Example assessment & marking criteria

Briefing paper

# Briefing paper example

This assessment task description and marking criteria and standards have been developed using the steps outlined on this site. To see how this evolved from a previous marking rubric, see the video on the example rubrics page.

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| **Assessment type:** | **Briefing paper** |
| **Subject:** | **BIO327 Wildlife Ecology and Management**  In a world of increasing human impact, effective wildlife management is crucial for the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity. In this subject, students build on their existing ecological knowledge to learn ecological principles specifically relating to wildlife and how these principles underpin wildlife management strategies. A strong emphasis is placed on factors such as nutrition, competition and predation in a management context. The population dynamics of wildlife, sustainable harvesting and survey techniques are discussed in detail and learnt in the field through a residential school or field trip. The application of adaptive management principles to wildlife management is emphasised throughout. The subject contains a total estimated workload of 310 hours. |
| **Subject learning outcomes:** | Be able to :   * apply appropriate scientific methods to the study of wildlife ecology and the development of management strategies; * relate the evolution of Australian wildlife to contemporary ecology and management; * identify the most important ecological principles that relate to wildlife and how these must be considered in applying management; * explain the dynamics of several Australian wildlife populations and the factors affecting their distribution and abundance; * describe the importance of habitat management to wildlife; * explain the theoretical and practical aspects of wildlife control and sustainable use; * apply the most appropriate wildlife survey techniques for a given taxon under certain conditions, and understand the advantages and disadvantages of the available techniques; * demonstrate knowledge of the theoretical and practical aspects of threatened species management; and * apply adaptive management principles to wildlife management problems. |
| **Assessment task:** | Assessment task 1: briefing paper |
| **Value & length:** | 20%, 2000 words not including references |
| **Task description:** | You are to prepare a briefing paper on the management status of a native or introduced wildlife species in Australia. This could be a threatened species, a problem (e.g. overabundant) native species, or an introduced pest. Make sure you pick a species for which there is enough information for you to complete each component of the assignment.  A briefing paper provides a summary of facts about a particular issue, and typically includes a suggested course of action. Briefing papers may be prepared for ministers, executives, or chairs of boards, and as such, should be written in easily understood language. There are a number of sections to the briefing paper. Use the information provided to guide you in developing the paper. The briefing should have the following headings: Issue, Background, Current Position, Recommendations.  **Issue**  Provide a single sentence statement of the management issue you have identified for your chosen species (i.e. the topic of this briefing paper).  **Background**  In this assignment, you will provide background knowledge on the ecology of the species, and details of its threats (for threatened species) or problems it is causing (for pest species). You will be expected to use and cite references from scientific journals as well as other sources in this section (even though briefing notes do not typically contain references). You should include at least the following information on the ecology of the species: distribution, habitat, diet, competition, and predation. Use relevant subheadings to organise your background information.  **Current Position**  In this section, you will include current status and management of the species. Has the species been formally listed on state or national threatened species legislation? What management plans, recovery plans, or threat abatement plans are in place for the species? What progress has been made with respect to the implementation of these plans? Is there any evidence that the species’ status (e.g. population size or distribution) has changed since its listing?  **Recommendations**  Based on what you know about the ecology of the species, its status, and current management approach, what recommendations would you make to either ensure its ongoing persistence (for threatened species), or control its numbers and impacts (for pest species)? Should the species’ status be revised? What are the priorities for management? What research is needed to improve our knowledge of this species? Provide a list of no more than ten recommendations in point form.  **References**  Make sure you use the correct procedures for citing references in the text, and use a consistent approach to listing sources in the reference list at the end of this briefing paper. Marks will be allocated based on the breadth and appropriateness of references, as well as the correct citation procedures. |
| **Rationale**: | The purpose of this assignment is for you to relate the theory and information presented in Modules 1-3 and the textbook to a specific case study to demonstrate your understanding of important ecological concepts, and research and management strategies.  This assignment is designed to assess following learning objectives for this subject:   * identify the most important ecological principles that relate to wildlife and how these must be considered in applying management; * explain the dynamics of several Australian wildlife populations and the factors affecting their distribution and abundance; * describe the importance of habitat management to wildlife; * demonstrate knowledge of the theoretical and practical aspects of threatened species management. |

