

G05: ASSESSMENT ITEM KEY TERMS AND GUIDELINES

Overseer: PBC Dean of Studies

Approval Authority: PBC Teaching and Learning Committee

Review Schedule: 3 yearly

Next Review Due: Aug 2018

Review Table			
Date	Review Type <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Scheduled Policy amendment Admin update 	Summary of Changes	Review person/group
29/06/09	Admin Update	Conversion from Policy Manual to new format.	Adam Niven
14/02/13	Admin Update	Table added and intro rewritten	Melanie Dorn
18/12/14	Scheduled	Minor Grammatical changes	Adam Niven

Introduction

The following guideline provides direction for students on preparing four of the main types of assessment items set at PBC. This guideline does not cover every different type of set assessment item and students, if unsure or unclear on what is being requested, should speak with their unit lecturer.

The four assessment items covered in this guideline are:

- Research Reports
- Essays
- Presentations
- Written Examinations

KEY TERMS¹

The following are the key terms and their definitions as understood at PBC. These key terms are used in setting questions for assessment items. When attempting to answer a set question, students should identify any key terms and ensure they are aware of what the key term is asking them to do.

analyse - to take an idea or position apart and show how the various points interrelate;

¹ Van Oudtshoorn, A. (2007) *A taste of Glory: An introduction to theological studies*.

argue - to take up a certain position and show convincing reasons why this position is better than others;

compare and contrast - show the similarities and differences between differing positions;

criticise - critically evaluate an idea or position giving attention to the grounds on which it is constructed;

define - show the essence of, and the boundaries for, understanding a certain position or term;

describe - show the different aspects that are important to note in order to understand a position;

discuss - bring different points of view to bear on the topic under consideration;

evaluate - give reasons why you accept or reject a certain position;

examine - very similar to analyse;

explain - show how the different aspects fit together to develop a certain position;

illustrate - support an idea or position through the use of examples;

interpret - show the significance of a position or idea as you understand it;

justify - make a strong argument in support of one position;

outline - give an overview of the most relevant facts;

prove - use empirical methods which include a control group;

review - give a short overview of the contents of a book or journal article and critically evaluate the position taken and the main arguments for doing so;

trace - give special emphasis on the development of a position.

If an assessment item question uses a term not included in this list, students should clarify with the unit lecturer the definition for that term.

PREPARATION

Students should recognise that one of the key elements to successfully complete assessment items is the preparation that goes into each assessment item. The preparation required for different assessment items will vary dependant on the student and the type of assessment item.

It is recommended that each student undertake the Study Skills unit to begin to identify the preparation techniques they will need to develop in order to progress successfully and improve as a student. Some further direction is provided below.

RESEARCH REPORT AND ESSAY PREPARATION

In preparation for submitting a research report or essay it is recommended that students consult chapter nine: *How do you write a good assignment?* of *A taste of Glory: An introduction to theological studies* (2007, Van Oudtshoorn).

RESEARCH REPORT AND ESSAY PRESENTATION

Attention should be given to ensure that research reports and essays are presented suitably. How work is presented provides an impression for the lecturer of how much attention has been given to the assignment. Taking the time to ensure your submission is presented well provides a good impression. This includes:

- **English:** written submissions need to be written in good diction, phraseology, and style. Using a dictionary and thesaurus is recommended and careful attention to software spell checkers and grammar checkers should be maintained. Each paragraph must flow smoothly. Take care to ensure agreement; singular with singular and plural with plural. It is expected that students will have proof read their submissions.
- **Objectivity:** wherever possible, be objective and eliminate first person references. Submissions should be written in the third person which means avoiding words such as: I, we, you, mine, our, your, etc, as well as commands and exhortations.
- **Names and titles:** Generally, all persons referred to in a written submission should be by impartial reference meaning they are referred to by surname only.

- **Inclusive language:** Students should avoid gender bias and write in inclusive way, e.g. use 'humans' instead of 'men', 'humanity' instead of 'mankind', or use 'people' or 'persons', etc. Select appropriate personal pronouns – this is often best done by using the plural, 'they', instead of 'him/her' or 'he/she'.
- **Foreign words:** Type foreign words (transliterated into English) in italics, e.g. *Parousia*. Ensure that if you are using a foreign word you have demonstrated that you understand the meaning of the word. This may require a short 'gloss' of what the term means.
- **Numbers:** If a number can be written in one word, do so (e.g. twelve rather than 12, but 24, not twenty-four).
- **Rhetorical Questions:** While rhetorical questions are fine in sermons, they should be used sparingly in an academic paper. You must supply answers not questions.
- **Use Active verbs:** Try to avoid passive verbs where possible. Active verbs generally convey the meaning more clearly.
- **Personal pronouns:** When you use a personal pronoun, it should always refer back to the nearer antecedent. If not, use the proper noun to avoid confusion.
- **Formatting:** submissions should be presented with the following formatting:
 - Typewritten on first use A4 paper.
 - Type on one side only.
 - Page layout of 25mm margins
 - Double line spacing
 - Long quotes are single line spacing and indented
 - 12 point easy to read font, consistent throughout
 - Avoid "widows" and "orphans" – a single line on the bottom or top of a page
 - Page numbers (excluding title page and contents pages) included at top right-hand corner
 - Stapled top left-hand corner

