to your course material, you are required to identify and use sources to enhance your learning and to produce your assignments. You can use a variety of sources and are not limited to books or textbooks.

You may find many sources online and you can use the following links as a starting point.

Google scholar

Google Scholar is a simple but powerful search engine that makes it easy to identify relevant and informative content. Its citations system allows you to see what other people are finding useful and what is being cited. However, you should always cast a careful eye over it as it can be subject to manipulation and not all the content is free to access.

The Columbia University Academic Commons

This repository of academic articles is freely accessible without registration and can be browsed by subject.

BASE

BASE, or Bielefeld Academic Search Engines, is a very powerful search engine. It's useful for both locating specific articles as well as assisting in metaanalysis. Its user-friendly layout means that it's easy to browse by subject even if you don't have a specific title in mind. For example, you can filter by Science > Physics >Modern physics.

CogPrints

CogPrints is a self-archive of papers dedicated to Psychology, Computer science, Biology and Philosophy and is administered by Southampton

University. Containing over 2,000 articles, you can search by subject, title and author.

DOAJ

The DOAJ, or Directory of Open Access Journals is a directory of just under 9,000 journals, totalling over 1,000,000 articles. All included journals are either peer reviewed or editorially quality controlled, which means that the resulting data is of a high quality. All of the journals are open access, which means no need to purchase anything. Journal Seek journalese is a database, containing searchable links to open access journals. Though none of the journals themselves are hosted on the website, there is an entry for each journal as well as links to the journals.

Scirus

Scirus is a search engine that allows users to search over 545 million articles, focusing on scientific articles. By far the largest search engine on the site, it unfortunately contains a great deal of material that requires subscriptions in order to view. However, it is a very useful tool which allows you to search colossal amounts of data.

5.Assignments

Understanding assignments

The first steps of completing an assignment should always be:

- Read and understand both the Learning Criteria and Assessment Criteria.
- Read and understand the course materials.
- Research the topic thoroughly.
- Plan your assignment.

You should never jump directly into an assignment, as you will almost always have a better result when you carefully plan and research. We've broken down the assignment into several stages to help you to understand how to work through each one.

Learning outcomes vs assessment criteria

Learning Outcomes and Assessment criteria (hereby referred to as LO and AC for the sake of brevity) are similar but not interchangeable.

A Learning Outcome is essentially something that a student is expected to know or be able to do by a specific point in a course. So, a student studying a unit on Business Management might have a LO that requires them to be able to describe and evaluate 3 different approaches to management.

An Assessment Criteria is a specific point on which a student is assessed on. Before you start on each unit's assignment, read and understand the accompanying AC. If you don't understand one, you can ask your tutor.

The AC are subdivided into different sections, Pass, Merit and Distinction.

Types of assignment

There are several formats in which you might be asked to present your assignment. The most common formats are assignment and reports. Both academic assignments and reports require the same planning and research, even though the final format is different.

Each assignment will require you to write a script in response to a problem, question or lead. Your assignment should aim to provide a balanced answer to the question, demonstrating that you understand the topic, have researched it thoroughly and have generated an original conclusion.

How to complete an assignment

Researching

The first step on completing an assignment is to research the question and topic.

Ensure that you understand what the question/instruction is asking. Look carefully at the way the question is written. The table below explains what specific words mean.

Question/ Instruction:	What the Awarding Body are expecting you to do:
Analyse	Break an issue into its constituent parts. Look in depth at each part using supporting arguments and evidence for and against as well as how these interrelate to one another.
Assess	Weigh up to what extent something is true. Persuade the reader of your argument by citing relevant research but also remember to point out any flaws and counter-arguments as well. Conclude by stating clearly how far you are in agreement with the original proposition.
Clarify	Literally make something clearer and, where appropriate, simplify it. This could involve, for example, explaining in simpler terms a complex process or theory, or the relationship between two variables.
Comment upon	Pick out the main points on a subject and give your opinion, reinforcing your point of view using logic and reference to relevant evidence, including any wider reading you have done.

