Making your voice clear in academic writing.

Rationale

Lecturers often tell students that they do not want to know their opinion. But when the student hands a piece of work in, the lecturers say things such as: you haven't answered the question, you've only summarised facts, what are you trying to say? etc. We need to make a distinction between a student's uniformed, unsubstantiated opinion and the conclusions that they themselves have come to from their reading and research, what we can call their voice. This must be made clear in their writing.

Aim

The aim of this exercise is to help students to distinguish between their reports of their own findings, the work of others and their own conclusions.

Context

Text 1

> **6BUS0348 Managing Accounting Information coursework**
>
> Using the accounts for Marks and Spencer plc and other information researched by you, write a report recommending whether or not to invest in Marks and Spencer plc.
>
> Your report should be 1600 words (excluding appendices and executive summary), with a maximum of 2000 words. It should include the following:
>
> - Analysis of Marks and Spencer plc, including calculation of ratios (in an appendix, showing workings), detailed analysis of the company's business, and a recommendation whether or not to invest. You should show an awareness of the information needs of an investor and consideration of limitations which relate to the particular information in this case.
> - The report should be presented in a style suitable for a report (including an executive summary, introduction, clear sections and a conclusion and recommendation section).

Exercise 1

1. What do you need to do? What do you need to include? Where will you get your information from?

2. Compare findings in groups and feedback.

Exercise 1: Suggested Answer

You will need to:

1. Read M & S annual report.
2. Using the information give, work out the various ratios and include them in an appendix.
3. Read your textbook, lecture notes and other sources to make sure you understand the meanings and relevance of these ratios.
4. Read your textbook, lecture notes and other material to make sure you understand the needs of a potential investor.
5. Think about the limitations of the data you have - read.
6. Analyse & evaluate your data.
7. Make a recommendation.

Information will come from: M&S annual report; own calculations; reading from textbooks and other sources, lecture notes; own conclusions.

Example 1

Text 2

Liquidity summary

Liquidity ratios include current ratio and Acid test ratio. Those ratios reflect the health of the cash position of the business and its ability to meet its short-term obligations (Davies and Boczko, 2005).

	2009	2010
Current ratio	0.6 times	0.8 times
Acid test ratio	0.4 times	0.5 times

The current ratio in 2009 was 0.6 and this increased to 0.8 in 2010. The acid test ratio was 0.4 in 2009 and this rose to 0.5 in 2010.

Exercise 2

1. Evaluate this part of the answer according to criteria in Exercise 1.

2. Compare findings in groups and feedback.

Example 2

Text 3

Liquidity

Liquidity is the ability of a company to cover its liabilities comfortably. This can be measured by two main liquidity ratios: the current ratio and the acid test ratio. Both ratios give unique content of capital flow over time (Gowthorpe, 2003).

Table 1.3 below shows a summary of the comparison of Marks and Spencer's liquidity ratios for the Marks and Spencer's annual report for the years ended 28 March 2009 and 3rd April 2010.

Liquidity summary		
	2009	2010
Current ratio	0.6 times	0.8 times
Acid test ratio	0.4 times	0.5 times

Table 1.3 (see appendix A for calculations)

According to table 1.3, there was a low current ratio of 0.6 and 0.8 for the 2009 and 2010 respectively. This shows an increase of 0.2 in 2010 relative to 2009. The current ratio is very important in that it calculates how many times current assets are more than current liabilities in a company and an ideal benchmark for current ratios is usually 2 times (Beaumont, 2010). However, as Atrill & McLaney (2008) point out, in the case of Marks and Spencers being a retail company because it is not necessary to hold on to inventories of finished goods a low current ratio is expected. The table also show the acid test ratio for Marks and Spencer which has a similar objective with the current ratio but inventory is deducted from current assets because it might take long to turn into cash (Beaumont, 2010, Atrill and Mc Laney, 2008). The table shows a low acid ratio of 0.4 and 0.5 for 2009 and 2010 respectively with an insignificant increase of 0.1 in 2010.This shows Marks and Spencer do not have enough current assets to cover their current liabilities, the reason being that has a retailer they cannot hold on to inventory because it would be converted to sales which can however be used to pay their current liabilities.

Exercise 3

1. Evaluate this part of the answer according to criteria in Exercise 1

2. Compare findings in groups and feedback.

Exercise 4

1. Read example 2 again. Identify the different ideas in the text.

2. Compare findings in groups and feedback.

Text 4

e.g.

- Liquidity is the ability of a company to cover its liabilities comfortably.
- This can be measured by two main liquidity ratios: the current ratio and the acid test ratio.
- Both ratios give unique content of capital flow over time element in determining the level of job satisfaction, regardless of job type
- A summary of the comparison of Marks and Spencer's liquidity ratios for the Marks and Spencer's annual report for the years ended 28 March 2009 and 3rd April 2010.
- There was a low current ratio of 0.6 and 0.8 for the 2009 and 2010 respectively.
- An increase of 0.2 in 2010 relative to 2009.
- The current ratio is very important in that it calculates how many times current assets are more than current liabilities in a company .
- An ideal benchmark for current ratios is usually 2 times.
- In the case of Marks and Spencer being a retail company because it is not necessary to hold on to inventories of finished goods a low current ratio is expected.
- The acid test ratio for Marks and Spencer has a similar objective with the current ratio.
- Inventory is deducted from current assets because it might take long to turn into cash.
- There was a low acid ratio of 0.4 and 0.5 for 2009 and 2010 respectively with an insignificant increase of 0.1 in 2010.
- Marks and Spencer do not have enough current assets to cover their current liabilities.
- As a retailer they cannot hold on to inventory because it would be converted to sales which can however be used to pay their current liabilities.

