

Constructive Alignment and the Research Skills Development Framework: Using Theory to Practically Align Graduate Attributes, Learning Experiences, and Assessment Tasks in Undergraduate Midwifery

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Midwifery educators have to provide students with stimulating curricula that teach academic and vocational content, as well as transferable skills. The Research Skills Development (RSD) framework provides a conceptual model that allows educators to explicitly scaffold the development of their students' research skills. This paper aims to demonstrate the effective use of the RSD framework and constructive alignment theory to redesign a second-year Midwifery assessment task. The assessment task was changed into a scenario-based question to better reflect the unit learning objectives and expected graduate attributes. Students were provided with extra time in class to explore the assessment task in a peer environment. Following the return of their assessments, students were asked to complete a questionnaire to evaluate the effectiveness of the assessment redesign. We show that using a constructively aligned scenario-based assessment task in a second year unit more successfully articulated the expected graduate attributes of midwives. Qualitative and quantitative feedback suggested that students and staff appreciated a more clinically-relevant assessment task. This paper demonstrates that the use of the RSD framework to constructively align graduate attributes, learning experiences, and assessment tasks allows for the transformation of undergraduate assessment into a learning experience relevant to clinical practice.

Midwifery educators teach students to function in a complex environment. Students however, require additional skills and attributes that will arm them for settings that are continuously changing and evolving (Benner, Sutphen, Leonard, & Day, 2010). Consequently, midwifery educators are faced with the difficult task of providing students with stimulating curricula that teach academic and vocational content, as well as transferable skills such as academic writing, critical thinking, and clinical reasoning. Innovation in the structure of the undergraduate curriculum is therefore essential in providing a quality higher education program. The priority for learning in undergraduate curricula should not be on what students learn, but what students can do with the skills they have learned while at university (Billings & Halstead, 2012). The emphasis should therefore be on providing an education that guides students to become life-long and independent learners (Billings & Halstead, 2012).

Various approaches have been proposed to redesign midwifery and nursing curricula. These approaches usually focus on improving the vocational relevance of the content being studied, as well as the assessment guidelines and level of constructive feedback on learning (Bradley, Noonan, Nugent, & Scales, 2008). This paper describes curriculum design using a combination of the theory of constructive alignment (Biggs, 1996) and the Research Skills Development (RSD) framework (Willison & O'Regan, 2007). Constructive alignment is based on the principles of constructivism, and it advocates for a learning and teaching environment where students are encouraged to actively construct meaning through

engagement with the content (Fosnot, 2005). This type of engagement is encouraged through the alignment of course and unit objectives, learning experiences and assessment tasks (Biggs, 2003). Therefore, constructive alignment theory encourages educators to teach in a way that allows students to learn the skills the teachers intend (Brabrand & Dahl, 2008).

The RSD framework (accessible online; see Willison & O'Regan, 2006) is a conceptual model that provides an explicit scaffold and precise building blocks for the student to develop their research skills (e.g., information literacy, academic writing, critical thinking; Willison & O'Regan, 2007). The RSD framework is also useful in assisting staff to develop assessment rubrics that explicitly state the skills required to succeed in an assessment task. The RSD framework was developed by researchers at the University of Adelaide (Willison & O'Regan, 2007) and represents a conceptual framework that assists tertiary teachers to develop academic curricula that explicitly develop research skills in their students. In this context, "research skills" refers to the student discovering information that is new to themselves (Willison & O'Regan, 2007). On the horizontal axis, the framework shows the five levels of autonomy developed at a particular skill level, with the lowest level representing a low degree of autonomy (students answering a closed inquiry with a large level of structure and guidance), while the highest level corresponds to a high level of autonomy (answering an open inquiry with little or no guidance; Willison & O'Regan, 2006). The vertical axis of the RSD framework identifies the six facets of the research

process: (1) embark on an inquiry and so determine a need for knowledge or understanding; (2) find or generate needed information or data using an appropriate methodology; (3) critically evaluate this information or data and the process used to find or generate this information or data; (4) organize information collected or generated; (5) synthesize, analyze and apply new knowledge; and (6) communicate knowledge, and the processes used to generate it, with an awareness of ethical, social, and cultural issues (Willison & O'Regan, 2006).

