



The assignment, presented the way it will be marked.

Most marks lost on assignments are lost before the first sentence is written — the wrong question is answered, the wrong shape is used, or the work arrives in a form the marker cannot easily read. This document covers command words, a cover page laid out properly, three assignment shapes, and a submission checklist.

1 What the question is actually asking

The first verb in the question is an instruction, not decoration. The University of Bolton's study-skills guidance makes the point plainly:

"Command words, also known as instructional or directive words, are often verbs that explain how you should answer the question."

University of Bolton, LEAP Online, *Planning your assignment* (2023)

Command word	What it demands	What it does not ask for
Define	The precise meaning of a term, with its boundaries.	Examples, or an argument for or against.
Describe	An account of what something is or how it works.	A judgement on whether it is good.
Explain	Reasons and mechanism — it answers "why".	A list of features with no causal link.
Compare	Similarities <i>and</i> differences, organised by criterion.	Two separate descriptions placed side by side.
Contrast	Differences only, drawn out explicitly.	A balanced account of both sides.
Discuss	More than one position, then a defended conclusion.	A neutral summary that decides nothing.
Evaluate	Weighing against stated criteria, ending in a verdict.	Criteria invented after the verdict.
Analyse	Breaking a whole into parts and showing how they relate.	Simply listing the parts in sequence.
Apply	Using a rule, concept or method in a new situation.	Restating the rule in the abstract.
Critically review	Assessing the strengths and limits of a body of work.	Finding only faults, or only merits.
Justify	Giving reasons strong enough to defend a choice against objection.	Merely describing the choice you made.

2 Marks follow the outcomes, not the effort

Biggs, Tang and Kennedy describe the principle that governs how every assignment is marked: the outcomes state what you should be able to do, and the assessment is constructed to find out whether you can do it (Biggs, Tang & Kennedy, 2022). An assignment that demonstrates something other than the stated outcome will be marked as such, however much work it represents.

IF THE OUTCOME SAYS "APPLY"

A general discussion with no worked case will lose the marks reserved for application, even if the theory is stated perfectly.

IF THE OUTCOME SAYS "EVALUATE"

An accurate summary of the reading earns description marks only. Evaluation requires criteria, evidence and a defended judgement.

SOURCES Biggs, J., Tang, C., & Kennedy, G. (2022; ©2023). *Teaching for quality learning at university* (5th ed.). Open University Press / McGraw-Hill Education. — constructive alignment. University of Bolton, LEAP Online (2023). *Planning your assignment*. — command words.

3 Group assignments, and how the group deliverable differs

WHAT IS MARKED

- **One document, one voice.** If four sections read like four different writers, that is a group failure, not a style choice.
- **Consistent format.** Headings, fonts, citation style and spacing must match throughout.
- **Contributions are usually recorded.** Most programmes require a contribution sheet; keep it accurate, and agree it early.
- **Peer assessment is normally visible and evidenced.** "He did not help" is not evidence; a dated log is.

AGREE THESE FIVE THINGS IN THE FIRST MEETING

- Who writes which section, and by which date.
- Which citation style, which font, which heading numbering.
- Who holds the master copy — one file, one owner.
- When the sections are merged, leaving time for one editor to unify the voice.
- What happens if a section is late: the escalation, agreed in advance.



4 A cover page, laid out as it should appear

Every field below earns its place: the marker must be able to identify the module, the student and the question without turning to another page. Use your own programme's required wording if it differs.

THE UNIVERSITY OF ZAMBIA

School of Humanities and Social Sciences

ECN 2110 — INTERMEDIATE MACROECONOMICS

Assignment 2: Price controls in a developing economy

Student name	Chanda Mwansa
Computer number	2023345678
Programme	BA Economics, Year 2
Lecturer	Dr M. Banda
Date due	Friday 13 November 2026
Date submitted	Thursday 12 November 2026
Word count	1,480 words (excluding cover page and references)

Declaration. I declare that this assignment is my own work. All sources used have been acknowledged in the reference list, and I have not submitted this work for assessment elsewhere. *Signed:* C. Mwansa *Date:* 12 November 2026.

