

Study Skills Induction for New Learners:

2. Planning and Drafting Assignments

As we are waiting for others to join, please write your *course title* and *when you started* in the chatbox.

For example:

'I am undertaking the PMDA and this is my first term!'

Session will start at: 00:00

Planning and Drafting Assignments: Workshop Content

Develop an understanding of how to deconstruct an assignment brief

Explore four different planning strategies, considering their potential strengths and limitations

Practice the technique of generative writing to efficiently draft content

By the end of the lesson you will be able to:

Plan and efficiently draft assignments according to academic conventions to maximise your grade

Your Experiences Planning and Drafting Assignments?

1

On a scale of 1 to 10, how confident do you feel about planning and drafting your first assignment?

2

What potential challenges might you face when attempting to plan and draft your first assignment?

Benefits of Assignment Planning



Improves **time management skills**.



Encourages **adherence to the wordcount**.



Supports the development of clear, **evidence-based arguments**.



Improves **cohesion** - detecting potential gaps in your argument.



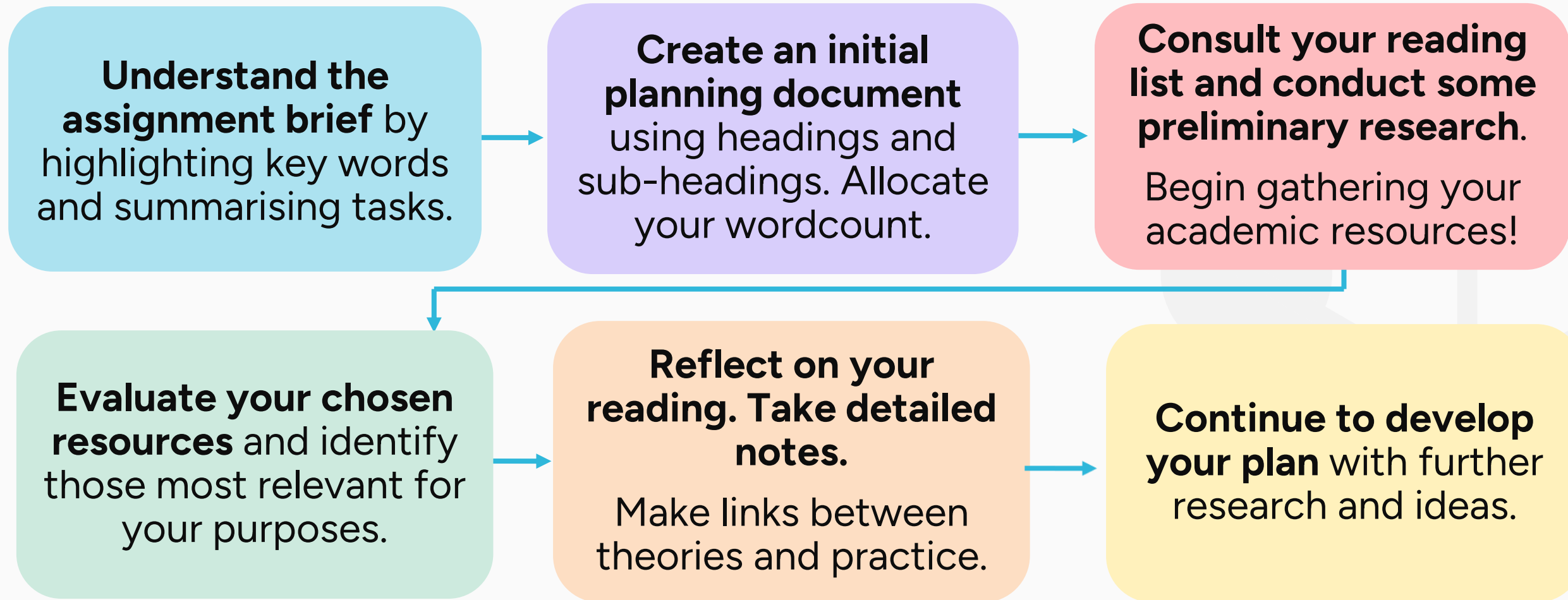
Improved **concision** and avoidance of unnecessary repetitions.