While constructive alignment has been used in curriculum design in the past, this paper highlights how constructive alignment theory can be used in conjunction with the RSD framework. Here we discuss the implementation of constructive alignment theory using the RSD framework in the Bachelor of Nursing Practice and Bachelor of Midwifery double degree course at Monash University in Australia. Specifically, one unit will be used as an example to demonstrate the redesign of assessment tasks in a compulsory unit of the double degree course. We show that the use of constructive alignment in conjunction with the RSD framework enables the effective transformation of undergraduate classes and assessment tasks into learning experiences relevant to clinical practice.

Background

The Bachelor of Nursing Practice and Bachelor of Midwifery double degree is a 4-year baccalaureate degree that aims to “produce a nurse midwife who is a highly capable individual able to work in partnership with the interdisciplinary team in general nursing and midwifery practice settings” (Monash University, 2012a). It consists of 25 compulsory units that incorporate extensive clinical placement experience. As these 25 units are compulsory, academics are able to consistently build students’ clinical and transferable skills throughout the course. The unit discussed in this paper, MID2105 Supporting Birthing Women, is undertaken in the second year of the course. MID2105 provides an opportunity for students to develop skills and knowledge that will enable them to deliver effective care to birthing women experiencing variations from normal childbearing (Monash University, 2012b), and was identified as a suitable unit for curriculum redesign. Students are exposed to opportunities to analyze and debate current trends in the provision of birthing services including issues sensitive to rural and urban differentials. Students also have a clinical practice component that provides opportunities to apply theoretical learning directly to midwifery practice.

There were several considerations that prompted and informed the curriculum redesign described in this paper. Firstly, in order for graduate nurses and midwives to practice, the course has to be accredited

through the Australian Nursing and Midwifery Accreditation Council and approved by the Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia (NMBA). As a result, it was necessary that the curriculum redesign should reflect its congruency with the national competency standards of the NMBA (2006a, 2006b). Secondly, the assessment tasks must address the stated unit learning objectives of each unit. It was decided that the support of a Learning Skills Adviser would be required to effectively redesign this assessment task. At Monash University, Learning Skills Advisers play a key role in academic skills development by working with academics to integrate academic skills development and training into the curriculum. Additionally, Learning Skills Advisers also assist academics in the design of assessment tasks and marking rubrics. Finally, it was essential that students were provided with the information and support to successfully complete the changed assessment task. Learning Skills Advisers also work with students to improve their academic approaches to study. It was decided that the Learning Skills Adviser would be allocated extra class time to discuss the assessment task and associated marking guide with students. This would allow students to gain a better understanding of the requirements of the assessment task, thus ensuring that students were able to answer the question effectively.

Methods

All research described in this article was approved by the Monash University Human Research Ethics Committee. In order to constructively align course content and assessment tasks, it was essential to examine the learning outcomes of the unit. The two learning outcomes of relevance to this paper are:

- upon completion of this unit, students will demonstrate safe clinical practice based on sound theoretical knowledge and reasoning; and
- students will be able to discuss and critically analyze variations from normal that may arise during labor and birth, and the midwife’s role in managing these.

Previously, this unit incorporated an essay question related to a topic covered during the semester. Two typical examples are shown below.

- Critically discuss the variations from normal labor that may occur. Explain how midwives can assist these women to cope when their journey varies from normal. Include the impact of cultural, societal and educational expectations on their experience.

- Critically discuss the implications of both fetal malposition in labor and assisted vaginal birth. Your discussion should include techniques the midwife can employ to improve progress of labor, strategies the midwife can utilize to assist the woman to cope, types of assisted vaginal birth, other indications for assisted vaginal birth, and the midwives' role and responsibilities.

While it is important for student midwives to be able to answer questions like these, this type of assessment task did not give the students the opportunity to demonstrate clinical reasoning skills or explore the midwife's role in the decision making process. As a result, staff wanted to change the standard essay-based assignment to an assignment that was more clinically relevant. Consequently it was decided to alter the assessment task to address the NMBA Standard 1: "Dynamic practice that incorporates application of high level knowledge and skills in extended practice across stable, unpredictable and complex situations" (NMBA, 2006b, p. 2). It has been suggested that nursing and midwifery training should provide learning experiences that promote analysis, application and clinical reasoning (Benner, Sutphen, Leonard-Kahn, & Day, 2008; Giddens, 2010). We decided that a scenario-based essay question would be able to better assess a student's clinical reasoning skills than a standard essay and would therefore better articulate the accreditation standards of a graduate midwife. Consequently, an assessment task was developed that provided a real-world clinical problem and asked the students to determine the most appropriate type of care required for the woman. Using scenarios to foster learning helps students develop skills critical to midwifery practice, such as evidence-based practice and clinical judgment, by providing realistic clinical situations (Tanner, 2009). Problem-based learning has been used effectively in Medicine courses for many years (Barrows & Tamblyn, 1980; Neame, 1981; Neufeld & Barrows, 1974; Schmidt, 1983, 1998). The question is shown below:

