

## Care Purchasing and Brokerage Assignment Template

Please fill in your details here:

<b>Student name:</b>	
<b>Student number:</b> <i>(also enter in header)</i>	
<b>Date assignment due:</b>	
<b>Date submitted on VLE:</b>	
<b>Student word count:</b>	2,281
<b>Important Note:</b>	Your submission, excluding the reference list and appendices, must be between 1,800 and 2,300 words. No tolerance is given. This is a mandatory criterion i.e. your assignment will not be passed if it does not adhere to the word count.

Assessor to complete:

<b>Word count:</b>	State word count and any comments
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### **Instructions to Students**

Write a reflective commentary that describes a placement you have made and how you managed the process. You should show how you applied the best practice you learnt on the course and what the challenges and barriers were.

The assessment criteria are:

- a) Demonstrate knowledge and awareness of the national context for care purchasing and brokerage including relevant statutory duties and regulatory arrangements.
- b) Demonstrate appropriate brokerage and purchasing practice.
- c) Evaluate the effectiveness of the brokerage and purchasing activities undertaken.
- d) Provide a reflective commentary that demonstrates personal development and learning.

The criteria will be assessed using the assessment scheme below. You must submit your assignment by the deadline given. Submit your assignment as a WORD document using the blank pages of this template.

The assignment must be between 1,800 and 2,300 as no tolerance is given. The word count refers to the main body of your assignment and does not include the assignment title or appendices.

**Ensure that you complete the front sheet details above and the statement of originality below.**

**Please include your full name within the filename when you save this template.**

Details of the relevant regulations are in the Student Handbook.

Ensure that you keep both an electronic and a hard copy of your assignment.

## Assignment Statement of Originality

Except for those parts in which it is explicitly stated to the contrary, this work is my own. It has not been previously submitted for assessment at this or any other higher education institution.

### Checklist

Please check the following statements are true. Tick each box (or write YES):

I completed this work without any unauthorised help	YES
I have included a reference list, using the Harvard system of referencing	YES
I have included examples of my work as appendices	YES

### Extract from the [Student Conduct Regulations](#)

Students shall not cheat (obtain, or attempt to obtain, an unfair academic advantage) in any assessment. In particular, they shall not commit collusion, plagiarism, falsification, or duplication, submit other people's work as their own, use a custom writing service or assist others to cheat.

### Explanation of terms used in the Student Conduct Regulations

- *Collusion* means producing assessed work by working with another person who you have not been authorised to work with. This includes, but is not limited to, allowing another student to copy your work.
- *Falsification* means presenting invented data, for example claiming that you have conducted interviews or sent out questionnaires when you have not, or altering or making up your results.
- *Plagiarism* means submitting the work of someone else as if it were your own. When you include someone else's ideas in your assignment, you must provide a reference in the text. If you copy someone else's words (a quotation), you must show clearly in the text how much was copied by using speech marks.
- *Duplication* means submitting work for assessment which has been assessed before, either in this University or elsewhere, without acknowledging the extent of the previous submission.

**Assessment Scheme****Guidance for students/Assessor's Feedback:**

Assessment scheme		Passed	Not passed	Guidance for students	Weighting
a)	Demonstrate knowledge and awareness of the national context for care purchasing and brokerage including relevant statutory duties and regulatory arrangements.			Short introduction to include which team you work in and your role and what it covers. Provide some basic details about the statutory framework and regulatory arrangements within which you work (e.g. SEND, children's, adults) and also some examples of current national challenges for care placement and brokerage officers.	25%
b)	Demonstrate an understanding of appropriate brokerage and purchasing practice.			Provide a commentary on <i>key</i> activities that <i>you</i> have carried out when making a placement(s) with reference to best practice, e.g. managing the referral; procuring the placement; contract management and monitoring.  Include evidence of your work in appendices.	25%
c)	Evaluate the effectiveness of the brokerage and purchasing activities undertaken.			Evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of the placement activities you carried out. What went well, less well and why? Have there been implications for care purchasing and brokerage practice in your service and/or organisation? What changes might still be needed? You may find it helpful to revisit your 'organisational self assessment' from session 1.	25%
d)	Provide a reflective commentary that demonstrates personal development and learning.			Reflect on what you have learned <i>personally</i> from the placement activities you have described and learning from the course. What else might you need to do to improve your practice in the future.	25%

**Assessor's comments:**

Summarise the strengths and possible improvements of the submission, including any suggested action such as proof read more carefully.