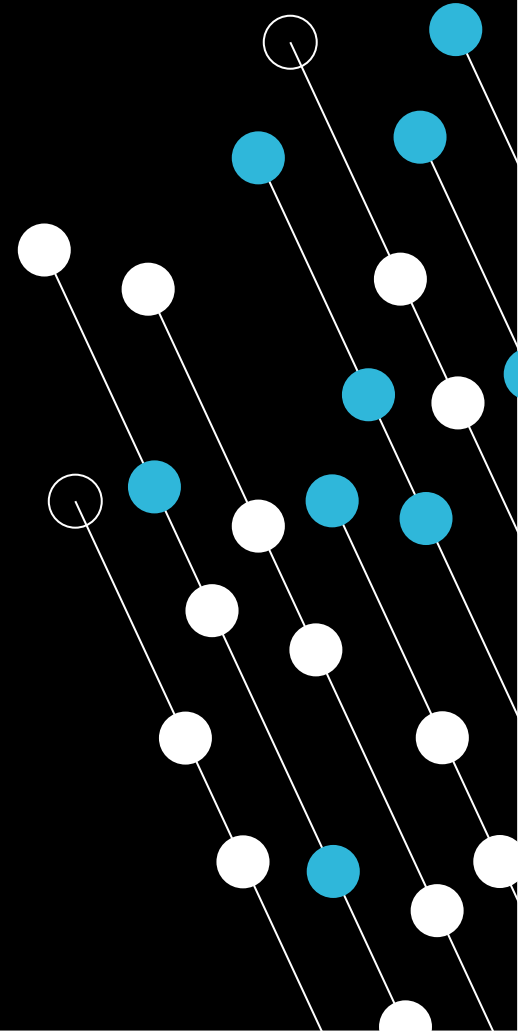
Promotes **well-being** by providing a **logical structure** to follow.

Preparing to Plan an Assignment

Preparing to plan an assignment can be broken down into manageable stages.



Understanding the Assignment Brief





Understanding the Assignment Brief

Begin by breaking down the task description, highlighting the **directive**, **subject matter** and **limiting words**.

Directive Words

Tell you precisely **what to do**.

Subject-Matter Words

Describe the topic you should be writing about.

Limiting Words

Help **narrow the focus** of your answer.

Identifying Directive, Subject Matter, and Limiting Words

Task

Identify the **directive**, **subject matter** and **limiting** words in the assignment task.

Task 1: Critically evaluate the impact of leadership behaviours on digital transformation in your organisation.

Identifying Directive, Subject Matter, and Limiting Words

Identify the **directive**, **subject matter** and **limiting** words in the assignment task.

Answer

Task 1: **Critically evaluate** the **impact** of **leadership behaviours** on **digital transformation** in **your organisation**.

Task

Consider the directive words '**critically evaluate**'. What are they asking you to do? Write your answer in the chatbox!

Understanding the Directive Words

Critically Evaluate



Consider the arguments **for** and **against** a **theory, model, concept**, or **practice, assessing** the strength of **evidence** on **both sides**. Use criteria to guide your examination of **alternative theories**, models, concepts, or practices, **establishing** which is **preferable**.

Understanding the Directive Words

Analyse	Examine a phenomenon in close detail and from several angles , making use of academic theory .
Apply	Put theory into practice .
Describe	Provide a detailed account of the main components or factors .
Discuss	Explore the most important characteristics of a theory, model, concept, or practice. Offer arguments for and against .
Examine	Look at a theory, model, concept, or practice in detail . You may be expected to ' critically evaluate ' it too!
Justify	Provide evidence in support of your argument .

Understanding the Assignment Brief – Further Strategies



Summarise the task in your own words.



Annotate the task with preliminary ideas and questions; this can help to **establish what you know** about the topic and **identify knowledge gaps**.



Try to address your questions through **further reading**.



Research unfamiliar terminology to **devise a glossary**.



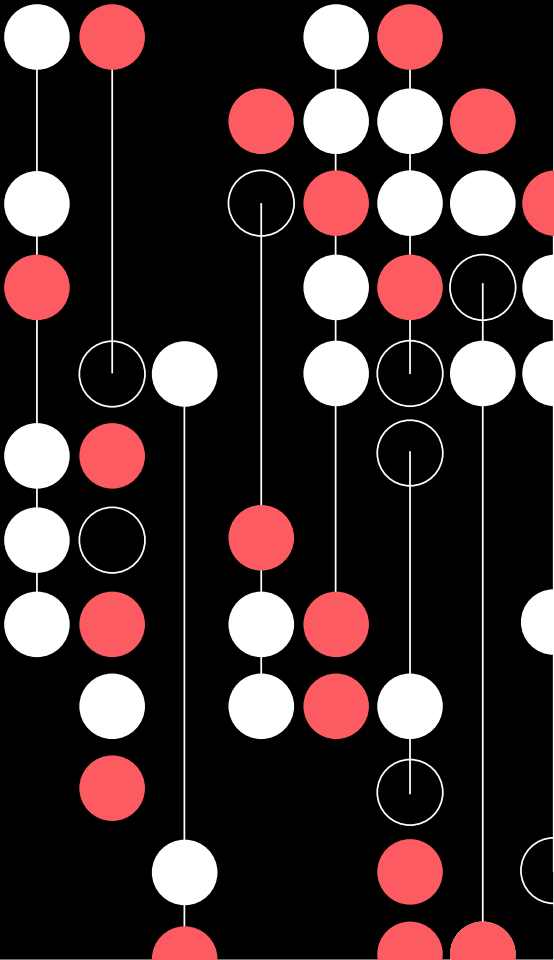
Book an **ACE 1-2-1 Tutorial** to develop your comprehension.