Compare	Identify the similarities and differences between two or more phenomena. Say if any of the shared similarities or differences are more important than others. 'Compare' and 'contrast' will often feature together in an assignment question.
Consider	Say what you think and have observed about something. Back up your comments using appropriate evidence from external sources, or your own experience. Include any views which are contrary to your own and how they relate to what you originally thought.
Contrast	Similar to compare but concentrate on the dissimilarities between two or more phenomena, or what sets them apart. Point out any differences which are particularly significant.
Define	To give in precise terms the meaning of something. Bring to attention any problems posed with the definition and different interpretations that may exist.
Demonstrate	Show how, with examples to illustrate.
Describe	Provide a detailed explanation as to how and why something happens.
Discuss	Essentially this is a written debate where you are using your skill at reasoning, backed up by carefully selected evidence to make a case for and against an argument, or point out the advantages and disadvantages of a given context. Remember to arrive at a conclusion.
Elaborate	To give in more detail, provide more information on.
Evaluate	Give your verdict as to what extent a statement or findings within a piece of research are true, or to what extent you agree with them. Provide evidence taken from a wide range of sources which both agree with *and* contradict an argument. Come to a final conclusion, basing your decision on what you judge to be the most important factors and justify how you have made your choice.
Examine	Look in close detail and establish the key facts and important issues surrounding a topic. This should be a critical evaluation and you should try and offer reasons as to why the facts and issues you have identified are the most important, as well as explain the different ways they could be construed.

Explain	Clarify a topic by giving a detailed account as to how and why it occurs, or what is meant by the use of this term in a particular context. Your writing should have clarity so that complex procedures or sequences of events can be understood; defining key terms where appropriate, and be substantiated with relevant research.
Explore	Adopt a questioning approach and consider a variety of different viewpoints. Where possible reconcile opposing views by presenting a final line of argument.
Give an account of	Means give a detailed description of something. Not to be confused with 'account for' which asks you not only what, but why something happened.
Identify	Determine what the key points to be addressed are and implications thereof.
Illustrate	A similar instruction to 'explain' whereby you are asked to show the workings of something, making use of definite examples and statistics if appropriate to add weight to your explanation.

Interpret	Demonstrate your understanding of an issue or topic. This can be the use of particular terminology by an author, or what the findings from a piece of research suggest to you. In the latter instance, comment on any significant patterns and causal relationships.
Justify	Make a case by providing a body of evidence to support your ideas and points of view. In order to present a balanced argument, consider opinions which may run contrary to your own before stating your conclusion.
Outline	Convey the main points placing emphasis on global structures and interrelationships rather than minute detail.
Review	Look thoroughly into a subject. This should be a critical assessment and not merely descriptive.
Show how	Present, in a logical order, and with reference to relevant evidence the stages and combination of factors that give rise to something.
State	To specify in clear terms the key aspects pertaining to a topic without being overly descriptive. Refer to evidence and examples where appropriate.

Summarise	Give a condensed version drawing out the main facts and omit superfluous information. Brief or general examples will normally suffice for this kind of answer.
To what extent	Evokes a similar response to questions containing '*How far...*'. This type of question calls for a thorough assessment of the evidence in presenting your argument. Explore alternative explanations where they exist.

Once you fully understand what the question is asking of you, it is time to begin your research. You will need to find information relevant to the question that you have been posed.

Before you start looking for information, think about how you would find information that is relevant to your question. Make a list or mind map of how you want to approach the question and what information you require to answer.

Remember, as you research you may find that the focus of your assignment alters as you find new information. This is fine so long as your assignment still answers the questions that you have been set.

Your research materials can come from a wide variety of sources including books, magazines, journals, newspapers, television and websites. Details on how to reference these can be found later.

