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?

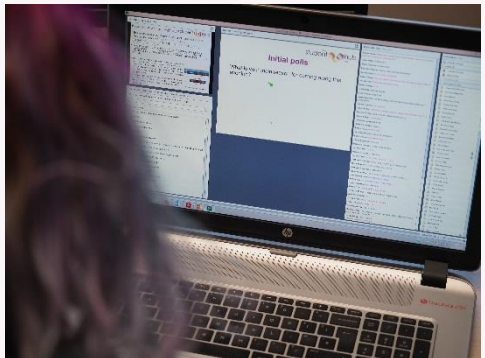
- Arts
- Languages (English & other)
- Social sciences
- Business and law
- Science
- Engineering or technology
- Maths
- Health sciences
- Education
- Sports
- OTHER

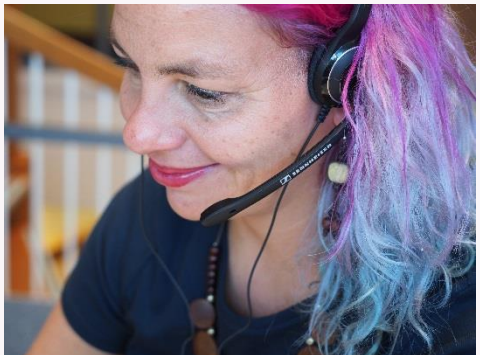
Have you been to any student hub live online events before?

- No (I'm brand new to SHL!)
- No (but have listened to one or more recording)
- No (didn't have time)
- No (wasn't aware of before now)
- Yes any spring 2022
- Yes any earlier

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.

Workshop

- This is going to be a structured workshop to help you getting thinking critically if you are new to it or at lower levels of study.
- We'll get you starting to think about key elements and give some tutor advice about aspects that are important
- There is a lot of interaction so please be ready to answer polls (questions) or add to chat pod during the session
- You'll get the chance to discuss with others in a small group / or alternative discussion activity (dependent 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

Please

- Do NOT share any personal information in the chat pod during the session
- On the recording names will be anonymised to user number
- However if you type anyone's full name or any other personal information in the chat pod it can be seen by everybody and it would also show up on the recording

Initial poll

What is your main reason for coming along to this session? Please choose the option that fits for you today:

- Study skills for current module(s)
- Study skills for future module (s)
- Connecting with other students
- Gain new ideas
- Responding to recommendation from tutor
- Curious about what studenthublive is

Critical thinking and writing

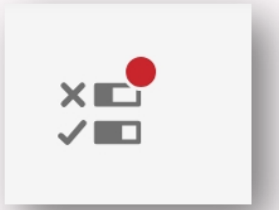
This was our advert…

Aimed at Access and Level 1 students or those who are new to critical thinking and writing, this workshop covers the basics: we will look at how to use module information, taking it apart to understand the key themes for yourself, independently of the guidance you are given. We then move on to writing critically, identifying relevant information, and presenting it objectively in your own words.

What do you want to learn?

Using the short answer poll provided please say what you are hoping to learn from today's 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

