

## 2.10 Instructional words

The following terms frequently appear in assignment and exam questions:

**Account for** – Give reasons for

**Give an account of** – Describe

**Take into account** – Consider; think about

**Analyse** – Divide into parts and discuss each part and how they relate

**Argue** – Systematically support or reject a position by presenting reasons and give evidence for acceptance or rejection

**Assess** – Decide how important something is and give your reasons

**Assume** – First accept that something is true

**Classify** – Arrange into groups or classes

**Comment on** – Explain why something is important

**Compare** – Describe the ways two things are alike

**Concept** – An important idea

**Concise** – Short, brief

**In the context of** – Referring to; inside the subject of

**Contrast** – Describe the ways two things are different

**Criteria** – The standards, the questions you would expect to be answered

**Criticise** – Discuss, pointing out faults and advantages

**Deduction** – The conclusion or generalisation you come to after looking carefully at all the facts

**Define** – Provide clear, concise, authoritative meanings

**Discuss** – Give both sides of an argument and then your own opinion (A word of warning: ‘Discuss’ is often used loosely by lecturers when they actually mean ‘Describe’, so ask your lecturer which is intended.

**Distinguish between** – Describe the difference between two things

**Elaborate** – Yes or No is not enough; answer fully with reasons and examples

**Evaluate** – Decide and explain how great, valuable or important something is

**Explain** – Analyse in order to show reasons, causes and effects; clarify by the use of models and examples

**To what extent is x true?** – Explain in what ways x is true and what in what ways x is not true

**Factors** – The circumstances bringing about a result

**Function** – what something does; its purpose or activities

**Identify** – Point out and describe

**Indicate** – Show; explain

**Illustrate** – Give examples or diagrams that prove your answer is correct

**Implications** – Results which are not obvious; long term, suggested results

**Limitations** – The shortcomings, what is not useful or relevant in something

**List** – Provide an itemised series of points (often expressed in point form)

**Outline** – Give an organised description in which you state the main points but omit detail

**Prove** – Confirm or verify by stating and evaluating evidence, or by logical reasoning

**With/by reference to** – Include discussion about the following subject

**Relate** – Emphasise connections and associations in relation to – only a certain part of the topic is needed

**Review** – Re-examine, analyse and comment briefly on the major points

**Role** – the part something plays, how it works, especially in co-operation with others

**State** – Formally set out a position

**Summarise** – Choose the main points of a wide subject

**Validate** – give the evidence and facts to prove this statement

### Acknowledgements

The material for this section is compiled from the following sources:

Betts, K. & Seitz, A. (1994) *Writing Essays and Research Reports in the Social Sciences*, 2nd edition, Thomas Nelson, Melbourne.

Clanchy, John & Ballard, Brigid (1981) *Essay Writing for Students: a Guide for Arts and Social Science Students*, Longman Cheshire, Melbourne.