Planning an assignment

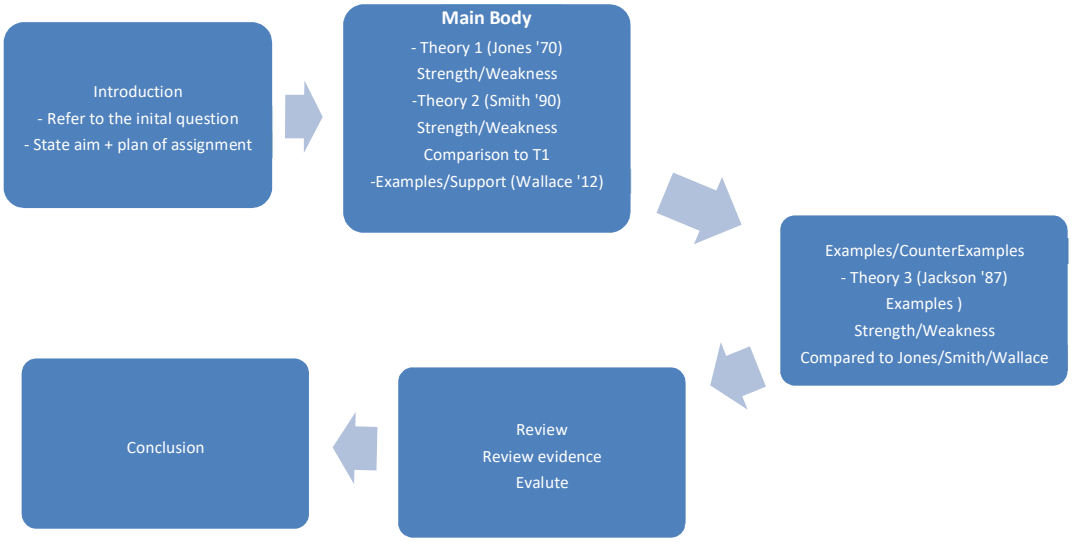
Once you have done your initial research, you should think about planning your assignment. Every assignment should have an initial plan, even if you find that you diverge from it at a later point.

Plans can be visual – in the form of tables, illustrations or diagrams – or they can be written. Find the style that suits your needs best. Your plan has 2 purposes. Firstly, it should act as a checklist, to ensure you don't miss out any important parts. Secondly, it should give you an idea of the initial structure of the assignment itself.

You can sure the following steps to plan your assignment.

1. Mark the Goals - Copy/List all the AC.
2. Build the Skeleton - Structure your assignment – Introduction, Main Argument, Review of argument, Conclusion.
3. Flesh out your argument - Populate the skeleton with notes indicating where and how you intend to use the evidence that you have gathered. You should be aiming to meet an AC (or make a point towards one) every paragraph.
4. Review - Check that you've met each of the AC. If you haven't go back to step 3 until you have.

A very basic plan may look something like this over page:



Writing an assignment

When you write, you need to ensure that your writing follows these key points:

- Uses clear, correct language.
- Uses correct terminology.
- Uses technical language where needed.
- Does not use excessively wordily words for the sake of it.
- Use British spelling where possible.
- Harvard Referencing System (HR) to be used throughout your work.

By writing in a specific and consistent style, your assignment will be much easier to read and evaluate. Using clear, straightforward language means that your argument will be easier to follow and understand. Using the correct terminology, as well as technical terminology is expected, but take care not to use excessively complex language for the sake of it. Aside from adding to your limited word count, it will not benefit your grade, but misusing complex language may make it harder to understand your point.

Tutors and Assessors are Human too!

Remember that your assessor does not want you to fail. However, they do have to read through many assignments each week. By following the above guidelines, you can ensure that they find your work easier to read and understand.

1st Vs 3rd Person

Generally, you will be expected to write in the 3rd Person. This means that you should avoid phrases like we, you and us. Instead you should be using phrases like he, she, it, they, him, her and them.

Example:

1st Person - “In this assignment, I will examine how theories of business management have developed over the last 2 years.”

3rd Person - “Business management theories have changed over the last 2 decades, with a variety of a different approaches emerging.”

Formatting

The specific format of your work is relatively open, as the only restrictions are:

- It must be saved in an MS Word format.
- It should be written in blue or black fonts. It should be easy to read.

You will want to ensure that your work is presentable and most importantly, easy for your assessor to read. We suggest that you use a standard font, such as Arial, Calibri or Times New Roman. Do not use fonts that would appear unprofessional, or are hard to read. Assignments should be written in size 11 or 12 fonts and double spaced unless otherwise stated.

