



Pre session polls

What level of study are you?

- Access
- Level 1
- Level 2
- Level 3
- Postgraduate

What would you consider is your main area of study?

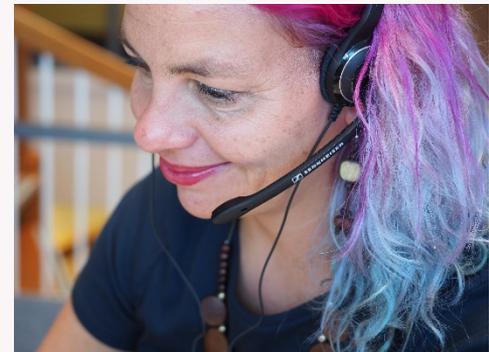
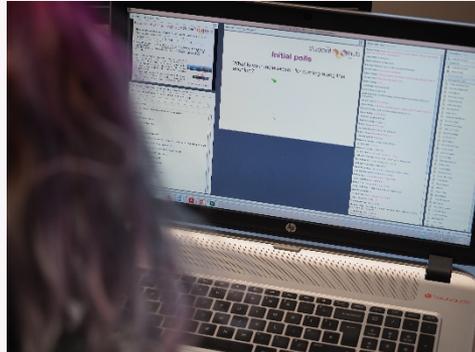
- Arts
- Languages (English & other)
- Social sciences
- Business and law
- Science
- Engineering or technology
- Maths
- Health sciences
- Education
- Sports
- OTHER

Have you been to any student hub live online events before?

- No (I'm brand new!)
- No (but have listened to one or more recordings)
- No (didn't have time)
- No (wasn't aware of before now)
- Yes any 19J (Oct-Dec 19)
- Yes earlier 2019 (Jan-Aug 19)
- Yes previous year (any 2018 or before)

What are student hub live online sessions?

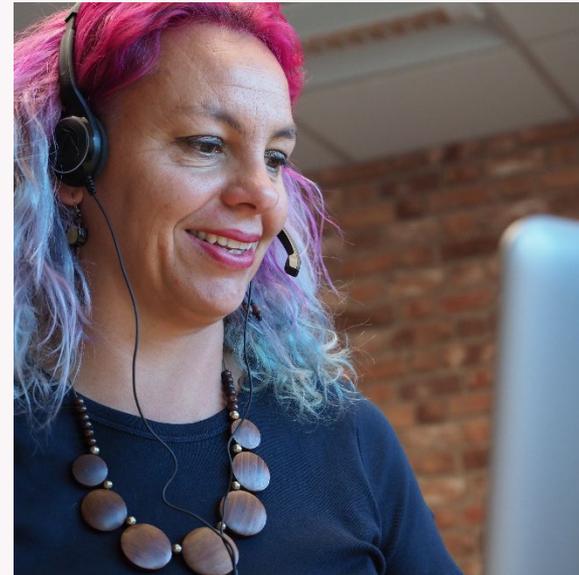
- All student hub live sessions are non modular and focus on skills relevant to study at university level
- Polls are anonymous to other participants but the chat box will have your logged in name associated with your comments
- All online sessions are recorded and available to view on catch up on a public facing website. *Small group discussions are not recorded.*
- Slides are available at the end of the session and from the main website



student hub live is the OU's live online interactive platform to support academic community



Karen Foley is a lecturer at the OU, head of student hub live and chairs Y032. She also tutors in social sciences, psychology and science.



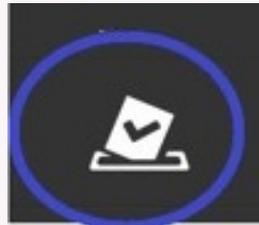
Isabella Henman is an essay writing aficionado and skills trainer. She tutors in science and health sciences at Access to level 2.



Initial polls

What is your main reason for coming along to this session?

(If you are on a mobile device remember you need to tap into the polling option)



To come back to these slides after completing a poll click on the share pod slides icon





Critical thinking and writing – going beneath the surface

This was our advert...

Critical thinking is a key skill in higher education and involves evaluating and weighing up information as well as considering how well it explains a concept or is fit for purpose – and then writing about this. The benefits of developing your critical thinking and writing skills include being able to show *why* you have included something and demonstrating a good level of understanding.

We'll explain some of the things that tutors look for which evidence this, as well as some of the indicators that this is not being done.