3. Identify where the ideas come from.

4. Compare findings in groups and feedback.

Text 5

e.g.

- Liquidity is the ability of a company to cover its liabilities comfortably. (Author)
- This can be measured by two main liquidity ratios: the current ratio and the acid test ratio. (Gowthorpe ?)
- Both ratios give unique content of capital flow over time element in determining the level of job satisfaction, regardless of job type. (Gowthorpe)
- A summary of the comparison of Marks and Spencer's liquidity ratios for the Marks and Spencer's annual report for the years ended 28 March 2009 and 3rd April 2010. (Table 1.3)
- Table 1.3. (From appendix A, which is taken from M&S annual report)
- There was a low current ratio of 0.6 and 0.8 for the 2009 and 2010 respectively. (Table 1.3)
- An increase of 0.2 in 2010 relative to 2009. (Author)
- The current ratio is very important in that it calculates how many times current assets are more than current liabilities in a company (Author)
- An ideal benchmark for current ratios is usually 2 times. (Beaumont)
- In the case of Marks and Spencers being a retail company because it is not necessary to hold on to inventories of finished goods a low current ratio is expected. (Atrill & McLaney)
- The acid test ratio for Marks and Spencer has a similar objective with the current ratio. (Table 1.3)
- Inventory is deducted from current assets because it might take long to turn into cash. (Beaumont)
- There was a low acid ratio of 0.4 and 0.5 for 2009 and 2010 respectively with an insignificant increase of 0.1 in 2010. (Table 1.3)
- Marks and Spencer do not have enough current assets to cover their current liabilities. (Author)
- As a retailer they cannot hold on to inventory because it would be converted to sales which can however be used to pay their current liabilities. (Author)

5. Note how the different voices are made clear.

Text 6

Liquidity

According to Gowthorpe (2003), liquidity is the ability of a company to cover its liabilities comfortably. This can be measured by two main liquidity ratios: the current ratio and the acid test ratio. Both ratios give unique content of capital flow over time.

A summary of the comparison of Marks and Spencer's liquidity ratios for the Marks and Spencer's annual report for the years ended 28 March 2009 and 3rd April 2010 is shown in Table 1.3 below.

Table 1.3: Liquidity summary (Calculations shown in Appendix A)

	2009	2010
Current ratio	0.6 times	0.8 times
Acid test ratio	0.4 times	0.5 times

Table 1.3 shows that there was a low current ratio of 0.6 and 0.8 for the 2009 and 2010 respectively. This shows an increase of 0.2 in 2010 relative to 2009. The current ratio is very important in that it calculates how many times current assets are more than current liabilities in a company and according to Beaumont (2010), an ideal benchmark for current ratios is usually 2 times. However, in the case of Marks and Spencers being a retail company because it is not necessary to hold on to inventories of finished goods a low current ratio is expected (Atrill & McLaney, 2008). It can also be seen from the table that the acid test ratio for Marks and Spencer has a similar objective with the current ratio but inventory is deducted from current assets because it might take long to turn into cash (Beaumont, 2010, Atrill and Mc Laney, 2008). The table shows a low acid ratio of 0.4 and 0.5 for 2009 and 2010 respectively with an insignificant increase of 0.1 in 2010. This shows Marks and Spencer do not have enough current assets to cover their current liabilities, the reason being that has a retailer they cannot hold on to inventory because it would be converted to sales which can however be used to pay their current liabilities.

6. Look at other ways it could be done.

Text 7

Liquidity

Liquidity is the ability of a company to cover its liabilities comfortably. This can be measured by two main liquidity ratios: the current ratio and the acid test ratio. Both ratios give unique content of capital flow over time (Gowthorpe, 2003).

Table 1.3 below shows a summary of the comparison of Marks and Spencer's liquidity ratios for the Marks and Spencer's annual report for the years ended 28 March 2009 and 3rd April 2010.

Liquidity summary		
	2009	2010
Current ratio	0.6 times	0.8 times
Acid test ratio	0.4 times	0.5 times

Table 1.3 (see appendix A for calculations)

According to table 1.3, there was a low current ratio of 0.6 and 0.8 for the 2009 and 2010 respectively. This shows an increase of 0.2 in 2010 relative to 2009. The current ratio is very important in that it calculates how many times current assets are more than current liabilities in a company and an ideal benchmark for current ratios is usually 2 times (Beaumont, 2010). However, as Atrill & McLaney (2008) point out, in the case of Marks and Spencers being a retail company because it is not necessary to hold on to inventories of finished goods a low current ratio is expected. The table also shows the acid test ratio for Marks and Spencer, which has a similar objective with the current ratio but according to Beaumont (2010) and Atrill & McLaney (2008) inventory is deducted from current assets because it might take long to turn into cash. A low acid ratio of 0.4 and 0.5 for 2009 and 2010 respectively with an insignificant increase of 0.1 in 2010 can also be seen from Table 1.3. This shows Marks and Spencer do not have enough current assets to cover their current liabilities, the reason being that has a retailer they cannot hold on to inventory because it would be converted to sales which can however be used to pay their current liabilities.

7. Finally, take away everything except the writer's voice and show what is left.

Text 8

Liquidity

Liquidity is the ability of a company to cover its liabilities comfortably.

The current ratio shows an increase of 0.2 in 2010 relative to 2009. The current ratio is very important in that it calculates how many times current assets are more than current liabilities in a company.

The low acid ratio shows Marks and Spencer do not have enough current assets to cover their current liabilities, the reason being that has a retailer they cannot hold on to inventory because it would be converted to sales which can however be used to pay their current liabilities.

8. The basic structure of the argument is still there, but there is a lack of detail.