Make use of paragraphs to break your assignment up into easy to read chunks. This will make it easier for your Assessor to read and allows you to use the AC/point per paragraph strategy. In reports, headings and sub-headings should be used where necessary.

When it is relevant, you may include visual images. On the Insert tab, the galleries include items that are designed to coordinate with the overall look of your document. You can use these galleries to insert tables, headers, footers, lists, cover pages, and other document building blocks. When you create pictures, charts, or diagrams, they also coordinate with your current document look. You can easily change the formatting of selected text in the document text by choosing a look for the selected text from the Quick Styles gallery on the Home tab. You can also format text directly by using the other controls on the Home tab.

Most controls offer a choice of using the look from the current theme or using a format that you specify directly. To change the overall look of your document, choose new Theme elements on the Page Layout tab. To change the looks available in the Quick Style gallery, use the Change Current Quick Style Set command. Both the Themes gallery and the Quick Styles gallery provide reset commands so that you can always restore the look of your document to the original contained in your current template. On the Insert tab, the galleries include items that are designed to coordinate with the overall look of your document.

Referencing

As mentioned in the getting started section of the Handbook, you are expected to use the Harvard Referencing System (HR) throughout your work, including intertextual references and providing a reference list at the end of your assignment.

There are several reasons why you need to use the HR system, including showing your sources, demonstrating that you have read widely on the topic and providing proof for claims. Most importantly it helps your tutor to identify which parts of the work are your original writing, which come from other sources and which portions have been inspired by other authors. By omitting relevant references to a text, you are passing off the work of others as your own i.e. plagiarism.

How to reference

Learning how to reference is straightforward, as you simply must follow a specific process for each reference. We have provided templates on the most commonly used sources of information at the end of this section. Referencing can be time consuming if you don't keep a list of your sources, so you may wish to use the appropriate section in your Portfolio to list all references that you use when researching and writing your assignment.

To reference a source, you need to follow two steps:

1. Intertextual Reference - Place a reference to the source in the body of the text or assignment.
2. Reference List – Add your reference to your reference list at the end of your assignment.

Intertextual references

When should I use an Intertextual Reference?

You should use an intertextual reference in one of the following circumstances:

- You have made a factual statement.
- You have referred to someone else's work, theory, concept or idea.
- You have used an indirect or direct quotation.
- You have discussed, paraphrased, inferred, or otherwise alluded to someone else's work.

How do I make an Intertextual Reference?

An intertextual reference requires, at a minimum, the author's surname name, date of publication and page number, if known. Depending on how you have presented the information requiring the reference there are several options on the use of the reference. Two examples are seen below.

"In addition, by comparison of gender, life expectancy is higher for women than for men almost everywhere in whole world (Kalgan 2002, PP.45)."

"According to Kalban (2002, PP.45), "Today, males have greater mortality than females throughout the world."

You can see that when you have used the authors name directly in the text, you simply need to use the publication date and page. If, however, the name does not arise naturally in the text, you will need to include it in the reference.

How do I include reference if there are multiple authors?

If you are referencing multiple authors *from separate sources*, they must be referenced individually, in the manner explained above. If you are referencing multiple authors from the same source, then you need to do one of two things.

If there are 2 or 3 authors, you need to reference all their surnames, as above. If there are 4 or more authors, then you need to use the phrase "et al." which means and others in Latin. For example:

"However, research by Wallace et al. suggests that this trend may be reversing (2009, PP.42)"

"Recent research suggests that this trend may be reversing. (Wallace et al. 2009 PP.45)"

"However, Wallace et al. state that "there is reason to believe that this trend will not continue and is in the process of a reversal" (2009 PP.45)

What if I can't identify the author, or it is a corporate author?

By corporate author, we mean that there is no individual author, which is common for works published by a large organisation or governmental bodies, such as the NHS and BBC. In this case, you may use the abbreviation for the organisation in the reference, provided that you have previously used the full title of the organisation. You then enter the date as you would for an individual author.

What if the source is a website, without a clear author?