- Lola is a G1P0, EDC 16/4/2012, singleton pregnancy, positive blood group, currently taking pregnancy multivitamins, she has attended the routine schedule of antenatal care with no adverse issues identified. Lola presents to your maternity unit at 10:30hrs with a history of irregular contractions since 02:30hrs, with contractions now becoming regular at four minutely intervals. Lola's membranes ruptured at 01:00hrs with clear liquor draining. On admission the abdominal palpation reveals a baby presenting in a right occipito-posterior position (ROP), with the

fetal head 3/5ths above the pelvic brim. A vaginal examination is performed, with the cervix found to be posterior, 1-2cms long, 2cms dilated, station -2, and membranes are confirmed ruptured. Critically discuss the care required for the laboring woman with the fetus presenting in an occipito-posterior position, including possible outcomes this woman may expect.

These second-year students have not previously had a similar assignment. In order to determine how to implement this task effectively, the RSD framework (Willison & O'Regan, 2006) was consulted. Clinical reasoning skills are high-level skills that fall within the higher levels (i.e., Level IV and V) of the RSD framework (Willison & O'Regan, 2006). Taking into account that students had not previously attempted a similar type of assignment, it was decided to target the assignment at the lower level of autonomy. Consequently, this assignment was designed to be aligned with Level IV of the RSD framework, where students are required to conduct research to an open-ended question within structured guidelines provided by the teacher (Willison & O'Regan, 2006). The question remained open-ended, but structured guidance was also provided. This allowed students to complete the task effectively, while still allowing high-achieving students to demonstrate their skill above the required level. The scenario-based question summarizes the main clinical concern for the patient ("a baby presenting in a right occipito-posterior position"), and provides some guided instruction as to what the essay should focus on ("care required" and "possible outcomes").

The RSD framework is also useful in structuring a curriculum that teaches information literacy competencies. Saunders (2012) identified information literacy, or "the ability to find, access, evaluate and use information" (p. 226), as a key graduate learning outcome. As a result, this assignment was designed to enable students to demonstrate various information literacy competencies by using all the facets of inquiry highlighted in the RSD framework (Willison & O'Regan, 2006).

One 1-hour workshop was designed, examining the scenario-based question in a peer learning environment. It has been previously shown that collaborative learning environments help improve students' critical thinking and reasoning skills (Collier, 1980; Dunne & Bennett, 1990), particularly if peer learning is directly associated with an assignment (Boud, Cohen, & Sampson, 2001). Consequently, this workshop was designed as an interactive class where group discussion was used to analyze the assessment task and decide how to best approach the assignment. A Learning Skills Adviser

acted as the classroom facilitator, providing students with prompts for discussion. Discussion prompts included: “What are the key symptoms or features in this case?”; “What do the key symptoms mean?”; and, “How will I care for Lola?” Students were encouraged to work in groups to decide on appropriate answers to these questions, and they were then asked to present their ideas to the class. Discussion between the groups was used to foster the investigation of different opinions and ideas.

Small workshops are usually better for problem-based learning, as they promote discussion and higher-order cognitive reasoning skills (Boud et al., 2001; Collier, 1980; Dunne & Bennett, 1990; Paul & Elder, 1995). With this in mind we conducted the class in a small workshop of 29 students with two staff members present. This allowed for significant class discussion with facilitation from the teaching staff. Twenty-five students completed the questionnaires after the assessment task.

Student assignments were assessed using a marking guide (see Table 1). The marking guide was similar to a previous year’s essay marking guide, and it was provided to the students with the assessment task. In addition to the marks and comments provided on the marking guide, students were provided with constructive feedback regarding their assignments. Students were also given the opportunity to contact the lecturer if they wanted any further clarification on the written feedback.

After students received their assessment feedback and grade, they were asked to complete a questionnaire to evaluate the effectiveness of the new assessment task. Questionnaires were administered in class by a staff representative not directly involved in the teaching. All participants provided informed consent, and the questionnaires were anonymous and all data de-identified before analysis.