First thoughts

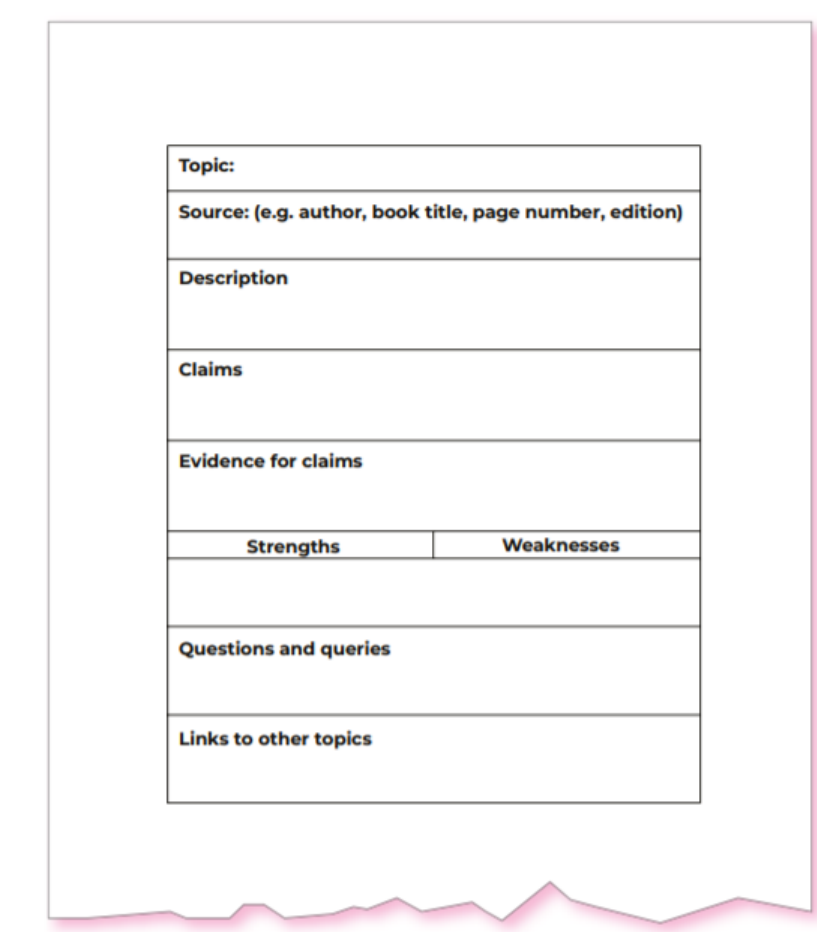
- What is your preferred method of working through key points in module materials to help you understand things?
- Please use the short answer poll pod provided

Our ideas

- Notetaking
- Highlighting and annotating
- Making a mind map
- Key points cards (flash cards)
- Post it notes
- Talking to a friend
- Watching videos or searching for additional explanations

Why did we mention this?

- Thinking critically requires the use of relevant module material, so you must have located that and recognise what was important to be able to think critically about it
- It is not just paraphrasing or recreating an account of the material as it was presented in the module, but critical thinking is about thinking about different aspects of the source and considering it in context of the questions you are asking (or are being asked)

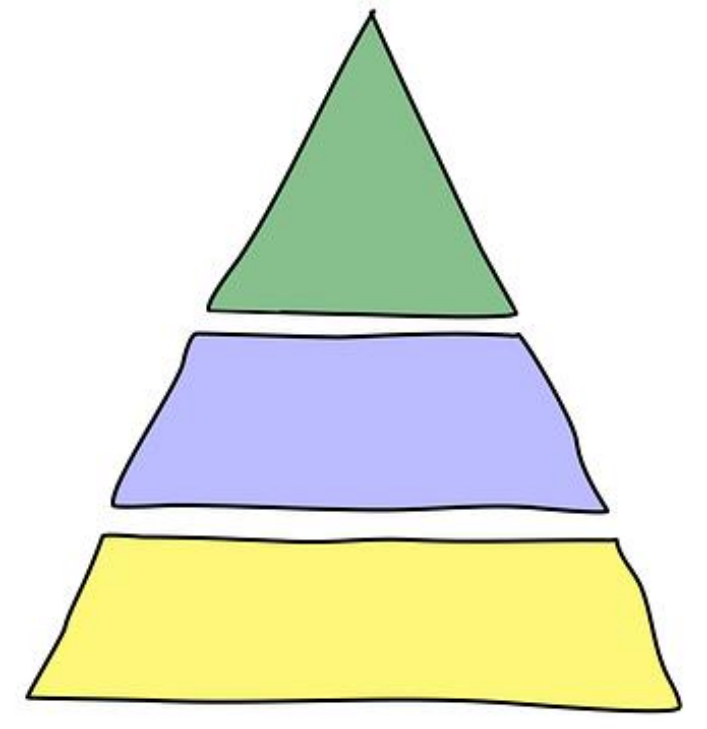


Topic:	
Source: (e.g. author, book title, page number, edition)	
Description	
Claims	
Evidence for claims	
Strengths	Weaknesses
Questions and queries	
Links to other topics	

Note taking

- We ran a session on creative note taking on 8th February where Jay Rixon gave some ideas for creative methods.
- Access through this room > view past recordings and look for the name
- There was also a studio broadcast;
- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nfjFAz2ZQOU&t=337s

Understanding



- Before you critically evaluate you do need to understand the material – it's the bottom stack of the pyramid
- This is the same as thinking about the key points
- Why are they the key points?