In this case, you need to establish the ownership of the website. For example, if you were to quote from the OxfordCollege.ac website, you could see that the copyright is claimed by Oxford Learning College in 2019. Note that websites have special requirements when adding them to the reference list.

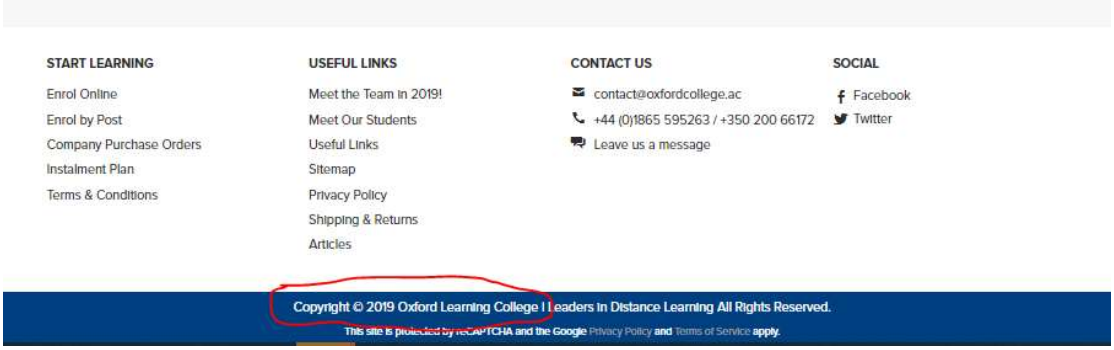


Figure 4 - One method for locating the owner of a website.

What if the source is cited by another author?

You may encounter references that are cited in another author's work that you wish to include. While it is preferable that you read the original authors work, you may reference it in the following way.

"Williams suggests that although the trend may be subject to fluctuations, it has remained consistent over the last 10 years (2007 cited in Jones, 2009, p.99)

Reference list

At the end of your assignment, you need to build a reference list. It will save you time and energy to build this list as you add references, rather than trying to build it as you work. You can use the reference table in your portfolio to help you to build the list.

Your reference list should be in alphabetical order. If you have used multiple sources from the same author, or authors that share the same name, place them in chronological order. You can see a sample of a reference list entry below, which has been broken down into its components.

Bloggs, J. 2012. How to build a reference list. Oxford: Generic Press

First, you include the author's name, followed by initial(s). Next you include the date of publication, followed by the title in *Italics*. Then you insert the city or town where it was published and the publisher. Pay particular attention to the punctuation – it is very important. If the book is not the first edition, you need to include the edition after the title. The example above would read "Bloggs, J. 2012 H*ow to build a reference list* 4th Ed. Oxford: Generic press"

Websites need to have additional information added. You must follow the same conventions as a normal reference, but you need to add a link to the page in question and include the date on which it was accessed.

You should also keep a screenshot of the page if possible, in case it is removed or updated.

Reference images

When referencing images, you need to include the photographer/artist, year in which it was created, its medium and its location. Please see the template below for an example.

Reference templates

Single Author

Bloggs, J. 2012. How to build a reference list. Oxford: Generic Press

Multiple Authors

Bloggs, J. and Doe, J.J. 2013. How to build a reference list, The ultimate guide 2nd Ed. Cambridge: One Up Press

Website

Oxford College, 2014. Top tips for using the internet for research. [Online] Available at: < http://www.oxfordcollege.ac/news/top-tips-using-internet-research> [Accessed 11 July 2014]

Image (Online)

Brooke, B. 2013. Orange Eyes [Electronic print] Available at: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/89367001@N08/9385598696/> [Accessed 11 July 2014]

Image

Evans, R. 2014. A street image [Photograph] (London, Tate Gallery)

Proofreading

You should always proofread your assignment before you upload it to your tutor, as once uploaded the work cannot be retrieved. Proofreading ensures that you don't make silly mistakes that will negatively impact your work. It also ensures that you have a chance to review your work and ensure that it is well written.