Attend the **module office hours** or view recorded sessions.

[ACE Quick Guide to Understanding the Assignment Brief](#)

Developing a Plan



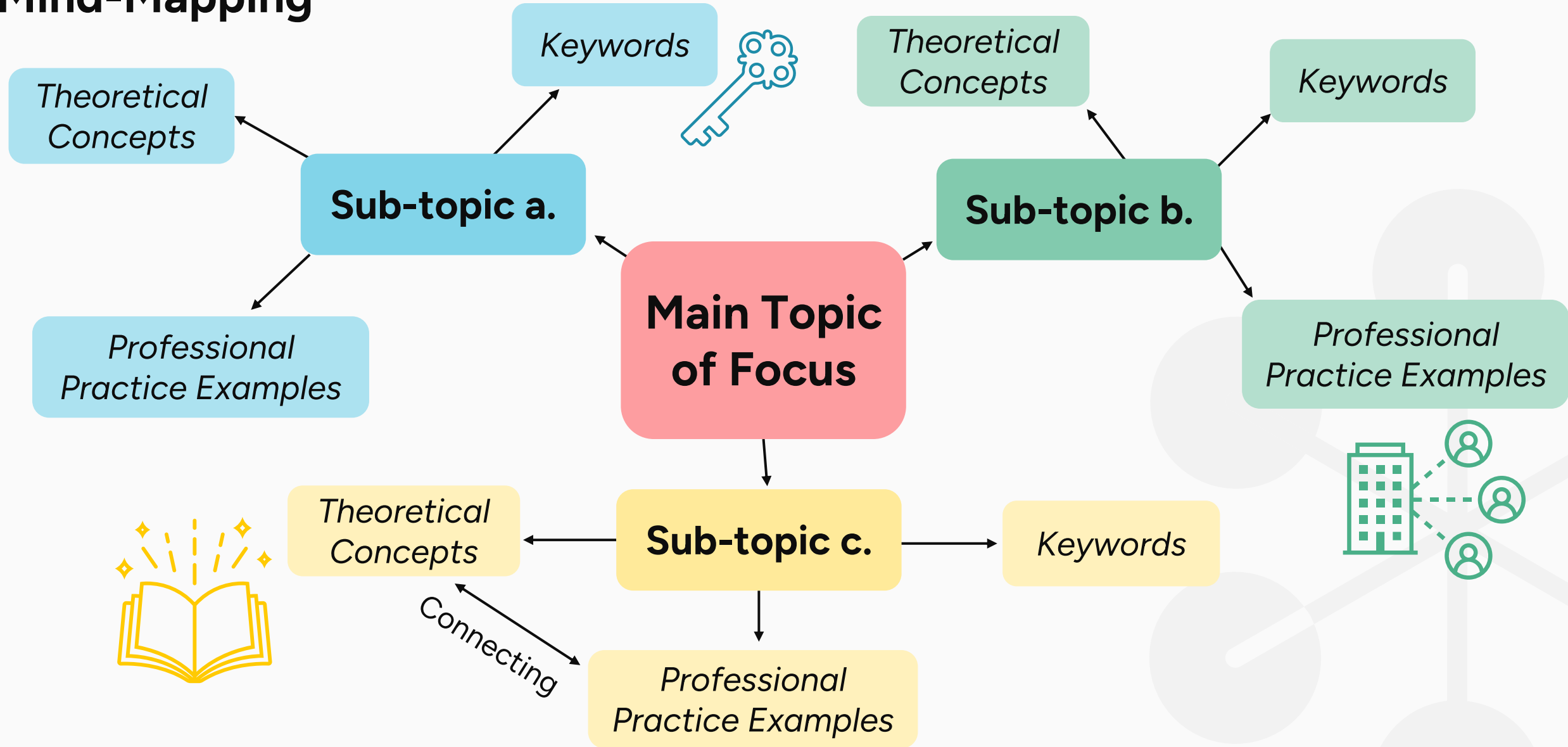
Using the Brief to Develop a Plan

When beginning to plan, you can use the **directive**, **subject matter** and **limiting** words in the assignment task to help you make a start.