CHECK LIST FOR WRITTEN ASSIGNMENTS:

We often find that lecturers have to repeatedly make comments to remedy the same basic mistakes in essays and reports. In order to ensure that essays and reports conform to the academic style, format and structure demanded from authors, students will be required to complete a check list for each assignment. By doing so, students will be able to ensure that their writing conforms to the standards required at PBC. If a student ticks a box indicating that he/she has checked it, and it subsequently becomes evident that the assignment does not meet that requirement, the writing will be appropriately penalised. The written assignment will not be marked unless the check list has been completed. Checklists are available from the student forms section in the library or for download on the PBC website.

RESEARCH REPORTS

What is expected from a research report?

A research report is generally used in the presentation of the results of a research task. A research report is expected to clearly present the results of the research in a logical flow of ideas.

A research report contains headings and sub-headings to identify and separate the content.

A research report is written in paragraphs but may also contain charts, diagrams, figures, etc.

Each section of a report should contain paragraphs which are linked in a logical sequence. However, there is no requirement to link from one section and the next section. The report should still maintain a logical sequence of sections.

A research report does not need to carry one central argument/idea supported by minor supporting arguments and ideas. However, sections should only carry one central argument/idea/area of research.

The conclusions from the research may be presented in the conclusion of the research report. In this case all conclusions need to related directly to the presented sections and not introduce any new information.

At PBC a Research Reports should consist of eight parts:

1. Assignment Cover Sheet

The *Assignment Cover Sheet* needs to be attached to each submitted research report. Lecturers need to ensure that the student has signed the

cover sheet stating that the work is that of the student unless indicated otherwise. If a cover sheet is unsigned the lecturer should return the assignment to the student to sign before it is graded.

The *Assignment Cover Sheet* outlines the criteria which the lecturer will be assessing and providing feedback to the student on. *Assignment Cover Sheets* are an important learning tool as lecturers will provide feedback on areas which represent good practice and areas which require improvement. Returned assessment items will direct students on how they can improve their work and this should be utilised by students.

2. Essay and Report Checklist

The Essay and Report Checklist is required to be attached to all reports and completed and signed by the student.

3. Title Page

The title page contains:

- a. The Title of the Assignment (near the top of the page),
- b. The student's name (near the centre of the page),
- c. A block near the bottom of the page containing:
 - i. Assessment Item Number,
 - ii. Unit Title and Number,
 - iii. Lecturer's name, and
 - iv. Date Due.

4. Contents Page

The contents page comprises a list of each section heading or sub-heading showing the page number on which each commences.

5. Introduction

The Introduction commences on a new page. Every research report should commence with an introduction, which briefly introduces both the topic being considered, and how the assignment will approach the topic. The aims of the report should be clarified up front. The introduction should occupy about 10% of the assignment.

In the introductory paragraph:

- a. Restate the question, showing an understanding of the requirements of the task [using your own words to explain more complex ideas/terminology used in the question]
- b. Briefly summarise the topics (ideas) of each of the body paragraphs
- c. Give some indication of the position you are taking on the issue under discussion

6. Body of the Report

The body of the report should consist of a number of sections and sub-sections, each containing the evaluation of and results of the research. Each section should be carefully written in correct English and set out in paragraphs each of which develops one central idea. Headings and sub-heading should help the reader to identify major topics being presented.

7. Conclusion

The conclusion presents no new material, but rather summarizes the ideas presented and possibly suggests solutions to a problem, areas for further research or the student's opinion based on the research. It should give the reader a sense that the paper is now finished. As with the introduction, the conclusion occupies about 10% of the assignment.

8. Reference List

Whenever quotations occur in any assignment the correct procedure must be followed (see PBC Referencing Guideline). Any assignment which has used other source material is required to have a "Reference List" attached. Direction in relation to the appropriate number of references will be given in the unit plan or the minimum requirements should be met for each learning level (See PBC Referencing Guideline). The Reference List commences on a new page.

ESSAYS

What is expected from an essay?

An essay is generally the presentation of one argument or idea. An essay is expected to clearly convey this argument or idea by linking together supporting materials, arguments and ideas in a logical sequence.