Data from feedback questionnaires were analyzed using the computer statistical programs GraphPad and Microsoft Excel 2010. Results are presented as mean \pm standard error of the mean.

Results

Student Feedback

Previously, the Learning Skills Adviser was usually consulted by at least half of the student cohort regarding an essay-based assessment task. Queries at these consultations usually covered issues such as topic analysis, structure of the assessment task, and whether the student’s essay answered the question. In contrast to this past experience, only six students (representing 21% of the student cohort) sought individual assistance from a Learning Skills Adviser for this assignment. In particular, these students wanted to clarify the marking guide for the

body section of the assignment. The marking guide stated that in order to get 55 marks out of 55 for the body section “The arguments [had to] present innovative and cutting edge thinking in the field of study” (see Table 1). Students stated that they did not think they “could actually achieve those criteria.” Additionally, the other questions at these consultations seemed to indicate a much deeper engagement with the content. For example, student questions were more focused on whether they had selected appropriate academic sources to support their claims, as well as whether certain treatment approaches were more appropriate than others. There were also questions relating to the interconnectedness of several different symptoms in the case. To us this indicates that students were more focused on examining the implications of the case to clinical practice than understanding the question.

Students were asked to complete a feedback questionnaire regarding the effectiveness of the new teaching approach using a scenario-based question. Qualitative feedback from the feedback questionnaires related to the effectiveness of the in-class discussions included “This class helped me to be able to break down my assignment and focus on the most important aspects of the question” and “It was really good to have the essay broken down like that.” Similarly, students also felt that the assessment was “useful in regards to clinical practice” and that it “related to [their] unit well.”

Quantitative results from the feedback questionnaires are presented in Table 2. Importantly, students felt that they could apply what they had learned in the workshop (3.81 ± 0.20), as well as in the assignment as a whole (4.10 ± 0.21), in their future career. Most students found the marking guide useful in helping to understand what was required in the assessment task (3.86 ± 0.17), and they felt that feedback on their assignments showed areas of improvement in the future (4.00 ± 0.14).

Assessment Feedback Provided to Students

Following assessment marking, students were provided with extensive feedback from the academics who marked the assignment. While feedback given to students was not formally measured, it was noted that the feedback given to students on their assignments was more focused and streamlined, and areas for either improvement or recognition of excellent work were clearly identified. Students were offered further consultation with the lecturer once they had reviewed the feedback on their assignment in order to seek clarification of the written feedback and marks allocated. This opportunity was taken up by some students, while others stated that they felt the feedback was clear. Of the students that sought verbal feedback, all could see what they had or had not achieved, and

Table 1
Marking Guide for the Scenario-Based Essay Question

Section and key elements	Guide to marks	Marks given
Introduction:	No clear introductory statement.	0
• Are there clear statements of the topic and relevant questions?	Poor: Incomplete statement lacking one or more of the key elements, or inconsistent with aims of the paper.	5
• Are main methods described?	Adequate: All elements included but thinly described, or overly long, or confusing.	10
• Are key findings, recommendations or implications included?	Good: Developed summary of the work. Defines the scope and context of the paper; states the topic, appropriate length. Excellent: A highly developed succinct summary of the work. Conveys the importance of the work. Specific methods and clear interpretation and implications.	15 25
Body:	No justification / review or application of theory to practice.	0
• Is there a logical justification?	Poor: Inadequate literature background to support conclusions. Ideas obscure or confused or literature not up to date. Inadequate demonstration of links between theory and practice. Does not answer posed questions.	15
• Has the justification been presented in a scholarly fashion?	Adequate: Appropriate, contemporary literature with some synthesis and analysis. Applied to own practice, attempts to compare and contrast. Attempts to answer questions.	25
• Has previous work/policy been critiqued?	Good: Satisfactory overview of relevant literature. Evidence of synthesis in arguments. Established links between theory and own practice. Answers questions with some rationale.	35
• Is the literature up to date and relevant?	Excellent: Literature is succinctly presented and well critiqued. Ideas are well synthesized. Presents a range of arguments around the topic. Strong links from theory to practice. Demonstrates rationale and considers further questions when answering.	45
• Is the literature applied to own experience?	Outstanding: The arguments present innovative and cutting edge thinking in the field of study.	55
• Does the assignment demonstrate understanding and position?		
Conclusion:	No clear concluding statement.	0
• Are there clear conclusions or rationale for why there are none?	Poor: Incomplete statement lacking one or more of the key elements, or inconsistent with the methods or findings.	2
• Are the conclusions consistent with the rest of the paper?	Adequate: All elements included but thinly described, or overly long, or confusing.	5
• Are key research issues identified?	Excellent: A highly developed succinct conclusion of the work conveying the importance of the paper and the specific methods. A perceptive use of personal experiences as illustrations. Clear interpretation and implications.	10
Presentation and referencing:	Poor: Deviates significantly from the prescribed parameters. Some attempt at referencing. Shows some attempt at organization.	2
• Conforms to instructions	Adequate: Conforms to instructions. Referencing is mainly accurate. Shows organization and coherence.	5
• Uses APA (6th ed.) referencing	Excellent: Conforms to instructions. Referencing is consistently accurate. Carefully and logically organized, with a polished approach to the topic.	10
• Contemporary literature used		
• Appropriate number of sources		
• Good quality sources used		
	Total	/100