Clearly state which assessment criteria have been met and the provisional grade awarded.

Assessed by		Date	
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**The marking and moderation process**

Your work will be assessed in accordance with the university's regulations that seek to ensure fairness, accuracy and clarity of feedback. In judging the quality of your work, assessors follow the assessment criteria outlined above. They also follow IPC's [Marking and Moderation](#) policy and abide by the University's assessment regulations. When your work is submitted it will go through the following process:

1. It will be initially assessed and given a provisional grade by a member of the IPC assessment team.
2. It may then be subject to moderation i.e. an internal examiner will mark it and, in discussion with the first assessor, confirm the provisional grade. A sample of assessments are moderated by an internal examiner.
3. We strive to give you feedback within three weeks. You will receive this feedback via the Virtual Learning Environment (Moodle).
4. Once a provisional grade has been agreed upon it will be finalised at the next Examination Committee meeting.
5. Your work may also be selected to be in the sample sent to our External Examiner – an academic from another university – who comments on the fairness, quality and consistency of the internal assessment of our programmes as a whole.

If you are concerned about your feedback, arrange to speak to your Academic Adviser to help you better understand the reasons for the assessment judgement and our feedback. If you think that there was a flaw in the assessment process, you can submit an Academic Appeal. More information about the appeals process can be found at [Student Disputes](#). However, please be advised that the University does not "re-mark" work and you cannot request an appeal on the grounds that you disagree with the academic judgement of the Examination Committee.

## Assignment Title Page

Write a reflective commentary that describes a placement you have made and how you managed the process. You should show how you applied the best practice you learnt on the course and what the challenges and barriers were.

### Introduction

I work as a Placement Officer within a Placements Team (Children's Services). I take the lead in identifying placements for care leavers and unaccompanied asylum seeking young people. My main duty is to identify "*the most appropriate placement available*" in accordance with The Children's Act 1989<sup>1</sup> Section 22C(7)

Identifying placements for this client group means most of the placements I procure are unregulated, categorised by The Children Act 1989 as *other arrangements*<sup>2</sup>. This includes but is not limited to semi independent provisions, Hostel and supported lodgings.

I also monitor unregulated placements which is imperative as these placements are not subject to the same inspection and monitoring process as fostering and children's homes<sup>3</sup>. I am of the view that unregulated provisions should in deed be regulated. A view also shared by Independent Children's Homes Association<sup>4</sup> members "*A large majority (92%) of ICHA members support proposals for additional regulation of the currently unregulated semi-independence and supported living sector*"<sup>5</sup>

The increased use of unregulated placements is a direct result of shortage of fostering and residential placements – which is a challenge faced nationally for local authorities<sup>6</sup>. The use of unregulated placements is the focus of a recent report by the Children's Commissioner for England<sup>7</sup> The report highlights concerns that such placements have *limited support, and is not regulated by the quality inspectorate*<sup>8</sup>. To address this issue and to ensure the safety of vulnerable children and young people, we procure placements accredited by the Commissioning Alliance and procured via the Dynamic Purchasing Vehicle (DPV)<sup>9</sup> known as Careplace.