Task 1: **Critically evaluate** the impact of **leadership behaviours** on **digital transformation** in **your organisation**. You must consider:

- a. How effectively **leaders** **communicate** the **digital strategy**.
- b. The **use** and **impact** of **change management frameworks**.
- c. The extent of **collaboration** with **internal** and **external stakeholders**.

Mind-Mapping



Mind Mapping Software Applications



Edraw



Padlet



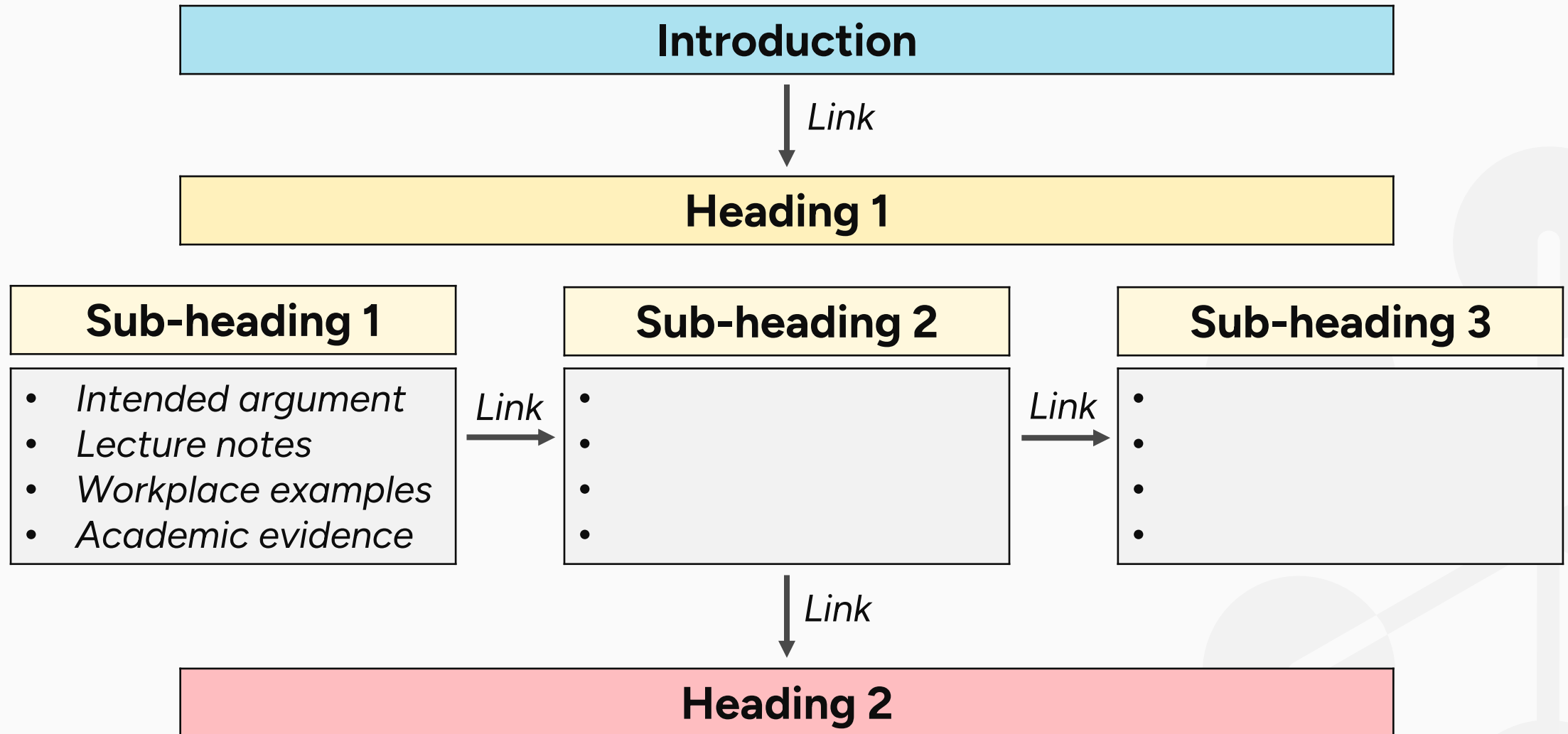
Canva



Xmind

Headings and sub-headings should be **concise statements** not questions!