Workshop

- This is going to be a structured workshop to help you getting thinking critically.
- We're going to start of with an example of everyday critical thinking
- Then we'll give some tutor advice
- You'll get the chance to discuss with others in a small group

Session purpose

- **Is for:**
- Covering general advice about critical thinking as a concept
- Give some guidance about how to look at different sides and provide evidence
- Provide a space to share ideas and connect with other students
- **Is not for:**
- Telling you what you HAVE to do
- Providing any module specific advice

Activity 1

- You have £20 to spend on your best friend's birthday.
- You need to think about what affects how you will spend this money.
- Please use the short answer poll available to suggest points that are relevant to how you spend the money.
- Remember to scroll to see other answers and see what others think

Mindmap!



Drawing these together

- What is the purpose?
- What is relevant to meet the purpose?
- What is not relevant to that purpose?

Critical analysis

- This is a higher level skill that gains more marks than anything else.
- It means looking at the information and evaluating it and considering whether it allows you to answer the question fully.
- It is a questioning process – **who said what?**
Does what they say have value? **Did they miss something out?** **Has someone else said something that completely disagrees with them?** **Have I read something that disagrees with them?**

Critical analysis hints

- It isn't about ripping something to shreds
- It **is** about evidencing your assertions
- If you ascribe to one person's theory as presented what is it about it that is convincing? Have you looked at what might not be right about it? is there anything missing?
- Is the view / evidence important because of the amount of people that agree or something else?

Critical evaluation – when and where

Difference between being descriptive and critical. A description or observation could be that a study had a small population or was carried out on rats. Fair enough but so what? Why does that really matter?



Description

- This is saying what something is
- It gives facts and details overall

Evaluation

- This says **why** something is, or **how**
- So rather than saying this is a great bar of dark chocolate (*which gives an idea / opinion but there is no analysis of that*)
- Better is this is a great bar of dark chocolate which has a smooth taste and makes me happy
- There is some analysis there along with a reason why
- You don't have to necessarily add lots of words as in this example, it is the how and why

Critical writing

- Objective
- Third person
- Not opinionated
- Weighing up against other point

Evaluation within a paragraph

The highest levels of critical evaluation will take information and present it in a way that shows the evaluation within the paragraph. So not just presenting and describing but showing *why* it is important.

Look again

The highest levels of critical evaluation will take information and present it in a way that shows the evaluation within the paragraph. So not just presenting and describing but showing *why* it is important.

This paragraph actually tried to demonstrate that evaluation – I explained how and why in the process of giving the information.

I could have just left it at the first paragraph which said what is but not why it is

Everyone clear on that? 😊 😞

Evaluation between paragraphs

The essay is a coherent overall piece of information. As well as using information within the paragraph on a topic, each separate paragraph needs to link together and support that topic. All work together for the main aim. There is no 'name dropping' or shoe horning in of information, everything is relevant and clearly so.

Paragraphs are separate but cannot be disconnected.

Putting it into practice

- With our favourite topic!
- We'll show 2 different ways of approaching a similar set of information. Read carefully and try to make some notes on what the key differences are (we'll have a poll for that after the 2nd example)



2 examples..

1. The history of the use of chocolate in religious ceremonies is very interesting as priests used the chocolate drink as part of their ceremonies. Furthermore the drink was brought over to Europe in the 1600s and special *chocolatl* houses were set up where only the rich people could drink the drink it.

2. Chocolate has been used within religious ceremonies both as a reward and a means of conveying favour upon the recipient. Through the perception of the cocoa bean as a luxury item the association with privilege enhances the idea that religion and its objects are special. This idea is further supported by the history of the *chocolatl* shops in Europe where the expensive drink was restricted to those able to pay and emphasised the importance of these people within society.

What's the difference?

- Using the short answer polling pod available suggest what the main differences between the 2 examples were (in terms of style and purpose rather than absolute number of words)

Our ideas

- 1. was a bit more opinionated and general – it was more descriptive as it said what was but didn't give evidence.
- 2. did give evaluation and evidence
- The language of 2. was more formal and academic style

What's the difference?

- Critical analysis looks at why and how and questions the information for its value.
- Not just *what* it is but *why* and *how* it is
- Remember it is not just about describing or listing pieces of factual information. It is evaluating them and showing how they are important and relating them to each other and the overall topic.

What are tutors looking for?

