

## Instruction Terms (Essay Writing)

These words will often be used when your tutors set your essay questions - it is a good idea to fully analyse your essay question before attempting to answer it. This means knowing **how** you should be answering the question as well as what you should be including. You should be describing, evaluating, analysing....

Adapted from Casey, F. (1985) *How to Study: a practical guide*, London: Macmillan

### **Account for**

Give a clear explanation of something and evaluate (possible) causes/reasons.

### **Analyse**

Examine the topic by dividing it into parts and looking at each part in detail; form judgements about each element and the whole.

### **Argue**

Provide reasons for and/or against something, in an appropriate order, citing evidence, which may be other people's research, or other kinds of facts/information

### **Assess**

Judge the significance of something, referring to the special knowledge of experts wherever possible (i.e. referring to/quoting from other people's work).

### **Comment on**

Give your own opinion about something, supported by reasons and evidence.

### **Compare**

Examine one thing in relation to something else, to emphasise points of difference or similarity

### **Criticise**

Give your judgements about the good and/or bad qualities of theories/opinions supporting your decisions with reasons and evidence

## **Define**

Explain the exact meaning of a word or phrase.

## **Describe**

Give a full account or detailed representation of something

## **Discuss**

Consider something by writing about it from different points of view with supporting evidence.

## **Enumerate**

List and mention items separately in number order

## **Evaluate**

Calculate the value/effectiveness of a theory/decision/object etc., including your own opinion, and supporting each point with evidence

## **Examine**

Look at or into critically or methodically in order to find out the facts of something; investigate; inspect; scrutinize; inquire into and test by carefully questioning.

## **Explain**

Give reasons for or account for something, so it is clear/easy to understand.

## **Illustrate**

Use examples or diagrams to explain something

## **Interpret**

Give your own opinion of the significance of something (give reasons/evidence wherever possible).

## **Justify**

Give good reasons for decisions or conclusions, perhaps by referring to other texts.

## **Outline**

Give the main features, facts, or general idea of something, omitting minor details.

**Prove**

Show something is accurate/true/valid by using facts, documents and/or other information to build your case

**Reconcile**

Show how apparently conflicting things can appear similar or compatible.

**Relate**

Establish how things are connected or associated, how they affect each other or how they are alike.

**Review**

To examine an area and assess it critically.

**Show**

Explain something giving evidence or examples to establish a strong case.

**State**

Put something clearly and concisely.

**Summarise**

Give a brief, concise account of the main points of something (leaving out details).

**Trace**

Follow the cause or stages in development of something.