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<sup>1</sup> Legislation.gov.uk, The Children Act 1989, *Duties of local authorities in relation to children looked after by them*, viewed 20 June 2021, <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1989/41/section/22C>

<sup>2</sup> Legislation.gov.uk, The Children Act 1989, Section 22C(6)(d) subject to section 22D, placement in accordance with other arrangements which comply with any regulations made for the purposes of this section viewed 18 June 2021, <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1989/41/section/22C>

<sup>3</sup> These placements are governed, monitored and inspected by regulatory bodies such as Ofsted or CQC

<sup>4</sup> Acronym ICHA

<sup>5</sup> Independent Children's Home Association, (2021). *State of the Sector Survey* [online] p. 35 [Viewed 1 July 2021] <https://www.icha.org.uk/Public/News/ViewNews/12>

<sup>6</sup> Pressures on children's social care 2019, Department for Education, National Audit Office, viewed 1 June 2021 <https://www.nao.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/Pressures-on-Childrens-Social-Care.pdf>

<sup>7</sup> Longfield, A. (2020) Children's Commissioner website *Unregulated – Children in Care Living in Semi independent accommodation*, <https://www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/report/unregulated/> viewed 29 June 2021, <https://www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/cco-unregulated-children-in-care-living-in-semi-independent-accommodation.pdf>

<sup>8</sup> Longfield, A. (2020) Children's Commissioner website *Unregulated – Children in Care Living in Semi independent accommodation*, <https://www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/report/unregulated/> Page 3, viewed 29 June 2021, <https://www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/cco-unregulated-children-in-care-living-in-semi-independent-accommodation.pdf>

<sup>9</sup> Procurement arrangement via Commissioning Alliance. Referrals are made to providers outside of this arrangements if we are unable to identify a suitable placement within the preferred placement process i.e.

Careplace is the online portal I use to procure placements: The young person's profile is sent to providers who then submit an offer on the portal. This is very useful tool as the providers within the DPV have already been vetted by the Commissioning Alliance meaning any risks associated with using unregulated provision is reduced: The Commissioning Alliance has a set of minimum standards for unregulated provisions and undertake contract monitoring function.

My role as placement officer is not limited to just procuring placements. I contribute to all four elements of the commissioning cycle<sup>10</sup> from quality assuring referrals (ensuring young people's profiles have a clear assessment of their needs), negotiating placement costs (reducing placement fees and maintaining low costs), reviewing placements and contract management (arrange monitoring meetings focussed on assessment against outcomes).

### Managing the referral

I previously dealt with a placement search for a young person with complex needs – K who was due to be released from prison into the community.

The <sup>11</sup>referral received for K from his social worker provided negative information and no analysis or assessment of K's needs. I sent the referral back to the social worker asking for it to be revised<sup>12</sup> so it included balanced, positive information about K including K's wishes and feelings<sup>13</sup>

I felt comfortable and confident enough to challenge social worker about the information presented in the referral knowing the challenges I would face to identify an appropriately matched placement if the referral was sent out in its original form. This challenge improved the social worker's practice in how the referral information was completed. The referral was revised by the social worker as I had requested to a satisfactory standard.

### Procuring the placement

In order to determine the suitability of each placement offered for K via Careplace, I considered a number of factors<sup>14</sup> such as location of placement<sup>15</sup>: I had to determine if the placement location was deemed appropriate as stipulated by social worker within the referral information. In this particular case social worker advised that that location to be considered was x, not just limited to for example x in order to increase the likelihood of identifying a suitable placement for him.

I provided the social work team with an option of suitable placements offers for K. As this was a planned placement move and the risks associated with the K's release from prison were significant, I suggested that a placement selection meeting should be held to discuss placement

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spot purchase arrangement will be made

<sup>10</sup> Plan, Do, Review, Analyse. The Institute of Public Care Commissioning Cycle (2021);

<sup>11</sup> Young person's profile document

<sup>12</sup> Appendix 1

<sup>13</sup> In line with corporate parenting principles "*to encourage those children and young people to express their views, wishes and feelings • to take into account the views, wishes and feelings of those children and young people*" 2.1 DfE Applying corporate parenting principles to looked-after children and care leavers Statutory guidance for local authorities February 2018. Section 2 What are the Corporate Parenting Principles

<sup>14</sup> Other factors considered – placement cost, provider's experiences, staff qualifications, staffing levels

<sup>15</sup> Considering location when searching for appropriately matched placements is in line with The Children's Act 1989 section 22(7) *that placement should be within the local authority's area but that the local authority only need to comply with ss(9) if it is reasonably practical to do so* Source: Legislation.gov.uk, The Children Act 1989, *Duties of local authorities in relation to children looked after by them*, viewed 20 June 2021, <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1989/41/section/22C>

options. The purpose of the meeting was to establish which placement would be best suited to meet the needs of K.