- A clear indication you know what is important and have been able to link this to the overall context and purpose of the piece of writing.
- If you are using evidence you have selected appropriate aspects of it e.g. not just namedropped, and have referenced correctly and fully.
- Convincing writing that shows that you know what you are talking about and haven't just stumbled across a bit of information that you are regurgitating

Structure ideas

- PEE
 - Point – make it
 - Evidence – support it with facts
 - Explain – why the evidence is supportive and it is relevant

Or

- PESELS
 - Point - make the point for this paragraph
 - Explain - what do you mean by this point
 - Support - provide evidence from studies and research
 - Evaluate - what is there about this point that is for/against
 - Link - to the essay task
 - Signpost - to the next paragraph

Indicators that critical thinking isn't there

- Close paraphrasing of the content
- Description rather than evaluation
- Personal opinion
- Too little information e.g. just a citation after a brief assertion “the history of chocolate relates to religion (Henman, 2019)” ermm how does it? Can the reader be expected to understand based on the information that is actually included



Information polls

What level of study are you?

- Access
- Level 1
- Level 2
- Level 3
- Postgraduate

Are you currently...? (please choose the one that is closest)

- Brand new to OU study (2020 start)
- New in 2019
- Have done at least one previous OU module (in last few years)
- Have done at least one previous OU module (many years ago)

Have you been to any student hub live online events before?

- No (I'm brand new!)
- No (but have listened to one or more recordings)
- No (didn't have time)
- No (wasn't aware of before now)
- Yes any 19J (Oct-Dec 19)
- Yes earlier 2019 (Jan-Aug 19)
- Yes previous year (any 2018 or before)



Discussion activity

- Now that you have some ideas and suggestions about critical thinking what do you think will be the greatest challenge to you implementing this in your writing?
- Please bring back a few points that you can share with the rest of the group
- We can then try and discuss some of the common points
- You do not have to speak on mic if you don't want to but please do interact with your group using the chat option

Useful points for breakouts

- We suggest you use the first couple of minutes to introduce yourselves and get used to the room. Choose a volunteer to keep the discussion on track and feed back to the main room
- Remember to activate your microphone to speak as per the instructions given.
- Breakout groups work best if people engage and contribute and discuss
- There will be ~10 minutes for the breakouts overall – we'll send regular reminders to let you know how long you have got left



*Remember to check the number of the room you are in (shows at top of chat pod as “chat x **BREAKOUT** y”) in case of connection issues and for bringing back information.*



Breakout activity

- Now that you have some ideas and suggestions about critical thinking what do you think will be the greatest challenge to you implementing this in your writing?
- Please bring back a few points that you can share with the rest of the group.
- We can then try and discuss some of the common points
- You do not have to speak on mic if you don't want to but please do interact with your group using the chat option

This session is currently in breakouts (small groups).

**If you are part of this group and have had
connection issues please let us know your room
number in the chat box**

**If you are only just arriving in this room
then unfortunately you have missed
the main session. Please log back out
and watch the recording which will be
available later today**

So....

- What can people share from their sessions?

Take home message

- Critical writing does require a good understanding of the topic (which takes time!)
- The key is evaluation rather than basic description, e.g. saying how and why rather than just what

Final polls

What do you feel is the main thing you will take away from this session?

What are you going to do as a result of this session?

Which of the following elements of today's session did you find useful?

- Tutor led explanation
- Opportunity to chat in text chat box
- Opportunity to suggest ideas in polls
- Opportunity to read ideas suggested in polls
- Breakout room (discussion with / learning from other students)
- Breakout activity (considering a task in more detail)
- Any other aspect (please give details in chat)

Upcoming sessions

- 5th February 7pm Effective online communication skills
- 13th February 7pm Essay planning
- 25th February 7pm Essay writing
- 3rd March 7pm Report writing
- 22nd April 7pm Developing a good academic argument

Details and booking information from <http://studenthublive.open.ac.uk/>

This session's slides are available to download from the file link provided. Click on the title then download file and it will download to wherever downloads go on your own computer (not on mobile devices). Slides are also available from the main SHL website

Past student hub live online sessions [here](#)
Visit us at <http://studenthublive.open.ac.uk/>
and subscribe for events as they are
announced

Send us feedback at
studenthub@open.ac.uk
View past (live) recordings on
www.youtube.com/thestudenthublive