Flow Diagram



Tabular Planning

Introduction					
Heading 1	Sub-heading 1	Sub-heading 2	Sub-heading 3	Sources	Questions
<i>Word count:</i> <i>Complete by:</i>	<i>Intended argument</i> <i>Lecture notes</i> <i>Workplace examples</i>			<i>Academic evidence</i>	
Heading 2	Sub-heading 1	Sub-heading 2		Sources	Questions
<i>Word count:</i> <i>Complete by:</i>					

Linear Planning

Assignment Title:

Word Count:

Submission Date:

Introduction

- For further guidance, see [ACE's Quick Guide to Introductions and Conclusions](#).

1. Heading 1 (Word Count: _____ / Complete by: _____)

1.1. Sub-heading 1

- *Intended argument*
- *Lecture notes*
- *Workplace examples*
- *Academic evidence*

1.2. Sub-heading 2

-
-

Tip

Your plan is a **working document** and will need to be updated!

Critical Reflection: Choosing Your Planning Approach

Task

Which planning technique do you think is best suited to you, and why?

[ACE Quick Guide to Assignment Planning](#)

Allocating Wordcount

Task 1 (40 marks)

Task 2 (50 marks)

Task 3 (10 marks)

Task

1

How could you allocate word count for Tasks 1, 2, and 3 for a **3000-word** assignment?

2

The average academic paragraph is approximately 200 words. How many paragraphs are likely needed in **Task 1**?

Allocating Wordcount

1

How could you allocate word count for Tasks 1, 2, and 3 for a **3000-word** assignment?

If you divide the overall assignment word count by 10, you can calculate how many words per 10 marks to **approximately** aim for!

Task 1 (40 Marks)
1200 words

Task 2 (50 Marks)
1500 words

Task 3 (10 Marks)
300 words

Allocating Wordcount

2

The average academic paragraph is approximately 200 words. How many paragraphs are likely needed in **Task 1**?

6 paragraphs!

Using the Brief to Develop a Plan

Task

Using your chosen technique, generate an **initial plan** for the example assignment task **including headings, sub-headings**, and projected **word counts**.

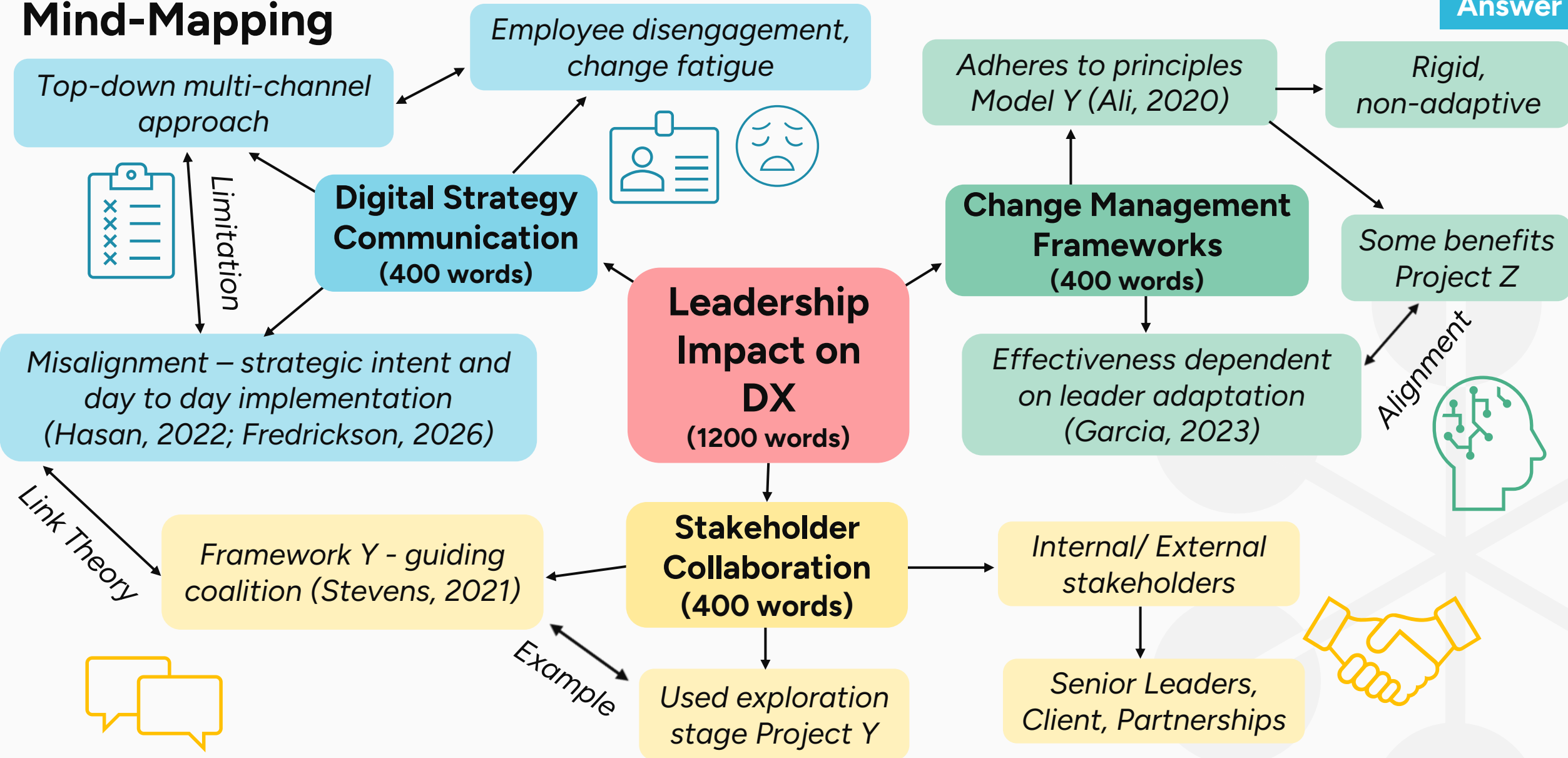
Task 1: Critically evaluate the impact of leadership behaviours on digital transformation in your organisation. You must consider:

