Assignment Writing Steps

1. **Analyse your assignment instructions**
   - To ensure your assignment is relevant and well-structured, spend some time to understand what you are required to do:
     - Focus on the topic(s), instructional words and other important words in your assignment instructions.
     - Create a plan or mind map of the sections of your assignment.
     - Outline the topics and sub-topics within each section.

2. **Compare assignment instructions with marking guide**
   - The marking guide elaborates on the assignment instructions. Use the marking guide to:
     - work out how many words to write for each section and
     - check and confirm that your plan or mind map covers all the parts of the assignment question.

3. **Analyse to decide what information is needed**
   - The assignment instructions and marking guide tell you the type of information needed e.g. New Zealand or international information, or historical, recent or current information.
   - Decide what sources of information are suitable. Most assignments require academic information from textbooks and journal articles.
   - Check how many sources are required, if stated.
   - Use your topic(s) and sub-topics to form search questions such as what, who, why, when, where and how.

4. **Decide on ways to find your information**
   - Your class materials and recommended readings often provide an overview and explanation of your main topics.
   - Use the index and contents pages of your textbook(s) to locate pages with the topic(s) or key terms.
   - Primo Library Search enables you to find resources available at Ara Library.
   - The Ara Library Catalogue has books with general information to help you understand the topics you are researching.
   - The Ara Online Resources and Databases contain resources such as peer-reviewed journal articles with more specific and current information that you may also require.

5. **Evaluate information**
   - How relevant is the information to key topics and concepts in your assignment? To find out, use your search questions to survey your reading materials and to scan for relevant information.
   - To gain an overview, the parts you should read first are the introduction and conclusion, and any summary or abstract.
   - Is the information reliable, objective, accurate and recent?

6. **Read for Useful Information**
   - Use in-depth reading and critical reading skills to identify useful information:
     - As you read develop your assignment plan or mind map by adding points to the key concepts.
For more information on each assignment writing step, refer to other Learning Services handouts. For information on different types of assignment refer to: Essay Structure, Reports, Literature Review, & Annotated Bibliography (on Learning Services’ website / Moodle site).

Effective time management is important. Set and keep to your own additional deadlines for each assignment writing step. This helps you to complete your assignment before the deadline given by your tutor. Refer to these hand outs:

- Timeline for an Assignment (on Learning Services’ Academic Skills Support site on Moodle, under section 13).
- Organising Your Time
- Make an appointment early at Learning Services if you are not sure about any of your assignment writing steps. A Learning Advisor will help you to develop your writing skills.