

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?

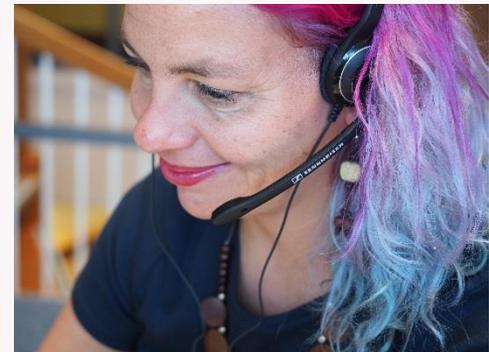
- Arts
- Languages (English & other)
- Social sciences
- Business and law
- Science
- Engineering or technology
- Maths
- Health sciences
- Education
- Sports
- OTHER

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 post summer 2020
- Yes any pre summer 2020
- Yes any 2019 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 during the live session.
- All online sessions are recorded and available to view on catch up on a public facing website.
- Slides are available to download during the session (*not accessible on mobile devices*) and from <http://studenthublive.open.ac.uk/>.



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



Isabella Henman is an essay writing aficionado and skills trainer and has been the main student hub live online speaker since 2017. She tutors in science and health sciences at Access to level 2.

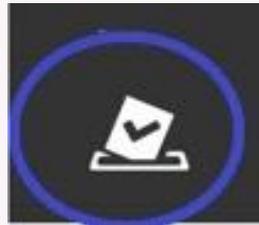


Rob Moore works on a range of under-graduate and post-graduate modules for the Open University Business School. Rob's passion is in making live online sessions fun and effective.

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

This was our advert...

Critical thinking is a key academic skill and involves evaluating information and articulating how well it explains a concept or is fit for purpose. The benefits of developing your critical thinking and writing skills include being able to show *why* you have referenced something and demonstrating a robust level of understanding.

We'll explain some of the things 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 or an extended discussion (dependant on numbers)

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

Please be aware

- These sessions are large scale
- They are very busy
- There is lots of interaction
- They are not the same as other tutorials
- You can maximise slides on your own screen by clicking the icon



First thoughts

- In which part of your university study do you want to become more critical? Please use the short answer poll pod provided

Our ideas

- Essays 😊
- Evaluating different theories
- Note taking

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

There is a difference between being descriptive and critical

It is a fundamental indication of moving below the surface

Description

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

A description or observation could be that a study had a small population

- Fair enough but so what?
- Why does that really matter?

Evaluation

- This says **why** something is, or **how**
- So using our previous example of a small study
 - It doesn't give enough information to generalise
 - The participants in that study could be unique in some way

The difference is recognising why the information is important, not just regurgitating it

Critical writing

- Objective
- Third person
- Not opinionated
- Weighing up against other point (evaluation)
- Providing evidence for assertions

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 sentence which said what is but not why it is

Everyone clear on that? 😊 😞

Evaluation between paragraphs

An 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)
- Be aware this is not just about the facts but the evaluation of those facts, remembering the rules of critical evaluation not being opinionated and providing evidence

Example 1

The history of the use of chocolate in secretive religious ceremonies is very interesting as priests used the chocolate drink to impress their rich and powerful friends. The Aztecs even used the cocoa bean as money. The drink was brought over to Europe in the 1600s and special '*chocolatl*' houses were set up where only these rich people could drink it. I think this is totally unfair as the poor didn't get to taste it and chocolate's great.

Example 2

Chocolate was 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 enhanced the idea that religion and its objects were special. This idea was 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)
- Remember the points about critical writing

Our ideas

- 1 was a bit more opinionated
- 1 was 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
- Unless you are asked to give your personal opinion then please don't!

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 including in the hope that it is right

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, 2020)” ermm how does it? Can the reader be expected to understand based on the information that is actually included

Discussion activity

- Now that you have some ideas and suggestions about critical thinking what do you think will be the aspect that you are going to be developing for your critical 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
- If you want to speak you will need to activate your microphone *once in the room and you see the option available*



- 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 aspect that you are going to be developing for your critical writing?
- Please bring back a few points that you can share with the rest of the group.
- 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?

Alternative discussion activity

- There will be 2 specific questions in chat pods for you to explore some of the elements we have discussed further.
- *The best tip I have picked up about critical thinking is...*
- *I am going to develop my critical thinking and writing by...*
- You are welcome to add your thoughts and we will then pick up some of the themes and talk through them.
- Chat does have names on but the recording will be anonymised so you will appear as 'user number'

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 this 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 / alternative (discussion with / learning from other students)
- Breakout activity / alternative (reflecting on the concepts in more detail)
- The chance to reflect more deeply on own experiences / skills



23rd /29th Faculty based re(freshers) events
28th Sep re(freshers) orientation



OU Essentials 3 Workshops Saturday 3rd Oct

10 Introduction to study at the OU / **12** Managing my time effectively
2 Academic writing

13th Oct 7pm Effective academic communication

21st Oct 11am / 8pm Academic writing skills

10th Nov 12 / 7pm Essay planning

More to be announced

Details and booking information from

<http://studenthublive.open.ac.uk/>

Past student hub live online study skills 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