- a. How effectively leaders communicate the digital strategy.
- b. The use and impact of change management frameworks.
- c. The extent of collaboration with internal and external stakeholders.

(40 marks)

Total assignment word count: 3000

Mind-Mapping

Answer

Flow Diagram

Answer

1. Leadership Behaviours and Digital Transformation (1200 words)

1.1. Communication of Digital Strategy (400 words)

Change
fatigue



1.2. Change Management (400 words)

Model Y



1.3. Collaboration with Stakeholders (400 words)

- At Organisation X, leaders communicate digital strategy via...
- Limitation: messaging lacks operational clarity – risking misalignment between strategic intent and day-to-day implementation (Hasan, 2022; Fredrickson, 2026).
- In Project Z...
- Caused disengagement and change fatigue (see employee satisfaction questionnaire).

- Leaders at Organisation X employ the principles of Model Y (Ali, 2020) to manage change, but they are applied rigidly not adaptively...
- Although potential benefits of this model include... in Project Z...
- Garcia (2023) argues that its effectiveness depends less on the model itself and more on how leaders adapt it for fast-paced digital environments.

- Strength: despite this, leaders at Organisation X utilised Model Y to proactively establish a 'guiding coalition' (Stevens, 2021) of internal and external stakeholders with relevant knowledge and expertise, including... alongside senior leaders from the exploration stage.
- In Project Z...

Assignment Planning: Top Tips



Approach your plan as a **flexible, working document** – expand and update it as you develop your subject knowledge!



Incorporate key information such as **deadlines** and **projected word counts**.



Combine techniques as required to better organise your thoughts and help to clarify the trajectory of your argument.



Include relevant **academic literature** and specific, meaningful **workplace examples**.



