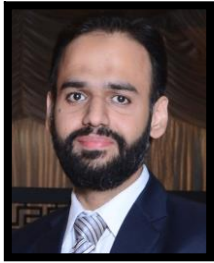


Writing Distinction- Securing Assignments



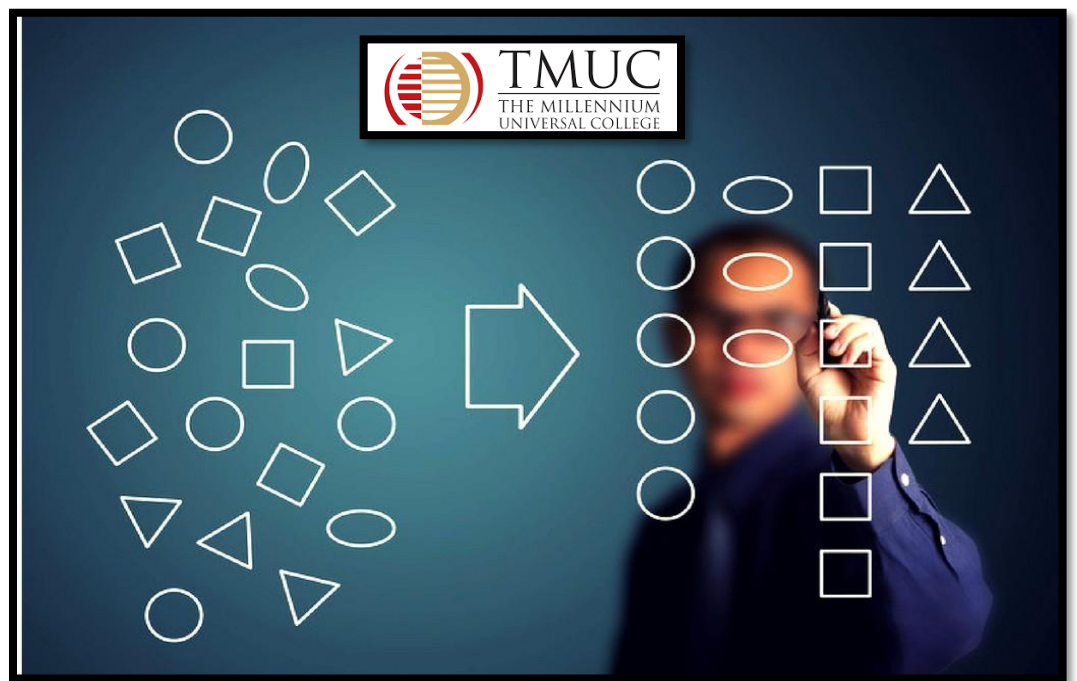
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Assignment or coursework-based qualifications entail that the learners are not required to sit and clear the exams rather they are assessed and graded based on their performance in the assignments. This offers a great opportunity for the learners to acquire academic accomplishments by doing well in their assignments without the hassle of going through examinations.

There are two myths among learners pertaining to exam-free academic qualifications; first one is their perception that it is a cakewalk to obtain these qualifications without exerting themselves academically and intellectually and the second one is the notion that securing top grades is a hugely difficult proposition. Both are not true as the learners have to prove their mettle by performing well in coursework assessments by fulfilling the assessment criteria and meeting stiff deadlines to earn their credentials and secondly if learners are willing to work for it, then getting distinctions and top grades is also not that of a big deal.

Firstly, we must realize that every domain has its own jargon that is to be comprehended well enough before delving deeper into the details. In our case, when we deliberate upon assignment-based assessments especially the Pearson's Higher Nationals Qualifications, we must be cognizant about some of the pertinent concepts like; Units, Assignment Brief, Learning Outcomes, Assessment Criteria, Submission Date, Grades, and Plagiarism etc. Briefly explicating these would help us to better understand and hone our assignment writing skills to ensure superior academic results. Units are simply the courses or subjects taught in HNs and every unit is broken down into various learning outcomes (LOs) which are typically four in number. The LOs are in fact the classification of unit topics into broad categories. Assignments brief is the source document from which the learners are conveyed what needs to be done in their assignments corresponding to the course/unit and another point worth consideration is that the assignment briefs are designed keeping in context of the LOs covered in the specific units during the semester. Assessment criteria is presented in shape of a comprehensive grid/table showing grades along with their respective requirements that must be met by the learners in their assignments in order to obtain these grades. For reference there are three grading options i.e. Pass, Merit and Distinction; so for each of these categories, assessment criteria table mentions the concrete requirements to be fulfilled to acquire the subject grades. Finally submission date is to be honored because late submissions are capped at Pass grade irrespective of the quality of work presented in the assignment. Plagiarism is another key aspect which is the first thing to be ensured for even a Pass grade, let alone the Distinction.