I was present at the meeting along with my team manager. Social work team attended to oversee the meeting and represent the young person's wishes, feelings and ensure placement identified was able to meet his needs. Youth Offending Team attended to risk assess any potential placement and ensure potential placement was able to help reduce the risk of K re-offending. Each attendees' contribution was vital in determining which placement would help K in achieving the best outcomes.

At the placement selection meeting, we went through details of each placement offer. Some details discussed included location, matching alongside other young people in the placement, provider's experience's in supporting young people with similar presenting needs as K, cost, staffing levels, therapeutic services offered, education provisions local to placement. We were able to determine out of the placements offered which placement was best suited to meet K's needs.

I found the Placement Options meeting very useful in determining K's placement needs and it useful for me as I was clear on social work team's expectations of placement. Moving forward I would like to recommend placement options meetings are held prior to a placement decision being made. This enables us to set clear boundaries and expectations before placement is made. I acknowledge that this is not always possible due to the often urgent nature of placement requests.

Following on from the placement options meeting, once a provider was chosen I then continued with the procurement process which included requesting a number of documents<sup>16</sup> and evidence<sup>17</sup> from the provider. This step within the procurement process was vital due to the placement being unregulated,<sup>18</sup> to ensure that the placement was appropriate and in line with The Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (England) Regulations 2010 Schedule 6<sup>19</sup>

### Contract management and monitoring

Once all requested documents had been received from the provider, contract was put in place by sending K's Individual Placement Agreement (IPA) contract form to provider for completion. Part of the contract asks for *expected outcomes of the placement*, in this section I entered "refer to individual placement agreement meeting" as I do with all other placements (normal practice in our Placements Team). It was felt that the social work team were in a better position to complete this information as it is specific to the young person's needs.

Moving forward a more efficient way of dealing with this area is to review placement and contract after a specified period of time and revise according to content of placement agreement meeting so when reviewing the placement in the future, goals, outcomes and expectations of both the provider and the local authority is clear: This responsibility should also be shared with placement officers,

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<sup>16</sup> Appendix 2 – Semi independent placements

<sup>17</sup> Appendix 10\_Document request to provider

<sup>18</sup> Semi independent provision

<sup>19</sup> The Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (England) Regulations 2010 Schedule 6 - Matters to be Considered Before Placing C in Accommodation in an Unregulated Setting Under Section 22C(6)(d) 1 In respect of the accommodation, the— (a) facilities and services provided, (b) state of repair, (c) safety, (d) location, (e) support, (f) tenancy status, and (g) the financial commitments involved for C and their affordability



not just social workers.

The IPA contract was also used to within the payment management process. As an incentive for the provider to complete and return the contract I advised the provider that purchase order required for payment of services will not be released without the returned, completed and signed IPA. This method has proved to be 100% successful and is a good example of how I have implemented an outcome based approach within the contract management process.

Whilst contract management process is shared with the Commissioning Alliance<sup>20</sup> there are a number of placements that have been procured outside of this arrangement.<sup>21</sup>

For example we have a blocked book arrangement with a local provision that accommodates unaccompanied asylum seeking young people. I organise quarterly monitoring meetings with the provider and representatives from x Children's Services<sup>22</sup>.

The monitoring meeting takes an outcome-based framework approach to determine if placement is fulfilling their contractual obligations. This approach is useful in determining and measuring how well a young person is doing in placement and if positive outcomes are being achieved. An example of this is when discussing how each young person manages their finances; are they receipt of Housing benefit? If so do they pay their rent on time or are they in arrears? If young person is in arrears this is addressed by holding a 1:1 meeting with social worker and young person and agreeing a way forward including a written plan / agreement. Another solution discussed is to encourage young person to enrol and undertake for instance MyBNK training<sup>23</sup>. The impact of addressing this measurable outcome means the young person is better equipped to deal with managing their finances and assisting with their independent living skills resulting in positive outcomes for the young person. Young people are given an opportunity to provide feedback via their social work team.