An essay does not normally contain headings or sub-headings. Each new point needs to fit within the logic of the presentation and be linked to the previous point.

An essay is written in paragraphs and would only contain charts, diagrams, figures, etc, if they were integral to supporting the position and provided a concise representation of ideas.

Essays should contain a logical sequence of paragraphs which are linked with good transitions. Overall, each paragraph should be supporting the main argument or idea and linked to both the previous and following paragraph.

At PBC an Essay should consist of four parts:

1. Assignment Cover Sheet

The *Assignment Cover Sheet* needs to be attached to each submitted essay. Lecturers need to ensure that the student has signed the cover sheet stating that the work is that of the student unless indicated otherwise. If a cover sheet is unsigned the lecturer should return the assignment to the student to sign before it is graded.

The Assignment Cover Sheet outlines the criteria which the lecturer will be assessing and providing feedback to the student on. Assignment Cover Sheets are an important learning tool as lecturers will provide feedback on areas which represent good practice and areas which require improvement. Returned assessment items will direct students on how they can improve their work and this should be utilised by students.

2. Essay and Report Checklist.

The Essay and Report Checklist is required to be attached to all essays and completed and signed by the student.

3. Title Page

The title page contains:

- a. The Title of the Assignment (near the top of the page),
- b. The student's name (near the centre of the page),
- c. A block near the bottom of the page containing:
 - i. Assessment Item Number,
 - ii. Unit Title and Number,
 - iii. Lecturer's name, and
 - iv. Date Due.

4. The Essay

Essays are made up of three essential parts:

An introductory paragraph: outlining the thesis statement of the essay and the steps that will be taken to establish the thesis. It is not appropriate to say "I will discuss, or this essay will discuss".

The Essay Body: a logical sequence of linked paragraphs which progress through the steps outlined to establish the thesis.

A concluding paragraph: summarising the thesis and the steps taken to establish it. No new information included.

Essays should be carefully written in correct English and set out in paragraphs each of which develops one central idea.

5. Reference List

Whenever quotations occur in any assignment the correct procedure must be followed (see PBC Referencing Guideline). Any assignment which has used other source material is required to have a "Reference List" attached. Direction in relation to the appropriate number of references will be given in the unit plan or the minimum requirements should be met for each learning level (See PBC Referencing Guideline). The Reference List commences on a new page.

PRESENTATION PREPARATION

In preparation for a presentation it is recommended that students consult chapter nine: *How do you write a good assignment?* of *A taste of Glory: An introduction to theological studies* (2007, Van Oudtshoorn). Whilst not all presentations require a written submission, the preparation for the content of the presentation is the same as that for a written submission.

Students should also take time to practice their presentations. Students are encouraged to deliver their presentations as if to an audience, including using any presentation aids. This will allow students to establish the time the presentation will take and make any required adjustments, as well as allow a student to have an indication of how well they know the presentation they are delivering.

PRESENTING THE PRESENTATION

Attention should be given to ensure that presentations are presented suitably. How work is presented provides an impression for the lecturer of how much attention has been given to the assignment. Taking the time to ensure your presentation is presented well provides a good impression. This includes:

- **Speaking:** presentations are to be delivered orally in English. Students need to speak clearly and audibly.
- **Body Language:** students need to maintain eye contact and use appropriate gestures. Not knowing your content and needing to read from notes generally causes this area to deteriorate.
- **Time requirements:** Presentations have a set time and it is important to meet this requirement. By practicing your presentation, you will be able to establish how close you are to the time requirements.

- **Presentation Aids:** Well prepared aids are effective, poorly prepared aids are often distracting and detract from the presentation. Make sure you know how to use your aids competently.
- **Organisation:** students need to be organised and ready to deliver their presentation as required. This may mean organising that a data projector will be available, or audio equipment. It also means ensuring that students are provided with the A4 handout.
- **Questions:** While rhetorical questions are fine in sermons, they should generally be avoided in a presentation. Questions should be “open questions” (i.e. not yes/no answers) to encourage participation and discussion. Questions like: “What do you think?” or “Which position would you support?” should not be used if you have not presented enough information for audience to form an informed opinion. They should also not be used as a substitute for you clearly presenting what you think and which position you support.
- **Appearance:** students should present themselves in a manner appropriate for someone delivering into the setting of the presentation. E.g. if the presentation is delivered in class, you should present yourself in a manner similar to the lecturer, not a manner similar to other students.

PRESENTATIONS

What is expected from a presentation?

A presentation should be an engaging oral delivery of either research results or an argument for a thesis statement.

Presentations are not the same as reading out a written submission. A presentation should concisely represent any written submission which may have been required as well.