After the elucidation of the fundamentals, let us now ponder further upon the seemingly uphill task of attaining distinctions in assignments by discussing the modus operandi to warrant best results. Let us explore each of the four steps towards the prized distinction grade in detail one by one to understand how we can achieve the coveted Distinctions in our qualification.



1. Understanding the Assignment Brief: As already described that assignment brief is the chief document that guides the learners about what is required from them in terms of extent and quality of work needed to achieve various grades. To begin with learners must understand the **SCENARIO** in the assignment brief. The learners are encouraged to use hands on approach to learn things by doing, so assignment briefs are set in the context of real-world scenarios in which learner is not a student, but he/she has to assume a specific **ROLE** as assigned in the assignment brief to work on in the assignments. For example, if the unit covers accounting topics, then the scenario may ascribe the role of an accountant, or finance analyst to the learner so he/she gets a feel of a professional business executive instead of simply being an academic student. After understanding the scenario and role, we must comprehend that there are certain tasks assigned in the assignment brief. These **TASKS** are designed in relation to the LOs covered in the unit during the semester. Learners must be capable to relate these tasks with the relevant LOs to do well in their assignments. Once all these elements are comprehended, learners must then plan their work not only in the context assignment tasks but also in the perspective of assessment criteria table in order to make sure that they know what is exactly to be done to reach the top step of the grading ladder.

2. Assignment Structure and Outline: As the proverb goes that "a well-defined problem is half solved", the learners must realize the significance of proper planning before they start writing their assignments. After understanding the problem by the learners i.e., what is required of them in the assignments, the next step is to conceive and chalk-out an effective structure for their assignment draft which actually implies that the learners must decode the work into a broad **OUTLINE** to proceed further. One thing that must be kept in mind is that the learners should know that the document they are going to prepare is mostly a sort of a business report and not an answer sheet. This provides the launching pad to craft a viable outline for the draft because answer sheet approach learners would write academic questions and clichéd headings while the report minded learners would follow a more professional layout and design apt captions for their drafts. Therefore, answer sheet mindset is to be avoided while writing the assignments. During the outline designing phase, after planning fundamental requirements, next thing to decide is about **FORMATTING** of the document i.e., what type of write-up is preferable whether paragraphs are appropriate, or pointers would serve the purpose well. Also, pertinent here is to consider what sections and segments are to be designed and what must be the captions and headings and where they must be place for better visibility and clarity for the assessor.

3. Writing Core Contents and Working on the Subsidiary Requirements: The vital point to consider in writing the core contents or body of the assignment draft is to appreciate and build upon the fact that every write-up has three core parts i.e., outline/introduction, body and conclusion. Hence learners must stick to the basics and follow these principles of fine academic writing by being **RELEVANT, SIMPLE AND ERROR-FREE**. The learners instead of using complicated words and knitting longer sentences should write plain and easy words and must expand their write-up based on their outline as discussed in the previous section. After addressing the points already discussed, learners must also consider the **SECONDARY REQUIREMENTS**, if any in their assignment briefs. These are usually subsidiary requirements that are to be taken care of in order to achieve the assessment criteria in the assignment brief. For instance, if the assignment is regarding marketing of a new product launched by any company, the secondary requirements may include some sort of presentation, brochure or animation to promote the new product or in case of some IT or comput-

ing related course/unit, the secondary requirement of assignment may be to provide the programming code etc. Besides ensuring an effective assignment draft, the learners must also make sure that they ensure quality fulfillment of secondary assignment criteria/requirements to guarantee best grades. This is noteworthy that the core requirements are met by almost all learners, so this is crucial to make sure that subsidiary assignment goals are aptly addressed in order to distinguish our work from average performers.

4. Finalizing the Assignment

After writing the main content and details of the assignment draft, the task is to conclude your draft on a high note. This is vital to mention here that this final step actually helps in many facets. From checking and verifying your citations and **REFERENCING** to fine-tuning of your typing **ERRORS** and mistakes, this is the time to reflect upon what you have done by giving a thorough review to your assignment draft. You may also craft a checklist of what needs to be done in terms of securing the distinction and tick all items to ensure you are on the right path to glean the top grades in your assignments. The learners are suggested to be meticulous i.e. having an eye for details to evaluate their work. The approach must be to consider yourself in the shoes of an assessor and endeavor to identify any shortcomings or loopholes in the draft to rectify and aptly address the same before the tutors/assessors do it. Also be certain that you have checked the **SUPPLEMENTARY** material for subsidiary requirements like adding any additional files, documents or information along with the assignment draft. Now that you are all done with everything, get your tutors final feedback and make any modifications or **REVISIONS** as proposed by the tutor. Once you have given the final touches after the tutor's suggestions, make your final submission with full confidence because the distinction is certainly coming your way after all the hard work you have put in.

