**Unit for Academic Counselling and Development**

Centre for Student Counselling and Development, Division of Student Affairs, Stellenbosch University

**Understanding common instruction words:**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Account for** / Verklaar | Give reasons for; explain why something happens. |
| **Analyse** / Analiseer / Ontleed | Break up into parts; investigate. |
| **Assess** / Bepaal of stel vas | Decide the importance of and give reasons for. |
| **Compare** / Vergelyk | Look for similarities or differences between two things. Show the relevance or consequences of these similarities or differences. Perhaps conclude which is preferable. |
| **Contrast** / Stel teenoor | Point out the differences between two items or arguments. Show whether the differences are significant. Perhaps give reasons why one is preferable. |
| **Critically evaluate** / Evalueer krities | 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. |
| **Criticise** / Kritiseer | Requires an answer that points out mistakes or weaknesses and also indicates any favourable aspects of the subject of the question. It requires a balanced answer. |
| **Define** / Definieer | Give the exact meaning of. Where relevant, show you understand how the definition may be problematic. |
| **Describe** / Beskryf | Give the exact meaning of. Where relevant, show you understand how the description may be problematic. |
| **Discuss** / Bespreek | Investigate or examine by argument; sift and debate; give reasons for and against; examine the implications of. |
| **Distinguish between** / Onderskei tussen | Point out the differences between. |
| **Evaluate** / Evalueer | Assess and give your judgement about the merit, importance or usefulness of something. Back your judgement with evidence. |
| **Examine** / Ondersoek | Look closely into something. |
| **Explain** / Verduidelik | Make clear why something happens, or the way it is; interpret and account for; give reasons for. |
| **Explore** / Verken | Look closely into something. |
| **Illustrate** / Illustreer | Make something clear and explicit, giving examples of evidence. |
| **Interpret** / Interpreteer, vertolk | Show the meaning and relevance of data or other material presented. |
| **Justify** / Regverdig | Give evidence that supports an argument or idea; show why a decision or conclusions were made; answer the main objections that might be made. |
| **Narrate** / Vertel | Outline what happened. |
| **Outline** / Uitstippel, beskryf in hooftrekke | Give the main points/features/general principles; show the main structure and interrelations; omit details and examples. |
| **Prove/disprove** / Bewys/Weerlê | Both of these require answers that demonstrate the logical arguments and/or evidence connected with a proposition; prove requires the ‘pro’ points, and disprove requires the ‘contra’ points. |
| **Relate**   1. Verslag doen van/vertel 2. Verband hou met | 1. Narrate 2. Show similarities and connections between. |
| **State** / Noem  **Summarise/outline** / Som op | Give the main features briefly and clearly.  Point out the main points only; omit details and examples. |

Verwysing:

Burns, T. & Sinfield, S. (2012). Essential Study Skills. The complete guide to success at university. (3rd Ed.). SAGE Publications: London.