11 Adjective and noun combinations

This unit focuses on a number of adjective + noun combinations which are particularly frequent in academic contexts.

A Adjectives suggesting importance

adjective	*comment*	*some of the nouns it frequently goes with*
important	**significant** can convey the same meaning and both adjectives often go with these nouns	aspect, contribution, difference, implications, point, question, reason, element
significant	can also mean large in size and as such goes with these nouns	increase, reduction, number, proportion
major	the opposite, **minor**, also often goes with these nouns	role, changes, problem, factor, issue, concern, difference, theme, contribution, point
enormous/ considerable	**enormous** can mean very large or very important; **considerable** means large or of noticeable importance (i.e. slightly less strong than enormous)	amount, expansion, number, range, diversity, difference, variation, extent, degree, impact, power, influence, significance, interest
particular	means special	interest, attention, significance, importance, concern

Note that a feature of academic writing is that it often uses an adjective + noun phrase to suggest importance of some kind instead of just using an adjective, e.g. *Marx's contribution is of particular significance* instead of *Marx's contribution is very significant*.

B Adjectives suggesting frequency

Widespread means that something happens in many places or among many people. It often combines with such nouns as *belief, acceptance, support, opposition, assumption, use*. For example, *There is **widespread support** for government policy in urban areas.*

Common can mean frequent. With this meaning it often combines with such nouns as *experience, practice, use, concern*. For example, *It is increasingly **common practice** for UK teenagers to take a gap year before entering university.*
Note that *common* can also mean 'shared' and as such it combines with *knowledge, ground, feature, interest*. For example, *There is much **common ground** between the two writers.*

Specific means relating to one thing and not to things in general. It often combines with *context, information, case, type, form, purpose, characteristics, conditions, example*. For example, *The reaction occurs only under **specific conditions**.*

C Other useful adjective and noun combinations

Inevitable is often used with words relating to results or changes such as *consequence, outcome, collapse, decline, conflict, effect, developments*. [unavoidable]

Explicit combines with words relating to how things are presented, e.g. *reference, statement, comparison, account, mention*. [clear and exact, communicated directly]

Relevant combines with words relating to evidence of different types, e.g. *data, documents, information, details, factors*. [connected with what is being discussed]

Exercises

11.1 Look at these statements about some academics. Complete each sentence with an appropriate adjective or noun. There may be more than one answer.

1 Davison did a considerable ..... of research into earthquake prediction.
2 Rawlinson drew ..... attention to the problem of energy consumption.
3 Werner's work had an enormous ..... on the way we design bridges today.
4 A ..... proportion of Thomaz's work was devoted to international law. Three of her five books were on the subject.
5 Prestyn made only a ..... contribution to modern psychology, but it was an interesting one, nonetheless.
6 Baklov's work has some extremely ..... implications for our work today.

11.2 Rewrite the sentences using adjectives from the opposite page instead of the words in bold.

1 There is opposition among students **in many places** to the idea of longer semesters.
2 The destruction of the riverbank will cause a decline **which is bound to happen** in the numbers of small mammals.
3 School standards are a concern **which occurs frequently** among parents nowadays.
4 Nowhere in the article does the author make mention **in a direct, clear and exact way** of the 20 cases which were never resolved.
5 There is very little ground **which is shared** between the two ways of addressing the problem.
6 The paper is too general and lacks examples **which relate only to individual things**.

11.3 Make sure you know the noun forms of these adjectives. Write them in the table. Use a dictionary if necessary.

adjective	*noun*	*adjective*	*noun*
significant		important	
relevant		valuable	
interesting		useful	
frequent		broad	

11.4 The sentences below came from lectures. Adapt them for use in an academic article by replacing the phrases in bold. In each case use an adjective from the box combined with a noun from 11.3 to make a phrase like *of great interest.*

huge	high	enormous	great	considerable

1 Johnson's work is very **relevant** for any student of medical engineering.
2 The research will be **very valuable** to anyone interested in economic planning.
3 It was an event **which was terribly important** in the history of Latin American politics.
4 Partich's book is an **extremely broad** work.
5 Sorlan's book was a **very significant** work in the development of political theory.
6 This software will be **quite useful** in the analysis of large amounts of numerical data.
7 The method she outlines is **very interesting** to anyone investigating sleeplessness.
8 'You know' is an expression which is **very frequent** in informal spoken English.