In a presentation a student should:

- Identify and summarise the major issues.
Presentations are not expected to cover all the areas possible on a given topic. Students should be selective in what is presented, identifying and focussing on the major issues.
- Critically analyse the major issues.
The presenter should demonstrate that they have been able to isolate the key issues related to the topic. This means a student would need to demonstrate their ability to identify between a source’s ‘surface’ position/s and identify the key elements which support such a position.

- Argue for a position/s related to the major issues.
The presenter should demonstrate that they have thought critically about the major issues and have not simply adopted the view point of a source. It is important for presenters to not only present their position on a major issue but also demonstrate the reasoning and argument for the position they have taken. The presenter should offer more than one position on major issues to allow them to demonstrate their decision for the position they have taken and why they have decided against other positions.
- Consider the practical implications.
The presenter should be able to demonstrate areas where the major issues will impact practically. The presentation should clearly demonstrate the connection of the theological or theoretical with the practical implications.
- Present in an appropriate format.
Presentation formats are not restricted to a seminar style delivery. Each presenter may decide on a delivery style that will: maximize the impact of their presentation; help class members think through the issues raised and encourage critical participation by all class members.
- Incorporate appropriate aids.
As far as possible, the oral presentation should be supported by appropriate aids such as diagrams on the whiteboard, use of PowerPoint, video, music, etc. Aids should be used to improve the impact of a presentation and presenters should be careful to not use aids which do not improve the presentation. Presenters should also ensure that they can operate any aids competently.
- Involve and engage audience.
Presenters should look to create a learning environment which encourages the audience members to participate where appropriate. This may include but is not limited to providing a number of thought-provoking questions to stimulate discussion on the topic. Such questions may help identify concerns, clarify issues, and/or stimulate further critical reflection.
- Provide a summary handout.
Presenters should prepare a carefully structured single-sided one-page, 12-point font size, A4 handout for each class member to facilitate their comprehension of the topic. The presenter should be selective in what is included and use the most appropriate format for the greatest clarity and impact. This could be prose, tabulated

notes, diagrammatic representation, etc. The handout should be appropriately referenced.

At PBC a Presentation should consist of four parts:

1. Presentation Cover Sheet

The *Presentation Cover Sheet* needs to be attached to the presentation handout and submitted to the lecturer on the day of the presentation. Lecturers need to ensure that the student has signed the cover sheet stating that the work is that of the student unless indicated otherwise.

The *Presentation Cover Sheet* outlines the criteria which the lecturer will be assessing and providing feedback to the student on. *Presentation Cover Sheets* are an important learning tool as lecturers will provide feedback on areas which represent good practice and areas which require improvement. Feedback on presentations will direct students on how they can improve their work and this should be utilised by students.

2. Handout

A copy of an A4 handout should be provided for each member of the class. A copy should be stapled to the *Presentation Cover Sheet* and submitted to the lecturer.

The handout should contain:

- a. A header including the student name and the presentation title,
- b. The main content of the handout,
- c. A reference list at the bottom of all sources cited on the handout.

3. The Presentation

Whilst different presentation formats are encouraged it is important that a presentation:

Introduction: A presentation needs to introduce the topic of the presentation in an engaging way.

Presentation Body: the body of the presentation should work through the major issues in a logical sequence and present the relevant practical implications. The presentation body should seek to engage and involve the audience. If the presentation also had a submitted written paper, no new points should be included in the presentation, and the presentation should follow the logical sequence and arguments of the written paper. However, keep in mind you should not simply read out your paper.

Conclusion: a presentation should conclude with a summary of what has been established during the presentation. New information is not to be introduced.

Question time: as a presenter you should be prepared to answer questions related to your presentation. Your ability to answer questions will demonstrate how well you have researched or covered your topic beyond what you have presented.

4. Presentation aids

Presentation aids are encouraged as they can greatly enhance a presentation. Presentation aids should be used to emphasise the presentation content. E.g. PowerPoint presentations should only contain key dot points and key quotations, not superfluous amounts of written work that is read out or expected that the audience will read. All presentation aids should be referenced. For PowerPoint it is appropriate to cite sources as per a written submission on slides throughout the presentation and include a reference list slide as the last slide.

WRITTEN EXAMINATION PREPARATION

Preparation for written examinations begins on the first day of class. It is important to maintain good notes of class content as these will provide preparation aids for the examinations at the end of the semester. Often lecturers will indicate especially relevant areas in classes and making a clear note of this allows for direction in preparing for examinations. Reviewing notes on a weekly basis will improve your ability to recall key areas.

Past examination papers are released in the library (not for loan) prior to the exam period and these provide an excellent resource in preparing for examinations.

Using concise summaries, diagrams, mind maps, pictures can provide a useful way to recall the key points related to a topic or question. Such items can be put down at the beginning of the examination for the questions the student chooses to answer, allowing the final answer to be constructed from this aid later in the exam period.