Planning Your Assignment

Understanding Your Question
Before you start your assignment, it is important that you understand what you have been asked to do. You do not want to fall into the trap of putting a lot of your effort into your assignment only to find out that you are answering the question incorrectly.

Breaking Down Your Question
One approach that you can use to break down your question is the TFI method.

Topic, Focus & Instruction (TFI)
- **Topic** - What is the question generally about?
- **Focus** - What specific aspect do you have to concentrate on?
- **Instruction** - What are you required to do?

The TFI method allows you to understand the main areas that you should be exploring within your assignment.

- The topic of your question should relate back to the wider content being covered within your module.
- With the focus of your question, you will be able to concentrate your search for literature to help you answer the question.
- The instruction of your question will enable you to distinguish the most appropriate approach to answering the question.

Example

1. Critically evaluate the social impact of global warming
   - **Topic** - Global Warming | **Focus** - Social Impact | **Instruction** - Critically Evaluate

2. Identify the factors that determine the distribution of welfare within households
   - **Topic** - Distribution of Welfare | **Focus** - Households | **Instruction** - Identify

3. Explore the impact of running on mental health
   - **Topic** - Mental Health | **Focus** - Running | **Instruction** - Explore
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Consider a response

Before you begin researching, consider what your response to the question may be. The question that you have been set should link back to some of the concepts that you have explored within your lectures and seminars.

So it is worth taking the time to think about the knowledge that you have acquired through your teachings and how it may be applicable to the assignment.

Making the task more manageable

When you are approaching your assignment, your word count can be quite intimidating. So you might find breaking down your word count a useful way of making your assignment more manageable.

Unless you have been given specific instructions, you can allocate 10% to your introduction, 80% to your main body and 10% to your conclusion.

Example: Explore the impact of running on mental health

Word count: 2000 words

Introduction = 200 words

Main Body = 1600 words total

- Theme 1 = Stress Management (400 words total)
  - Paragraph 1: Time to be alone with your thoughts (200 words)
  - Paragraph 2: Increase concentrations of norepinephrine (200 words)
- Theme 2 = Prevents cognitive decline (400 words total)
  - Paragraph 3: Improve memory (200 words)
  - Paragraph 4: Increase in cognitive flexibility (200 words)
- Theme 3 = Improvements to sleep (400 words total)
  - Paragraph 5: Improve sleep quality (200 words)
  - Paragraph 6: Increase sleep amount (200 words)
- Theme 4 = Improvements in mood (400 words total)
  - Paragraph 7: Builds self-confidence (200 words)
  - Paragraph 8: Reduces anxiety (200 words)

Conclusion = 200 words