For spot purchase providers I undertake annual monitoring visits to the provider the aim of which is to determine that the needs of the young people placed is being met and also to ensure contract compliance. I have undertaken contract monitoring visits in the past when dealing with independent fostering agency placements<sup>24</sup>

Once K was placed at the identified provider, I instigated a review of placement by sending social worker an electronic task online requiring the case to be present to Access to Resources panel for review of placement. Issues discussed at the placement review includes whether or not five outcomes<sup>25</sup> is being achieved, progress, placement cost, education. I do not attend the panels

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<sup>20</sup> Contract management of placements procured via Dynamic Purchasing Vehicle

<sup>21</sup> spot purchase and block booking arrangements

<sup>22</sup> Attendees – Placement officer, Access to Resources team manager, Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking and Leaving Care Team Manager, Manager of the specialist placement

<sup>23</sup> UK Charity that *create and deliver innovative, high impact and high energy programmes covering topics such as saving, budgeting, debt and public and student finance* for children and young people aged 5 to 25. Source: My Bank (2021) <https://www.mybnk.org/info/> [online] viewed 1 July 2021

<sup>24</sup> Appendix 3

<sup>25</sup> Five Outcomes: Being healthy; Staying Safe; Enjoying and Achieving; Making a Positive Contribution; Economic Wellbeing. Source: Department for Education and Skills (2003), *Every Child Matters* p.12 [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/272064/5860.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/272064/5860.pdf)

however the Placement Team manager attends. Tasks arise as a result of the panel that require me to take action, for example requests to reduce placement cost<sup>26</sup>

### Negotiating placement cost and package

As the semi independent market is saturated, negotiating with unregulated providers is not usually challenging due to large range of choice available to us. However, I found negotiating with the provider identified for K initially quite challenging. Provider initially refused to reduce the placement cost. However, I managed to negotiate a reduced fee with the provider. As part of my negotiations skill I highlighted to the provider how much the local authority are paying for the placement every month and that what we usually pay on average for similar placements was significantly less than what the provider was charging us: Presenting the local authority's large financial contribution to the placement in this way assisted in successfully negotiating a fee reduction as the provider was then able to put into context the hundreds of pounds we were paying for placement each month. I have used this method of negotiating successfully<sup>27</sup> a number of times.

Negotiating is an important step within the procurement process, to reduce overall spend on placements: I am often asked to negotiate and reduce placement costs by senior management due to finance pressures faced by Children's Services. This is a challenge for local authorities nationally and is emphasised in a report from The National Audit Office Pressures on Children's Social Care<sup>28</sup>

### Provide a reflective commentary that demonstrates personal development and learning.

I felt that the quality assurance step implemented at the referral stage when searching for a placement for K went well. His social worker was able to act on the recommendations of revising the profile. The placement selection meeting held was also successful. Both steps of the process contributed in identifying placement for K that was able to meet his needs.

Unfortunately, holding placement selection meetings is not always an option due to the urgency of many placement requests; many of which are required same day as making the placement request but this will be recommended were appropriate and practical.

Change that I will make in the future; More collaborative working with social work team starting from referral stage. I feel it will be advantageous to meet with social work team to discuss referral information, anticipate queries that providers may raise and ensure profile is as clear, balanced and informative as possible whilst also giving a pen picture of the young person.

Initially on participating in the course I believed that an area of development for me was the reviewing and monitoring of contracts and placements. My belief was that I was not heavily involved in this area of commissioning and that the responsibility to feedback, review and to advise if placements were not compliant in their contractual obligations in meeting the young person's needs was the responsibility of the social work team.