If possible, leave the assignment alone for 24-48 hours before proofreading, as you will find that more errors can be spotted this way. Ideally, have your friends or family read it for you. Be wary about giving a copy to other students. You may have the best intentions but if they use your work you may find yourself in trouble.

A note on Assignment/Essay writing services

You may be tempted to use one of many online Assignment/Essay writing services to complete your assignment/essay for you. These sites will at best, generate an assignment that is unlikely to be suited to your study and at worst will send you a plagiarised assignment. All assignments are electronically scanned before being reviewed by your assessor. Page **32** of **41** Plagiarised content will be found and you will not receive credit for it.

Do not use assignment/essay writing services!

Plagiarism

Plagiarism is the act of passing off the work of another author as your own and if you are guilty of it, you will be liable to severe penalties, including but not limited to,

Avoiding plagiarism

Plagiarism can be intentional or unintentional, but by its very nature it is extremely hard to differentiate between a mistake made in good faith and overt plagiarism. Students are therefore advised to take a great deal of care with references.

In addition, before submitting work, you are required to make a declaration that the work is your own, making a false declaration is classed as ´malpractice´ which can also result in dismissal from the course.

Students can make use of a range of Anti-Plagiarism software to check their work before submission, but the single best way to avoid a penalty is to be honest, write your own work and ensure that you carefully reference all sources of information that you have used. Generally, you should expect less than 10% of your work to consist of quotes or any other use of other people's words. In some disciplines, such as Law, there is often a necessity to use greater amounts of direct quotations, this is expected and only becomes a problem if referencing is inaccurate.

Uploading your assignment

When you have completed your assignment, you will need to upload it to your tutor/assessor. To do this, you need to log into Campus. Once logged in, you should click on the upload assignments link and click on your course. From there you will be asked to click a button, indicating that you are uploading your own work and that you are aware of the penalties of uploading plagiarised content. You will then need to click the browse button to locate your assignment.

When you are uploading, you should receive a message and asked to confirm you have read this message before you are able to upload. Make sure you read and understand the message before uploading. If you find that you do not receive this message please report this immediately to Student Services.

What resubmissions are you allowed and what grade you will receive

The College must be able to maintain its integrity when awarding students with a high-level qualification. For this reason, each module has 2 permissible submissions only. The second submission is for resubmitting referred (failed) work on the first submission. Your second submission will result in a pass only.

If your second submission results in a referral, you may purchase a further opportunity to submit to attempt to achieve a pass. Please refer to the website for more information. **This purchase is not available if you are on a BTEC programme – for which 1 resubmission only is allowed.**

If you accidentally upload an assignment in the wrong unit slot

Please contact student services as soon as possible, using the Ask a question link.

6.Feedback and grading

Your Tutor/Assessor will mark your assignment and upload it to campus. You will receive an email notification when it is complete. You can log into campus to download your assignment, check your grade, and review your feedback.

A breakdown of the available grades and what to do when you get them can be found below.

Grading

Distinction – A distinction grade is the highest available grade and indicates that you have completed significant independent research, analyzed the information, and applied your understanding before presenting it. If you achieve this grade, you should review your tutor's feedback to ensure that you can apply your good practices to your future assignments. Don't forget a pat on the back!

Merit - A merit grade is the second highest grade available and indicates that you have conducted independent research and provided a good analysis, but may have required extra guidance from your tutor or not quite reached the requirements to earn a distinction. If you receive this grade, you should carefully review your tutor's feedback, which will indicate what you did well and will point you towards achieving a Distinction grade.

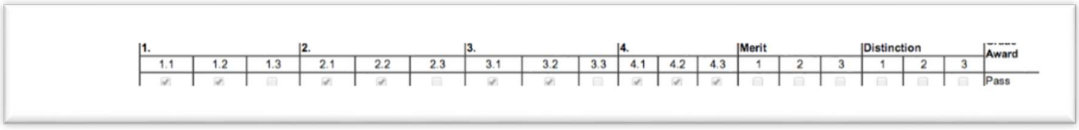
Pass - A pass grade is the standard passing grade and indicates that you have met all the requirements needed to pass the unit. It also means that you have not met all the Merit or Distinction criteria and that some additional work is needed to achieve these grades. If you receive this grade, you should look carefully at your tutor's breakdown of your weak points and aim to resolve these with your resubmission or next unit. Your tutor will also have included a SMART plan, to help guide you towards improving your work. If you don't understand any of the points, contact your tutor for assistance.