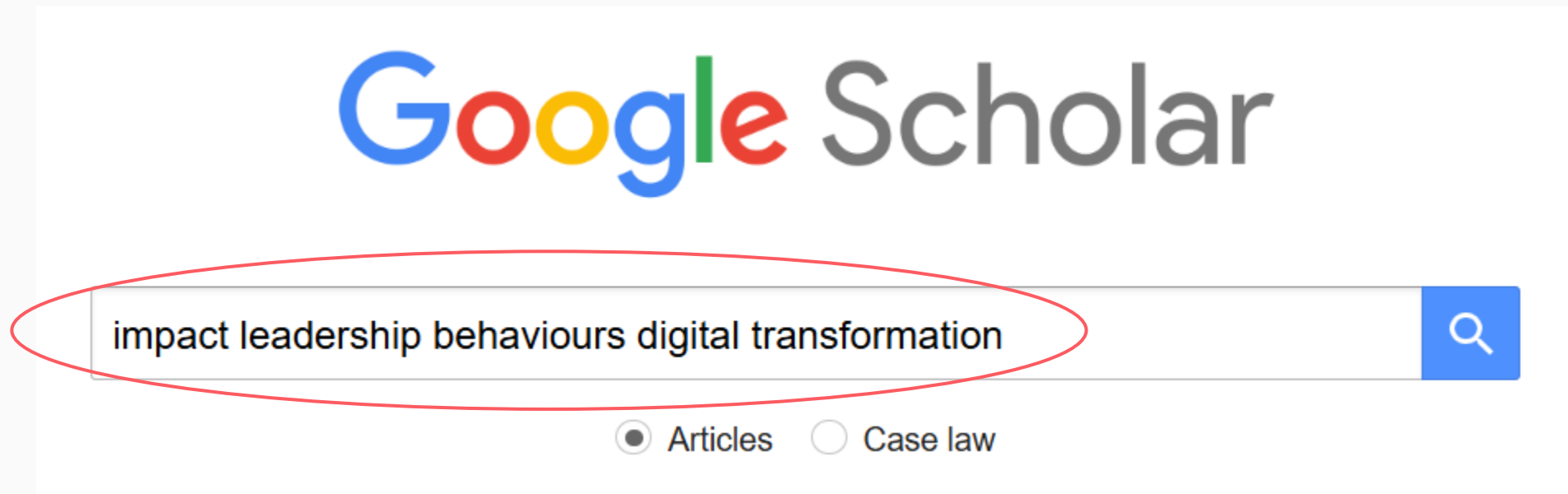
Invest time in your plan, avoiding the temptation to skip this crucial process!



Use your plan to **identify knowledge gaps** and **unresolved questions** to be addressed through further research or by attending module office hours.

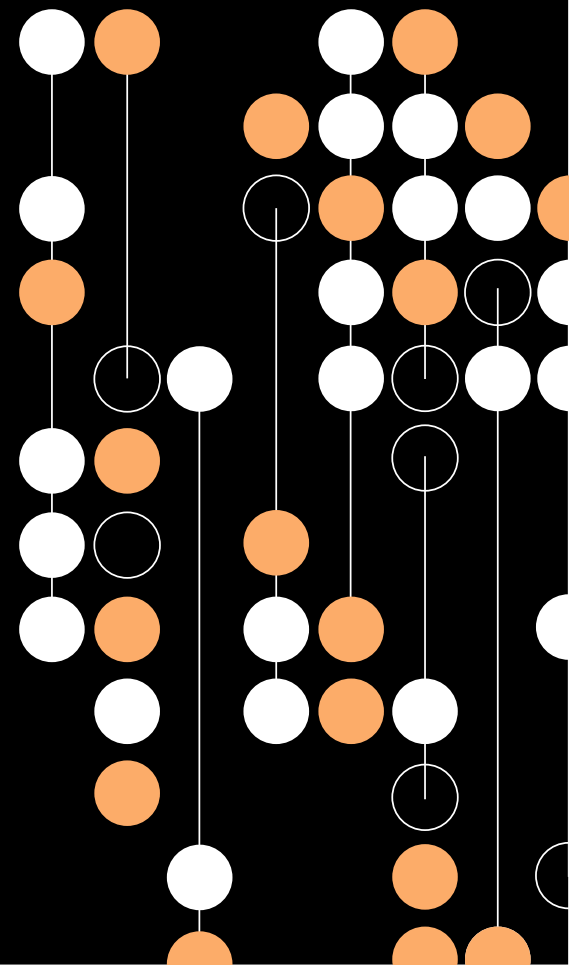
Using Independent Research to Develop your Plan

You can input the subject matter and limiting words into an **academic search engine** such as Google Scholar to locate credible scholarly resources.



For more information, please attend an upcoming Finding and Storing Academic Sources workshop or see the [ACE Quick Guide to Google Scholar](#).

Drafting an Assignment with Timed Generative Writing Exercises



What is Generative Writing?

**Identify a
topic of
focus**



**Set up the
exercise and
your timer**



**Write
continuously
for until the
timer sounds**



**Assess your
work**

Identify a small, manageable topic of focus – select a particular sub-heading or paragraph to work on.

Locate a pen and a blank sheet of paper; title the page with your chosen sub-heading or paragraph and set a timer.

Keep your pen moving for the whole exercise, putting aside the urge to edit or proofread.

Underline points that may warrant further research, expansion, or inclusion in your draft.

Practicing Generative Writing – 2 Minute Exercise

Task

What did you learn in today's induction? How will this learning inform your approach to planning and drafting assignments?

