

Academic keywords used in titles

These words indicate the approach or style expected for the piece of writing.	
<i>Account for</i>	Give reasons for; explain why something happens.
<i>Analyse</i>	Examine in very close detail; identify important points and chief features.
<i>Comment on</i>	Identify and write about the main issues, giving your reactions based upon what you have read or heard in lectures. Avoid purely personal opinion.
<i>Compare</i>	Show how two or more things are similar. Indicate the relevance or consequences of these similarities.
<i>Contrast</i>	Set two or more items or arguments in opposition so as to draw out differences. Indicate whether the differences are significant. If appropriate, give reasons why one item or argument may be preferable.
<i>Critically evaluate</i>	Weigh arguments for and against something, assessing the strength of the evidence on both sides. Use criteria to guide your assessment of which opinions, theories, models or items are preferable.
<i>Define</i>	Give the exact meaning of. Where relevant, show that you understand why the definition may be problematic.
<i>Describe</i>	Give the main characteristics or features of something, or outline the main events.
<i>Discuss</i>	Write about the most important aspects of (probably including criticism); give arguments for and against; consider the implications of.
<i>Distinguish</i>	Bring out the differences between two (possible confusable) items.
<i>Evaluate</i>	Assess the worth, importance or usefulness of something, using evidence. There will probably be cases to be made both <i>for</i> and <i>against</i> .
<i>Examine</i>	Put the subject 'under the microscope', looking at it in detail. If appropriate, 'Critically evaluate' it as well.
<i>Explain</i>	Make clear why something happens, or why something is the way it is.
<i>Illustrate</i>	Make something clear and explicit, giving examples or evidence.
<i>Interpret</i>	Give the meaning and relevance of data or other material presented.
<i>Justify</i>	Give evidence which supports an argument or idea; show why decisions or conclusions were made, considering objections that others might make.

Narrate	Concentrate on saying <i>what</i> happened, telling it as a story.
Outline	Give only the main points, showing the main structure.
Relate	Show similarities and connections between two or more things.
State	Give the main features, in very clear English (almost like a simple list but written in full sentences).
Summarise	Draw out the main points only (see 'Outline'), omitting details or examples.
To what extent	Consider how far something is true, or contributes to a final outcome. Consider also ways in which the proposition is not true. (The answer is usually somewhere between 'completely' and 'not at all'.)
Trace	Follow the order of different stages in an event or process.