Referral – To gain a PASS or above for the complete assignment, a minimum of a pass must be achieved for each criterion being assessed. If the pass criteria are not met for any element, the complete assignment will be referred.

If you receive this grade you must study and act upon any advice given by your tutor in the feedback. Your tutor will specify the areas of weakness and offer some advice on how to rectify these weaknesses e.g. you need to evaluate not simply describe; answer is not focused on the question. A SMART plan will also be included. You will need to revisit the assessment criteria and be sure of what is expected of you. You will then need to improve the referred elements to a minimum of a pass and resubmit.

Understanding your tutor's feedback

When you log into your account, having received an email notification you should be able to see a matrix – here is a snap shot of what it is likely to reflect:



1.1	Met – As part of Task 1, in the third paragraph the learner has clearly outlined three different types of business transactions and explained each one.
1.3	Not Met – The learner is required to evaluate two approaches to assessing risk. Only one approach has been included, and it has been described, not evaluated.

NOTE: If there is a criterion listed which has not appeared in your assignment (for example 1.3 in unit 1) then your tutor will have put in N/A.

Feedback from your tutor is vital to improving your overall grades and for progression through the course. Therefore, along with this matrix you will receive more detailed feedback: In-text annotations and a feedback sheet. If you don't receive these you must inform your tutor immediately as we would not want anything problem with your progress. It is your responsibility to make sure you study the feedback and take note of what is being recommended. If there is anything you are not sure of please contact your tutor.

What you should expect to see amongst the various forms of feedback

We expect our tutors to be as informative as possible to students, without actually providing them with direct answers. Awarding Bodies would not want our tutors or anyone else to provide direct answers to students as the learning and development belongs to the student.

- Rationale for grade awarded – This explains the reasoning behind the grade awarded.
- Strengths and positive aspects of the work submitted – this explains what you did well in your assignment. You should study this area carefully to incorporate these points into your next assignment.
- Weaker areas of the work submitted – This explains where your work needs improvement. By understanding your weaknesses, you can work to resolve them to ensure your continuous success.
- General guidance – This is intended to give you a general overview on how to improve and develop your work.
- Criteria not met/SMART plan – This section details the specific AC that you have not met, allowing you to identify where you have missed points. The SMART plan gives you points on how to meet these specific points.

7.Accreditation of Prior Learning Policy

Accreditation of prior learning must normally be made before a student commences study on the programme into which they are seeking to transfer prior learning. There may be occasions it may be possible for a student to apply for APL whilst already on a course.

The College's decision in terms of recognizes the ability for a student to be credited for prior learning will be determined initially by the policy criteria of the individual Awarding Body under which their programme falls.

Claims for APL must normally be made before a student commences study on the programme into which they are seeking to transfer prior learning. Accreditation of Prior Learning for a student who has already begun his/her study will be totally at the discretion of the College.

APL claims by students must be sent to the Academic Director, via Student Services, who will ask for more information from the student as required.

Where a student wishes to apply for APL for a high-level programme (eg BTEC, ATHE etc) it is usually recommended for the student to begin their studies at a lower level in the subject of their choice to prepare them for the advance level.

Fees for the programme will remain the same and not be reduced as a result of accreditation for prior learning.

8.If you have issues with your course

For day to day queries with your College account, please contact Student Services via the on-line messaging system or via email.

Any queries relating to the academic content of your course please liaise directly with your tutor via your on-line messaging system.

Errors in materials

Oxford College are continually reviewing the materials provided to students to stay in line with either trends of the particular topic or with Awarding Bodies.

If, however, on the very rare occasion, you find what appears could be a mistake, we would really appreciate it if you could let us know.

If you find something that appears to be a mistake, such as a spelling, general grammar, punctuation or a formatting mistake, please send an email to the Student Services team, along with a screen shot that indicates where there appears to be an error.

