Dear new student,

Throughout your university study you will need to show through your written assignments your understanding of concepts, knowledge of facts and ability to think critically. This is ‘academic writing’ and it is different from creative writing in the same way that spoken English is different from written English. To be able to do well at uni, you need to be able to read and write fluently and competently—at the equivalent of year 12 or senior college level. Ideally, you should have read widely because we enlarge our vocabulary and develop our writing style through our reading. Cartoons and newspapers will usually have simpler language than most of your first-year texts, so it is best that you also read books—fact or fiction—that use sophisticated and complex language.

Before going further, let’s test your understanding of academic language.

Take five minutes to do the test over the page and then come back here.

How did you go?

I answered all questions correctly and:

- I have just left school, did well at year 12 English, I have written lots of essays and I read a lot
- I am not a recent school leaver but my job/hobbies/voluntary work involves extensive or regular reading, writing, problem solving and information analysis

We say: Congratulations!—you have solid foundations for tackling assignments at uni. However, because academic writing is different from writing at school we strongly recommend you take UniStart, our academic induction short-course that runs before the start of semester (http://www.utas.edu.au/unistart/). All students should take this course. It runs for three days, is free and gives you an introduction (and head start!) to understanding and using academic writing conventions at uni.

I answered most questions correctly and I am a recent Year 12 school leaver/have worked for some years/ am returning to study after a long break

We say: We strongly advise you to take UniStart before the start of semester. It is likely that you will need to spend some extra time on developing your academic reading and writing during your first year. We recommend you familiarise yourself with Student Learning which provides assistance (http://www.utas.edu.au/student-learning) in developing these skills. It will be important to plan your semester well so you have plenty of time to do written assignments. Your Student Adviser (see http://www.utas.edu.au/first-year/student-advisers) can assist you to do this and give you some preliminary guidance on assignment planning.

I had some correct answers but found the text/this flyer a bit difficult to understand

We say: UniStart is a must! We also strongly recommend you speak to your Student Adviser before the start of semester so that she/he can help you plan your studies and help you to develop your time management and assignment planning skills. She/he will also help you to link in with the various Student Learning services that will assist you as you progress through your studies in your first semester.

PS Can you touch-type? If not, it will be good for you to learn because you will need to submit typed or electronic assignments—for free help see e.g., www.typingclub.com/typing-qwerty-en/keys-jf.html or http://www.sense-lang.org/typing/.
Test your understanding of uni-level text!
(Note: this also includes a test of your understanding of a simple graph)

Read the following and answer the questions:

During the 20th century, degenerative diseases such as heart disease, stroke and cancer replaced infectious and parasitic diseases as the main cause of death of older people. Not only had infection control measures improved in medical facilities, but public awareness of the value of preventative actions such as hand washing had grown. Increases in life expectancy at all ages in the second half of the 20th century have been attributed to improving social conditions and advances in medical technology such as mass immunisation and antibiotics.

Q1: Which of the following best describes the topic of the paragraph above?
   a) Life expectancy in the 20th century
   b) The increase in degenerative diseases as compared to infectious diseases as the main cause of death during the 20th century
   c) Causes of life expectancy
   d) Changes in life expectancy during the 20th and what has caused them

Q2: Parasitic and infectious diseases replaced degenerative diseases as the main cause of death in older people during the 20th century. (True/False?)

Q3: ‘Degenerative’ in the context of this paragraph means:
   a) Socially unacceptable
   b) Slowly decaying
   c) Life-style related
   d) Infectious

Q4: Mass immunisation was the one of the main contributors to increased life expectancy in the latter half of the 20th century. (True/False?)

Q5: Reading the graph, which of the following is true for 2009?
   a) Men on average outlive women by 5 years
   b) Men on average outlive women by 10 years
   c) Women on average outlive men by 5 years
   d) Women on average outlive men by 10 years

Answers: d), F, b), F, c)