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<sup>26</sup> Appendix 4\_Contract review\_Cost negotiation

<sup>27</sup> Appendix 5\_Negotiated cost reduction

<sup>28</sup> Pressures on children's social care 2019, Department for Education, National Audit Office, viewed 1 June 2021 <https://www.nao.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/Pressures-on-Childrens-Social-Care.pdf>

On reflection I realise that this view is in fact incorrect. I *do* monitor and review placements / contracts on a regular basis<sup>29</sup>. Recently a social worker advised me that she had serious concerns about the safety and wellbeing of her young people due to incidents of anti-social behaviours at a placement. I recommended that a professionals meeting should be held to discuss a way forward and identify solutions to the issues raised<sup>30</sup>. Other ways I have addressed similar issues include telephone conversation, email exchange with provider, review of outcomes / expectation set at the placement agreement meeting, <sup>31</sup>referral to panel or escalating issue to senior management. All methods have been successful in developing a corrective action plan. In the example used above when social worker raised concerns about anti-social behaviours in a placement, a virtual meeting was held and all parties agreed outcomes to address the concerns raised<sup>32</sup>

Moving forward, I will be more proactive in contract management, review and performance of placement providers not just waiting to act when an issue occurs or the annual monitoring visit is due. A recommendation could be to build in as standard ongoing review of placement / contract process when young people are placed. For example, review placement at the one month mark then quarterly to address issues before they become concerns. Part of the review process will include actively reviewing assessment against agreed measured outcomes.

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<sup>29</sup> Appendix 7\_Placement review post 18

<sup>30</sup> Appendix 6\_Review placement following concerns

<sup>31</sup> Appendix 8\_Review - referral to panel










<sup>32</sup> Appendix 9\_Meeting outcome\_Action plan

**Reference List**

- Department for Education (2018) *Applying corporate parenting principles to looked-after children and care leavers*, Statutory guidance for local authorities.
- The Children Act 1989, Legislation.gov.uk
- Department for Education, National Audit Office (2019) *Pressures on children's social care*
- The Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (England) Regulations 2010
- Anne Longfield (2020) *Unregulated – Children in Care Living in Semi independent accommodation* <https://www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/cco-unregulated-children-in-care-living-in-semi-independent-accommodation.pdf>
- Independent Children's Home Association, *State of the Sector Survey* [online] <https://www.icha.org.uk/Public/News/ViewNews/12>
- Department for Education and Skills (2003) *Every Child Matters* [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/272064/5860.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/272064/5860.pdf)
- The Institute of Public Care Commissioning Cycle (2021) [provided April 2021 as part of IPC Commissioning Course]

## **Appendices**

*Insert supporting evidence as appendices here, they are not included in the word count. **You will only be able to upload one file to the assignment drop box in the VLE (Moodle).** Therefore **EITHER** copy and paste appendices here **OR** embed the file(s) here (recommended).*

Appendix 1_Profile feedback to SW	 Appendix%201_Profi le%20feedback%20t
Appendix 2_Semi-independent placements checklist	 Appendix%202_Sem i-independent%20pl
Appendix 3_Monitoring Form (Independent Fostering Agency)	
Appendix 4_Contract review_Cost negotiation	 Appendix%204_Con tract%20review_Cost
Appendix 5_Negotiated cost reduction	 Appendix%205_Neg otiated%20cost%20r
Appendix 6_Review placement following concerns	 Appendix%206_Revi ew%20placement%2
Appendix 7_Placement review post 18	 Appendix%207_Plac ement%20review%2l
Appendix 8_Review - referral to panel	 Appendix%208_Revi ew%20-%20referral%
Appendix 9_Meeting outcome_Action plan	 Appendix%209_Mee ting%20outcome_Aci
Appendix 10_Document request to provider	 Appendix%2010_Do cument%20request%

*Please note the Institute of Public Care's [Confidentiality Policy](#): do not submit as appendices material that includes confidential information, such as the names of people who use services.*

*Click on the icon below for instructions on how to embed a file:*



How to embed a file  
in a Word document -

*Note that you must include evidence of your work as an appendix.*