If what appears to be an error is academic, eg an out of date fact, a miscalculation in your mathematics course material, or a wrong formula in a science course material or simply something doesn't appear to be explained clearly, please contact your tutor directly via the messaging system.

Feedback from students is always welcome for continuous improvement.

Appeals on feedback from your tutor

Programmes are delivered by an online system and therefore processes are in place to ensure that assessment is rigorous but flexible and fair to accommodate the needs of all involved. In addition, it is important within distance learning delivery to maintain a student-centred approach and consider the difficulties with meeting the learning preferences of students within a virtual learning platform which makes facilitation of learning more complex that via a traditional model.

With this ethos in mind the assessment process allows for considerable flexibility yet offers security of process in a timely and professional assessment and feedback process. Assessment is carried out by qualified tutors and verified to ensure accuracy and consistency and that we are maintaining the integrity of the level of course you are studying.

The system is highly effective and reliable, being endorsed by awarding bodies such as Edexcel/ATHE/CIE and the ABC National Award Organisation.

Although Oxford Online College are confident in the assessment process, it is acknowledged that differences of opinion may arise and errors are possible even in the most rigorous system. On return of an assignment, if you have any queries with regards to the feedback or grades you receive, you should contact your tutor who will be happy to offer further explanation or guidance. If your concern continues, further verification will take place. The result of this further verification will be final.

Student Complaints Procedure

The College values greatly the views of its students. It aims, therefore, to manage complaints in a way that is sensitive to the needs of each specific case, and supportive of the College's overall ethos.

There are a number of informal channels through which is it hoped that most problems can be resolved. These have been explained earlier. If, however, you need to pursue a complaint formally after attempting to resolve your issue via the informal channels, you can be sure that the College will treat it seriously and impartially, on the basis set out in this document.

Advice on how to use the complaints procedure is available from a variety of sources, but in the first instance students are encouraged to contact the Student Services Team, by sending an email to contact@oxfordcollege.ac

What complaints can be considered?

1. Grounds for complaint (after informal attempts) might include:
   - Dissatisfaction with standards of academic provision (for example, the content and structure; resources and facilities; arrangements for assessment and information provided to you about your course).
   - Dissatisfaction with the quality of supervision and tuition.
   - Failure to meet obligations promised to you by the College.
   - Persistent deficiencies in standards of services you have been promised.
   - Harassment, bullying and victimisation by College representatives.

2. Generally, complaints are most easily resolved if they are raised at the time the problem first occurs and with the person/s directly involved.

   Often, students will be able to resolve their issue, simply by discussing it with a Student Advisor or with their personal tutor.
3. If students cannot, or feel unable to, resolve concerns in this way, they can put their complaint in by completing a complaint form available from the student services team. The Academic Director, or a nominee, will seek to provide them with a response to their complaint within 21 working days.
4. Once your complaints form has been received, your case will be investigated and a full report presented to the Academic Director for consideration.
5. Non-completion of this form will mean a complaint is not investigated.
6. Refunds on the purchase of your course are available only if claimed within the first 14 days of enrolling.

9.Special considerations and reasonable adjustments

Oxford Learning College recognise disabilities are of a diverse nature and we do not tolerate discrimination on the basis of disability. We allow fair access to our courses for all students.

Equal opportunities and diversity categories include age, disability, gender reassignment, sexual orientation, marriage and civil partnerships, national origin, ethnicity, religion or belief, pregnancy and maternity.

All candidates have an equal opportunity to demonstrate their knowledge, skills or understanding to the level of attainment required to enrol and succeed. Barriers to entry and continuous learning via on-line are removed where possible.

However, in terms of sensory disability the responsibility lies with the student to make appropriate arrangements necessary to progress with their learning. Unfortunately, the college does not provide equipment necessary for students with visual difficulties.

Students who suffer with health during their course are provided with support upon medical reports from doctors, psychiatrists and other specialists. The College, wherever the Awarding Bodies will allow, will provide extension to programmes as requested. Individual student tutors are made aware, without disclosing confidentiality, of the problems their student may be experiencing.