Remember to write continuously for the entire duration of the exercise, avoiding the urge to read over or edit your work!



Practicing Generative Writing – Assess Your Work

Task

Spend the next 2 minutes assessing your work, extracting 1-2 key learning points from your generative writing.



Revising Your First Draft – Top Tips!



Write in **third person**, avoiding the use of personal pronouns such as 'I' or 'we' – unless you are given permission to do so.



Omit colloquialisms and idiomatic phrases such as 'boss' or 'in the pipeline'.



Remove contractions such as 'don't' or 'won't'.



Use **cautious, objective language**, avoiding emotive or dramatic expressions that may signal bias or exaggerate your claims.



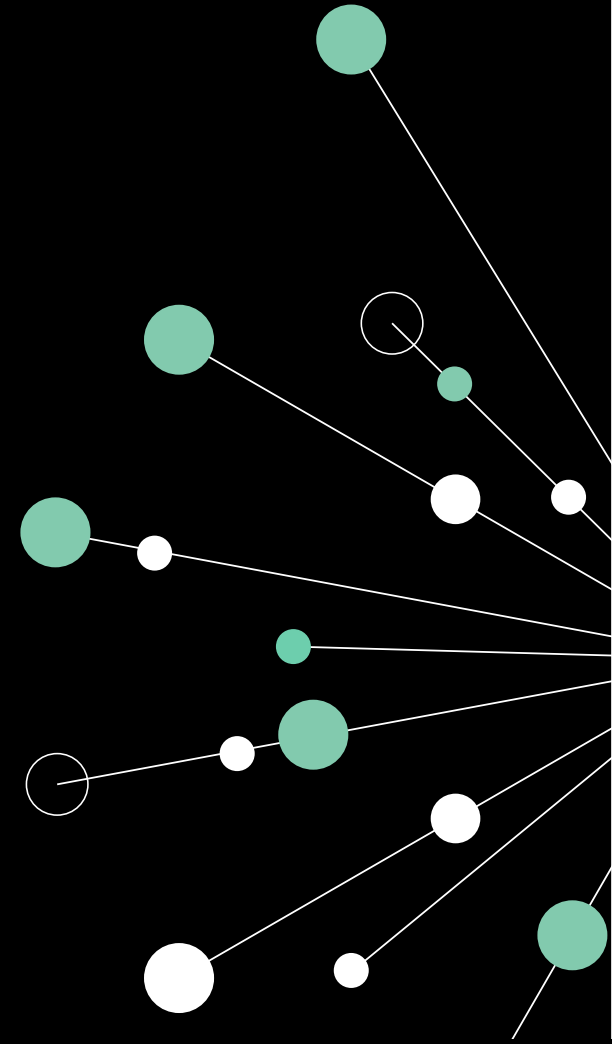
Use **precise, specific terminology**, integrating relevant facts, statistics, and discipline-specific vocabulary.



Accurately **cite sources** using your university partner's official referencing guide!

For further advice and examples, please see the ACE Quick Guides to [Formal Academic Style](#) and [Critical Writing: Building an Argument](#)

Review



Planning and Drafting Assignments - Review



Before conducting independent research, it is a good idea to break down your assignment brief.

Planning and Drafting Assignments - Review



Directive words tell you what topic you should write about.

Planning and Drafting Assignments - Review



You should include academic literature and specific workplace examples in your plan.

Planning and Drafting Assignments - Review



During generative writing, you should stop writing whenever you are unsure of a word or idea.

Onboarding Feedback

Thank you for attending this ACE Workshop.
We would be grateful if you could take 2 minutes to provide **feedback** based on your onboarding experience.

References and Further Reading

References

University of West London (2020) *Writing Critical Paragraphs*. Available at:
<https://www.uwl.ac.uk/current-students/support-students/study-support/writing-critical-paragraphs>
(Accessed: 14 September 2026).

Further Reading

[The ACE Quick Guide to Understanding the Assignment Brief](#)
[The ACE Quick Guide to Assignment Planning](#)
[ACE Planning Template – Flow Diagram](#)
[ACE Planning Template – Linear Planning](#)
[ACE Planning Template – Tabular Planning](#)
[The ACE Quick Guide to Mind Mapping](#)
[The ACE Quick Guide to Google Scholar](#)
[The ACE Quick Guide to Generating Ideas Through Writing](#)
[The ACE Quick Guide to Critical Writing: Building an Argument](#)

Do you require further academic support?

Look on the
ACE Page for
resources

Check out our
upcoming
workshops

Book a 1-2-1
tutorial



Any questions?