## Marking criteria & standards of performance

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| Criteria | High Distinction | Distinction | Credit | Pass | Fail |
| Background account of the species that identifies and explains its ecology and the factors affecting its distribution and abundance.  (40%) | A high distinction is awarded for a background account that provides a comprehensive explanation of the ecology of the species.  The description typically has the following properties:   * It makes highly sophisticated connections between the various environmental/ ecological factors and the species so as to build a rigorous platform for the current position and subsequent recommendations. * The account is extensively supported with references from the current refereed empirical literature. There is minimal use of secondary sources. * The literature is synthesized to identify any themes and disparities. Where possible conclusions are drawn in contested areas or where there are differences in the literature. * Overall, the account is highly sophisticated and yet accessible for a non-scientific audience. | A distinction is awarded for a background account that provides a highly detailed explanation of the ecology of the species.  The description typically has the following properties:   * It makes comprehensive connections between the various environmental/ecological factors so as to build a thorough platform for the current position and recommendations * The predominance of sources included in the account are from the current refereed empirical literature. There is some use of secondary sources. * Themes and perspectives in the literature are identified and summarized, creating a complete and accessible picture for a non-scientific audience. * Overall, the account is comprehensive but could be more sophisticated and/or accessible for a non-scientific audience. | A credit is awarded for a background account that provides a thorough account of the ecology of the species.  The description typically has the following properties:   * It makes some connections are made between the various environmental/ecological factors to create a defensible platform for the current position and recommendations. * The account is supported with a mix of primary and secondary sources. * Some identification of themes and perspectives although it lacks deeper insight and clarity. * Overall the account provides a mix of descriptive and analytic information for a non-scientific audience | A pass is awarded for a background account that provides an adequate account (for each area) of the ecology of the species.  The description typically has the following properties:   * the various environmental/ecological factors largely discrete (limited integration) and/or parts may be missing. * It covers the bases in support of the current position and recommendations although limits the scope and depth of those components. * The account may be largely supported by a predominance of secondary sources with some examples from the empirical refereed literature. * Overall the account presents a descriptive picture for a non-technical audience | A fail is awarded for an account that is cursory and/or may be incomplete  The description typically has the following properties:   * it fails to build an adequate platform (and/or demonstrate the logic) for the current condition and recommendations. * The base of support may be limited and/or lack an empirical base * Overall the account inadequate for a sophisticated non-technical audience. |
| The Current Position describes the management approach and status of the species.  (30%) | A high distinction is awarded for a description of the current position that typically has:   * provides a clear comprehensive picture of the status and management of the species. * Sophisticated connections are made between the background account and the listings and plans. The dots are joined and big ideas amplified with support. * All changes in status are identified and supported and any inconsistencies in the plans and listings are explained and substantiated. * The current position leverages from the background account and sets up a rigorously supported set of recommendations | A distinction is awarded for a current position that typically has:   * a clear and complete picture of the status and management of the species. * Complete connections are made between the background account and the listings and plans. The dots are joined with support. * Changes in status are identified and supported with literature and any inconsistencies in the plans and listings are explained. * The current position reflects the background account and sets up a well-supported set of recommendations. | A credit is awarded for a current position that typically has:   * a thorough picture of the status of the species. * Limited or abstract connections are made between the background account and the listings and plans. Changes in status are generally identified and may include the identification of inconsistencies in the plans and listings. * Those inconsistencies are identified and explained but they may be brief or unclear. * The current position reflects the background account and sets up a defensible set of recommendations. | A pass is awarded to a current position that typically has:   * an adequate picture of the status of the species. * some references to the background account is in places when describing the listings and plans and/or some changes in status are identified and this may include inconsistencies in the plans and listings. * Those inconsistencies are identified although not explained. * The current position reflects the descriptive nature of the background account and sets up an adequate basis for a set of recommendations. | A fail is awarded to a current position that is incomplete and reflects the weakness in the background account. The change in status and inconsistencies are inadequately accounted for creating a weak term of reference for the recommendations. |
| Recommendations integrate knowledge of the theoretical and practical aspects of management of the species.  (20%) | A high distinction is awarded for recommendations that are:   * specific, attainable actionable and prioritized * connected strongly and logically from the platform provided in the current position and the picture provided about the status and management of the species * justifiable, and insight based on overall evidence provided | A distinction is awarded for recommendations that are:   * generally specific, actionable and prioritized * connected strongly to the platform provided in the current position and the picture provided about the status and management of the species * justifiable based on the evidence provided | A Credit is awarded for recommendations that typically are:   * specific and actionable * well connected to the platform provided in the current position and to the picture provided about the status and management of the species | A pass is awarded for recommendations that typically are:   * generally specific but may be open to questions about interpretation or prioritization * build from the information provided in the current position and the picture provided about the status and management of the species | A fail is awarded to recommendations that are vague, lack logic and/or are not justified.. |
| Quality of writing and referencing using APA6  (10%) | The writing is highly engaging and attractive, clear, concise and generally free of APA and typographical errors. The writing attracts the reader to the unit and its approach. | The writing is engaging, interesting, clear and concise with minimal APA and typographical errors. The writing evokes reader interest in the unit and approach. | The writing is competent, clear and concise with limited APA and typographical errors. It effectively communicates the features of the unit. | The writing is sound. It adequately communicates the features of the unit with some APA and typographical errors. The writing represents the basic content of the unit clearly. | The writing is poor and unclear with frequent errors of grammar and APA style. |