The declaration above is a specimen, not a prescribed wording. Use the exact wording your own school requires, and never sign a declaration you cannot stand behind.

5 Presentation rules that apply to any assignment

THE PAGE

- Font: one serif or sans-serif face, 11–12 pt, used throughout.
- Line spacing: 1.5 lines for prose; single spacing inside long quotations and tables.
- Margins: at least 25 mm all round; a wider left margin if the work will be bound.
- Alignment: justified or ragged-right — but pick one and keep it. Do not centre body text.
- Page numbers: every page except the cover, in the same position throughout.

THE DOCUMENT

- Headings: numbered or bold, consistently; no heading for a single sentence.
- Paragraphs: one idea each, with the claim in the first sentence.
- Tables and figures: numbered, captioned, and referred to in the text.
- Spelling: British spelling, and set the language of the document so the spell-checker agrees.
- Binding: staple for a few pages, spiral or tape binding for a report; check the rule before you print.

6 Three assignment shapes

Shape	Skeleton	Use it when
Essay-style	Introduction → three or four body sections → conclusion → references. Continuous prose; headings optional.	The command word is <i>discuss</i> , <i>evaluate</i> or <i>compare</i> , and no data is collected.
Report-style	Summary → Introduction → Method → Findings → Discussion → Recommendations → References → Appendices.	You have collected or analysed something, or the brief asks for recommendations.
Problem-set style	Question restated → Given → Find → Equations → Substitution → Answer with unit → Check.	The command word is <i>calculate</i> , <i>determine</i> or <i>solve</i> .

Do not mix the shapes. A report with a discursive introduction, or an essay that suddenly presents a findings table with no explanation of where it came from, reads as two documents stapled together — and is marked as such.



7 Deadlines, extensions and late penalties

Rules on extensions, allowable grounds and penalties for late submission differ between institutions, schools and even modules. What follows is the shape these rules usually take — treat it as general practice and check your own module handbook before relying on any of it.

Situation	The usual position	What protects you
Submitted on time	Full marks available.	Submitting a day early, so a printing problem is not fatal.
Extension requested in advance	Often granted for documented reasons — illness, bereavement, a documented emergency.	Asking <i>before</i> the deadline, in writing, with evidence.
Extension requested after the deadline	Usually refused, or granted only for strong documented reasons.	A dated record that the problem began before the due date.
Late submission	Commonly a fixed deduction per day, with a cut-off after which nothing is accepted.	Knowing the exact penalty and the cut-off in your own module handbook.
Technical failure	Rarely accepted on its own — it is judged on whether the work genuinely could not be submitted.	Saving the file early, and keeping a copy of the submission receipt.
Late beyond the cut-off	Usually no marks are recorded for that assessment at all.	Submitting something, however imperfect, rather than nothing.

Keep one dated copy of everything. A submission receipt, a screenshot of the upload confirmation, and the file itself, kept until the results are published. In almost every dispute, the student with a dated copy wins.

8 Appendices, the checklist, and a specimen declaration

APPENDICES

- Supporting material only — raw data, the instrument, a long derivation.
- Never place argument there. Markers are not obliged to read appendices to follow your case.
- Number them, list them in the contents, and refer to each one in the text.
- Excluded from the word count in most programmes, but confirm the rule.

SIX STEPS BEFORE YOU SUBMIT

1. Re-read the question and the outcomes; tick each one off.
2. Check the command word has been answered at that level.
3. Verify the word count against the limit stated.
4. Check every in-text citation against the reference list, both ways.
5. Read the printed copy aloud once, slowly.
6. Confirm format, cover page and file name, then submit.

"I confirm that this submission is my own work. It has not been submitted for assessment elsewhere, and all sources consulted have been acknowledged. Where I have used the work of others, it is quoted or paraphrased and cited in full. No part of this work was generated by an automated tool and presented as my own."

Specimen declaration — adapt the wording to the one your school requires

9 CS Tutorials — help with any of this

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The SMARTprep study packs on our site are free to download and use — past papers, worked solutions and subject notes. Coaching is available if you want a person to work through it with you:

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- K180 per month** — one-to-one tuition, physical or online.

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