Step 3

Planning the assignment

Once you have brainstormed your topic and have a list of concepts, issues and keywords, you need to start asking yourself some questions.

Content

- What information needs to be included?
- What are my main arguments going to be?

Context

Why am I writing this assignment? This will help to determine the scope of the assignment, the level to pitch it (this is not a dissertation or a book you are writing) at and its length—quite apart from the word count.

Purpose

- Why am I writing this assignment? Why is it interesting? The answer to these questions can help you in writing your introduction.
- From what angle am I going to examine the topic? Make this explicit in your introduction. You might give a brief overview of your topic and then assert the approach that you will take.

Audience

- Who will read the assignment?
- What do they want to learn?
- Why do they need the information?
- Answering these questions will give you a sound framework in which to develop a useful search strategy

Just to recap them…

- Have I understood my assignment?
- Do I know what my tutor wants?
- Have I refined my topic by using
  - Background reading be it lecture notes, encyclopaedias, recommended reading, newspapers?
• Any of the assignment planning methods mentioned in Step 2?

• Do I know where to find the information?

• In writing my plan have I considered
  o Context
  o Content
  o Purpose
  o Audience