Table 2
Student Evaluation Scores for the Effectiveness of the Assessment Redesign

Evaluation	(Score / 5)* ± SEM
Evaluation of the Learning Skills Workshop	
I felt the class was unnecessary	2.19 ± 0.16
Before the class, I did not know what I was supposed to do for this assessment task	2.86 ± 0.23
I learned something new that will help me with my future studies	3.95 ± 0.18
After the class, I felt more relaxed about the assessment task	3.86 ± 0.16
I can apply what I have learned in this session in my course	4.00 ± 0.14
I can use what I have learned in my future career	3.81 ± 0.20
I felt that I could contact the Learning Skills Adviser for further assistance	3.76 ± 0.15
Overall, I found this class useful	4.10 ± 0.17
Evaluation of the assessment and marking guide	
The instructions provided were sufficient for me to understand the requirements of the assignment	3.90 ± 0.12
The assignment marking guide was useful in helping me understand what I was supposed to do for the assignment	3.86 ± 0.17
Now that my marked assignment has been returned to me, I know how my assignment could have been improved	4.00 ± 0.14
This assignment was too hard for my year level	2.48 ± 0.25
The skills I learned in this assignment will be useful for my future career	4.10 ± 0.21
I felt I could contact the academic teaching staff if I had any questions	4.10 ± 0.20
I understood what my lecturers expected of me in this assignment	4.00 ± 0.20
I knew the referencing style I was supposed to use	4.19 ± 0.18
Evaluation of students' perceived level of information literacy	
I find it easy to assess whether sources are academically acceptable	3.43 ± 0.19
I am good at skimming to locate relevant important material in a journal article	3.57 ± 0.16
I can separate main ideas and supporting evidence in sources I read	3.57 ± 0.16
I know how to track an argument through a source	3.19 ± 0.16
I am good at evaluating arguments and supporting evidence	3.24 ± 0.21
I felt that I could contact the Learning Skills Adviser for further assistance if required	3.81 ± 0.15
I know the difference between quantitative and qualitative research	3.80 ± 0.21
I find it easy to assess whether sources are academically acceptable	2.19 ± 0.16

Note. *A scoring system was used, classifying the questionnaire responses as follows: 1 (*strongly disagree*), 2 (*disagree*), 3 (*neutral*), 4 (*agree*), and 5 (*strongly agree*).

they were seeking further information regarding how to improve their skills in the specific areas identified.

will be used to assess future scenario-based assignments.

Design of a New Assessment Rubric for the Scenario-Based Assessment Task

As previously mentioned, several students had difficulties with the criteria defined in the marking guide, particularly in relation to the body section of the essay. This highlights the need for alteration of the marking guide to include assessment criteria that are attainable, as requiring an undergraduate student to demonstrate “innovative and cutting edge thinking the field” to obtain a high distinction (80-100%) is unrealistic. As a result of this feedback, the Learning Skills Adviser developed an RSD-informed assessment rubric that explicitly states the research skills required for a particular grade level (see Appendix). This rubric

Discussion and Conclusion

This paper demonstrates the use of constructive alignment theory and the RSD framework to align graduate attributes, learning objectives, learning experiences, and assessment tasks in a second-year Midwifery unit. Furthermore, we highlight the effective use of the RSD framework in the design of an assessment task and an assessment rubric that better articulates to the expected graduate attributes of a midwife.