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Ostracism and Workplace - Why Ignoring Hurts?



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In the highly dynamic, diversified and competitive job environment of today, the effective job performance of employees is essential for the progression and growth of organizations. Effective job performance suggests that employees add to the competitive advantage and aggregate success of the organization and help businesses to achieve their goals with the help of their behaviours and efforts. However, because of the considerable time employees spend with their colleagues in their workplace, the social context has emerged as an essential organizational aspect that significantly impacts the behaviours and job attitudes of employees, thereby influencing employee performance. Social psychologists believe that human beings are social animals and are driven by the desire to interact with and belong to social groups in order to satisfy their psychological needs. With the growing interdependency of job tasks and prevalence of teamwork, socialization among employees has become one of the crucial factors for both individual and corporate performance.

Favorable relationships with colleagues at the workplace are found to positively influence on job satisfaction, organizational commitment and job performance. Nevertheless, the workplace has transformed into a social arena where ostracism takes place, hence posing a negative impact on the interpersonal relationships among employees. Workplace ostracism, which indicates the degree to which an employee feels excluded or ignored by colleagues, has emerged as a crucial area of concern for managers and researchers over the past few years.



According to a study, 66 percent of employees in the US have experienced ignorance and rejection from their colleagues at the workplace. Unfortunately, organizations fail to consider workplace ostracism as a misdemeanor and only acknowledge threats like bullying and harassment in their rules of conduct. Considering the significance of employees for the success of an organization, it is vital for managers to realize the effect of ostracism and exclusion on employees.

Ostracism is a distressing experience and facing the ostracizing behaviours of others trigger the same parts of the brain which are activated while confronting physical pain, causing other physiological reactions as well, such as feeling colder. Even suffering from minor or temporary forms of ostracism, individuals face substantial stages of depression, sadness, and psychological discomfort. Due to its influence, ostracism has been a critical research area for scholars in context to employee performances. One of the primary concerns of researchers regarding ostracism is the damage to the psychological wellbeing of ostracized individuals and their likely response, leading to the realization that workplace ostracism considerably affects the personal outcomes of the victims in the form of decreased self-esteem and elevated stress levels and job-related consequences, such as turnover intention, and in-role performance. Another research stream concentrates on the factors causing workplace ostracism and has revealed that ostracism is caused due to the characteristics of both the environment, including organizational climate and leadership, and the victim, involving individual distinctness and personality.

As an essential stressor in the context of workplace, ostracism not only diminishes the social resources of individuals but also depletes their personal resources like self-respect and self-awareness. However, although workplace ostracism causes the exhaustion of personal resources, nevertheless, individuals' likelihood of suffering from ostracism reduces if they possess compensatory resources for those depleted due to it. Emotional intelligence, which indicates the capability of an individual to recognize his emotions and those of others, and thereby establish favourable relationships with others, can be regarded as a significant personal resource. Therefore, it can be argued that emotional intelligence acts as a counteractive resource in the face of ostracism which allows the minimization of the adverse impact of ostracism on employee outcomes, specifically job performance.

What can be done?

Managers should continually look for distinctive ways of identifying the existence of ostracism at the workplace and undertake efforts to reduce its occurrence. For this purpose, interpersonal and conflict management training sessions can be organized for employees to teach the significance of communication and cooperation within and across different organizational departments. Along the same lines, organizations may also stimulate their employees to socially interact and provide them opportunities like corporate dinners and informal meetings to enhance their chances of socialization and mingling with each other.

Moreover, organizations can design appropriate reward systems for those employees that demonstrate supportive and cooperative behaviours towards their colleagues. Furthermore, while undertaking performance appraisals, managers should look for traits related to knowledge sharing, cooperation, and teamwork to ensure that the employees are meeting the workplace behaviour criteria expected of them.

However, as it is impossible to eliminate workplace ostracism entirely from some organizations, the current study is specifically suitable for such firms. Employees who are aware of their feelings and those of others are in a better state to encounter the demonstration of ostracism by their colleagues. Therefore, emotional intelligence serves as a crucial psychological capability through which organizations can minimize the occurrence of acquiescence silence and decreased job performance of employees in the face of workplace ostracism. Hence, organizations that strive to decrease workplace ostracism should ensure that while conducting the recruitment and hiring process, they should test the prospective candidates for emotional intelligence and hire individuals with elevated levels of the trait, along with reinforcing the EI levels of existing employees with the help of training and mentoring.

Social Connections at TMUC

As goes by the saying, "Teamwork Makes the Dream Work", and at TMUC, the leadership ensures that employees are provided with a productive and healthy environment where they could connect with their colleagues to enhance both their personal and social wellbeing. As a result, the employees are more committed to the organization and contribute their maximum efforts to achieve the holistic goals of the company.

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