## Original marking criteria & standards of performance

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|  | Fail (0-49%) | Pass (50-64%) | Credit (65%-74%) | Distinction (75%-84%) | High Distinction (85%+) |
| Knowledge Content (30%) | Student did not understand the topic. Student used their own knowledge rather than basing his/her arguments on scientific literature. | Student demonstrated a basic understanding of the topic, but did not appear to grasp its complexity. Student provided some relevant factual knowledge and/or evidence (i.e. by citing only a few peer reviewed articles), but paper lacked a consistent content quality. | Student demonstrated an average understanding of the topic. Student understood and integrated 6 or more peer-reviewed scientific articles in his/her paper, which included some sections that were particularly good. | Student demonstrated a good understanding of the topic, by providing appropriate coverage of both scientific and management knowledge. Student reviewed the literature (i.e. understood and integrated 10 or more peer-reviewed published articles) to discuss the topic in its full complexity. | Student demonstrated an excellent understanding of the topic, by providing a comprehensive coverage of both scientific and management knowledge. Student thoroughly reviewed the literature (i.e. understood and integrated 15 or more peer-reviewed published articles) to discuss the topic in its full complexity. |
| Critical Evaluation (30%) | The student did not evaluate the literature and provided no new insights into the topic. Student made conclusions and recommendations not based on findings. | The student attempted to evaluate the literature, but has provided few insights into the topic. Student made some conclusions and recommendations, but they were mostly repetitive of previous information. | The student has evaluated the literature, and provided appropriate insights into the topic. Student has made recommendations that are mostly sound, but some may not be supported. | The student has evaluated the literature thoroughly, and provided appropriate insights into the topic. Student has made appropriate conclusions and recommendations. | The student has clearly evaluated the literature, and provided excellent insights into the topic.  Student has made succinct and thoughtful conclusions and recommendations. |
| Organisation / Format (15%) | Student did not follow the basic assignment structure. Arguments and evidence were presented randomly without any apparent logic (i.e. the reader could not follow the student’s line of thought). Paragraph and format standards not applied. | Student followed the basic assignment structure, but arguments and evidence were not always presented in a logical sequence. The paper had inconsistent formatting. | Student followed the basic assignment structure. The flow of the paper was smooth and logical. The paper includes section headings, logical and correct placement of arguments within paragraphs and sections. The paper had few errors of format. | Student followed the basic assignment structure. The paper included section headings, logical and correct placement of arguments within paragraphs and sections. Format standards were consistently applied in the paper. | Student followed the basic assignment structure. The flow of the paper was logical, allowing the reader to follow easily and anticipate the line of thought and arguments. Format standards were consistently applied in the paper. |
| Style / Grammar (15%) | The students’ writing had major deficiencies in expression, spelling, and grammar. | The students’ writing was sometimes convoluted, making it hard to know what was being expressed. Misspelled words, incorrect grammar, and improper punctuation were evident. | The students’ writing was mostly clear, but may have had the occasional weak expression. Meaning was sometimes hidden. The writing was mostly free from spelling, grammar, and punctuation errors. | The student’s writing was generally clear, but unnecessary words were occasionally used. Few spelling, grammar, or punctuation errors were made. | The students’ writing was consistently clear and excellent. The writing was free from spelling mistakes, jargon or stilted expression. |
| References (10%) | There were major deficiencies in citing of scientific references in the text and in the reference list. | Citing of scientific references in the text and in the reference list may not be correct. References cited were not always appropriate, and presentation may include formatting and typographical errors. | Citing of scientific references in the text and in the reference list may not be correct. References cited were appropriate, but not comprehensive. Formatting was not consistent, and with some errors. | Citing of scientific references in the text and in the reference list was done to high CSU standard. References cited were appropriate, but some key references may be missing. Formatting was mostly consistent, and free of errors. | Citing of scientific references in the text and in the reference list was done to high CSU standard. References cited were comprehensive and appropriate. Formatting was consistent, and free of errors. |