The RSD framework (Willison & O’Regan, 2006) proved a valuable tool in the redesign of a second year Midwifery assignment by providing an explicit guide to build and assess student skills. By targeting the

assignment to Level IV of the RSD framework, we were able to provide a challenging yet achievable assignment that still provided the opportunity for excellent students to showcase their skills. The redesign of the assessment task involved changing the assignment to a scenario-based question instead of a standard essay. While we do not have comparative data from a standard essay-based assessment, we believe this assignment was more appropriate for developing students' clinical reasoning skills, which is more aligned with NMBA's (2006b) competency Standard 1.

Using the RSD framework to change the assessment tasks by aligning them with the graduate attributes articulated by the NMBA (2006a, 2006b) proved highly effective, as the students were appreciative of having assignments that were applicable to the clinical setting. We believe this assessment task was more relevant to clinical practice because it required students to demonstrate clinical reasoning in their approach to treating the patient. This was achieved by providing the students with a clinical scenario, but not a clear treatment protocol. As such, students were required to not only discuss how they would treat the patient, but also demonstrate why they would treat the patient in that particular manner.

Academics noted that feedback on assignments was more streamlined and the Learning Skills Adviser found that student questions were more clinically focused and indicated a deeper engagement with the content of the assessment task. Overall, student feedback was positive. Qualitative feedback suggested that students appreciated an assignment that was relevant to clinical practice. The qualitative feedback was supported by quantitative data showing that students felt they could apply what they had learned in their future career (see Table 2).

This assessment task redesign also highlighted the need to provide students with assessment criteria that are clear and achievable. The Learning Skills Adviser has developed an RSD-informed assessment rubric (see Appendix) that we believe will more explicitly show students the skills they will need to demonstrate in order to achieve a particular grade level. This assessment rubric will be used in future scenario-based assessment tasks.

Cross-Disciplinary Perspective

It is important to note that, while this paper has discussed the use of constructive alignment and the RSD framework in a Midwifery context, we believe this approach would also be relevant in other discipline areas. The unique approach of combining constructive alignment theory (Biggs, 1996) and the RSD framework (Willison & O'Regan, 2006) is relevant to

all teaching contexts. Constructive alignment improves student engagement through the alignment of course and unit objectives, learning experiences and assessment tasks (Biggs, 2003). The incorporation of the RSD framework in this approach has allowed the Midwifery educators to teach the academic skills that they had intended (e.g., the development of information literacy, academic writing, and critical thinking). We also believe that the design of the new RSD-informed assessment rubric described in this paper will be beneficial to all educators as it highlights the development of an assessment rubric that explicitly states the skills required for a particular grade level. The RSD framework is not discipline-specific and provides a scaffold for skills development in any context. Academic skills development is essential in any discipline area, and consequently we believe the approach described in this paper can be adapted to any curriculum context.

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Appendix
New Assessment Rubric

The new assessment rubric was designed to more explicitly state the skills required for particular grade levels in the scenario-based assessment.