Activity 1

- You have been invited to contribute to a program entitled ‘my most prized possessions’. You have to name your 10 most prized possessions **and** explain why you have chosen each in a short sentence.
- Please use the short answer poll available to suggest anything that is relevant to how you might start to do this. *Hint – it is not stating what the possessions are at this stage but how you will formulate the decision.*
- Remember to scroll to see other answers and see what others think

Ideas

- Monetary value
- Sentimental value
- Heirloom
- Practical

Drawing these together

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

Link this to your module

- Bringing together those two activities, your key points and your prized possessions. What are the key points in your module-the prized possessions that you don't want to lose from the module?
- What points form the bottom of your pyramid?
- Recognizing why they are key points helps you in your analysis
- The criteria on which you decide may vary, it might not always be your choice

Looking for clues - poll

- Is there anything in your module that helps you recognise what is most important?
- Please use the short answer poll to give your ideas and look to see what other people have said

Our ideas

- Learning outcomes – these state what you should be expected to know from topics, sections, books, the module overall and emphasise what is most important
- TMA and assessment questions – bluntly these will emphasize what you need to know for the marks!
- Professional outcomes for some people

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?

Your assertions

- These are *yours* but not presented in a subjective way – essentially they are you as a student of your module representing the module content
- So it is not about your personal opinion of whether you agree or disagree with some facts presented, someone's theory, or the results of an experiment
- It is about how you as an objective university student can convey information appropriate to your learning level

Objectivity

- Similar to critical analysis, this is not about *objecting*
- It is about looking at things to from a balanced perspective, both sides
- It may be an easy 'fence to sit on' to cover both sides
- Or it may be that you have to come down on a side because you can't straddle

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?
- Does it matter in your context?
- You will have to give some information but make it clear why it is important

Description

- This is saying **what** something is
- It gives facts and details overall
- These are normally irrefutable – they are facts
- Some are **more important** within the context than others though which is where evaluation comes in
- Description is active and is about identifying what matters and having the confidence to leave out what is "peripheral"

Evaluation

- This says **why** something is, or **how**
- It takes the facts and makes it clear why they are important
- Going back to the animal study idea – the fact it is on animals may reduce application for humans; the small population means it may not be generalizable to a bigger population
- Remember – who is your sample /population? (It is your module)

Activity time

- Think about your favourite food – **why** is it **your** favourite food?
- Use the short answer poll pod provided to give your ideas

Why?

- You don't describe your favourite food to make it clear why it is your favourite food, that is saying *what it is*
- *Evaluation* is the explanation about why it is your favourite food – you have to make a considered decision based on the evidence

Critical writing

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

Using PEE to evaluate

- PEE
  - Point – make it
  - Evidence – support it with facts
  - Explain – why the evidence is supportive and it is relevant
- This is about including the fact in a way that makes it clear you haven't just stumbled across it but can relate it clearly to the topic you are presenting – the explanation is where you have evaluated the evidence

More points

- 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, that 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

Indicators that critical thinking isn't there

- Close paraphrasing of the content
- Non-active description rather than evaluation
- Personal opinion
- Too little information e.g. just a citation after a brief assertion
- Words like obviously – why is it obvious? What evidence has been presented to make the case?
- Can the reader be expected to understand based on the information that is actually included

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 and writing 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 appears 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
- You have used your module material, internalized it, then extracted what is important to make your case and conveyed that in your answer

Final poll

What do you feel are the main things you will take away from this session?

- Better understanding of today's topic
- Better understanding of the place of study skills within university study
- Enthusiasm for my studies
- Enthusiasm for my skills development
- Feel part of the university
- Feel part of SHL

If you have any other feedback please send to studenthub@open.ac.uk

Upcoming sessions

7 Jun 7pm Developing your critical thinking & writing
15 Jun 7pm Learning from feedback
21 Jun 11am What's in your open box?
22 Jun 7pm Dealing with other people's ideas
29 Jun 11am Introduction to critical thinking & writing
7 Jul 11am Creative note taking

(Live broadcasts in purple)

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

Study skills workshop

Live broadcast