Attribute	Task	Fail (Below 50%)	Pass (50-59%)	Credit (60-69%)	Distinction (70-79%)	High Distinction (80% or above)
<i>Students embark on inquiry and so determine a need for knowledge/ understanding</i>	Identify the key concepts within the task, and determine knowledge required to complete task. Total: 15 marks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Key concepts from the task not addressed Response to task irrelevant 0-6 marks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Limited identification of key concepts Response to task mostly irrelevant 7-8 marks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some key concepts from the tasks identified but in a limited capacity Response to task contains some irrelevancies 9-10 marks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Most of the key concepts and issues are identified Appropriate response to task 11-12 marks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All of the key concepts and issues are identified Appropriate response to task Demonstrates insight and ability to apply knowledge gained to other situations 13-15 marks
<i>Students find/generate needed information/data using appropriate methodology</i>	Gather relevant information from a variety of sources including unit textbook and readings Total: 15 marks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No evidence of research Irrelevant theories and concepts are used 0-6 marks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Limited evidence of research Limited number of sources Sources are mostly old or out of date Theories and concepts do not clearly address task 7-8 marks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some evidence of research Satisfactory number of sources A mix of out of date and contemporary sources Some theories and concepts are irrelevant 9-10 marks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evidence of wide research Large number of sources Sources are mostly contemporary Relevant theories and concepts obtained from sources 11-12 marks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evidence of extensive research A broad range of sources Contemporary sources used throughout Highly relevant theories and concepts obtained from sources 13-15 marks
<i>Students critically evaluate information/data</i>	Evaluate information based on academic reliability and credibility, currency, and arguments presented. Total: 10 marks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No sources used to back up concepts, issues, or theories 0-4 marks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sources used to back up concepts, issues, or theories are not credible Poorly presented or misinterpreted information 5 marks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Limited use of sources to back up concepts, issues, or theories Some sources are not credible Some poorly presented or misinterpreted information 6 marks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Appropriate use of sources to back up concepts, issues, or theories Sources are credible Information appropriately presented and interpreted 7-8 marks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Excellent use of sources to back up concepts, issues, or theories Sources are highly credible Highly effective presentation and interpretation of information 9-10 marks
<i>Students organize information</i>	Structure and argument logically organized according to the appropriate writing genre (style). Arguments must be supported by relevant evidence. Total: 20 marks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assignment does not conform to the prescribed structure Assignment lacks introductory, body, and/or concluding paragraphs Arguments illogical Arguments lack evidence No concluding statement 0-10 marks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assignment does not clearly conform to the prescribed structure Assignment not clearly organized into paragraphs Arguments are mostly illogical Arguments are largely unsubstantiated Conclusion present but unclear 10-11 marks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assignment conforms overall to prescribed structure Assignment mostly organized into paragraphs Arguments are mostly accurate Arguments do not always flow logically between paragraphs Arguments are sometimes supported with little or unreliable evidence Conclusion present but overly long or confusing 12-13 marks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assignment conforms to the prescribed structure Assignment is clearly organized into appropriate paragraphs Arguments are logical Mostly clear links between paragraphs Arguments are adequately supported by evidence A succinct conclusion present 14-15 marks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assignment conforms to the prescribed structure Excellent organization of ideas into introductory, body, and concluding paragraphs Arguments presented are logical and convincing Clear links between paragraphs Arguments are strongly supported by evidence A highly developed and succinct conclusion present 16-20 marks

<p><i>Students synthesize and analyze and apply new knowledge</i></p>	<p>Knowledge gained is synthesized, analyzed and applied in a cohesive manner which aids the reader's understanding</p> <p>Total: 30 marks</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analysis of information not present • Evaluation of evidence not expressed • Excessive use of quotations • No links between personal experiences and task • Plagiarism evident <p>0-15 marks</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analysis of information rarely present • Evaluation of evidence rarely present • Random or excessive use of quotations • Personal experiences not clearly used • Paraphrasing skills require development to avoid plagiarism <p>15 marks</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some attempt at analysis • Some attempt at evaluation • Lacks writer's voice • Attempt at using personal experiences as illustrations, but these are sometimes irrelevant • Reasonable ability to paraphrase ideas <p>16-20 marks</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reasonable attempt at analysis of information • Reasonable attempt at evaluation of evidence • Writer's voice mostly present • Use of personal experiences as illustrations • Good use of paraphrasing <p>21-24 marks</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Insightful analysis of information • Evaluation of evidence clearly expressed • Writer's voice clear throughout • Perceptive use of personal experiences as illustrations • Excellent ability to paraphrase ideas <p>25-30 marks</p>
<p><i>Students communicate knowledge with ethical, social and cultural awareness</i></p>	<p>Appropriate use of discipline specific academic language; accurate spelling, grammar, punctuation; professional presentation; and correct acknowledgement of sources referenced using APA 6th style</p> <p>Total: 10 marks</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lay language used • Academic tone not demonstrated • Substantial errors in spelling, grammar or punctuation • Incorrect acknowledgement of sources • Referencing does not conform to APA 6th referencing <p>0-4 marks</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mostly lay language used • Attempted use of academic tone • Several errors in spelling, grammar or punctuation • Partial acknowledgement of sources • Attempted use of APA 6th referencing <p>5 marks</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mainly discipline-specific language used • Academic tone demonstrated, but inconsistent • Few errors in spelling, grammar or punctuation • All sources are acknowledged • Mostly correct use of APA 6th referencing <p>6 marks</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discipline-specific language used • Academic tone mostly correctly demonstrated • No errors in spelling, grammar or punctuation • All sources are acknowledged • Correct use of APA 6th referencing <p>7-8 marks</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A range of discipline-specific language used throughout • Academic tone correctly demonstrated and consistent • No errors in spelling, grammar or punctuation • All sources are acknowledged • Correct use of APA 6th referencing <p>9-10 marks</p>

Comments: