QA
Learn. To Change.

ACE Workshop:
Critical Analysis 2 – Writing

Please note: these workshops are interactive!
Message the lecturer if you are unable to unmute your microphone during the session.

Session will start at: 00:00

Critical Analysis 2 – Writing: Workshop Content

| Explain the differences between descriptive and critical writing | Produce well-structured paragraphs using the acronym 'TEEEL' | Compare two methods of relating academic theory to practice |

By the end of the lesson you will be able to:

Produce well-structured critical paragraphs, integrating scholarly theories to build compelling, practice-based arguments.

Descriptive and Critical Writing

Answer
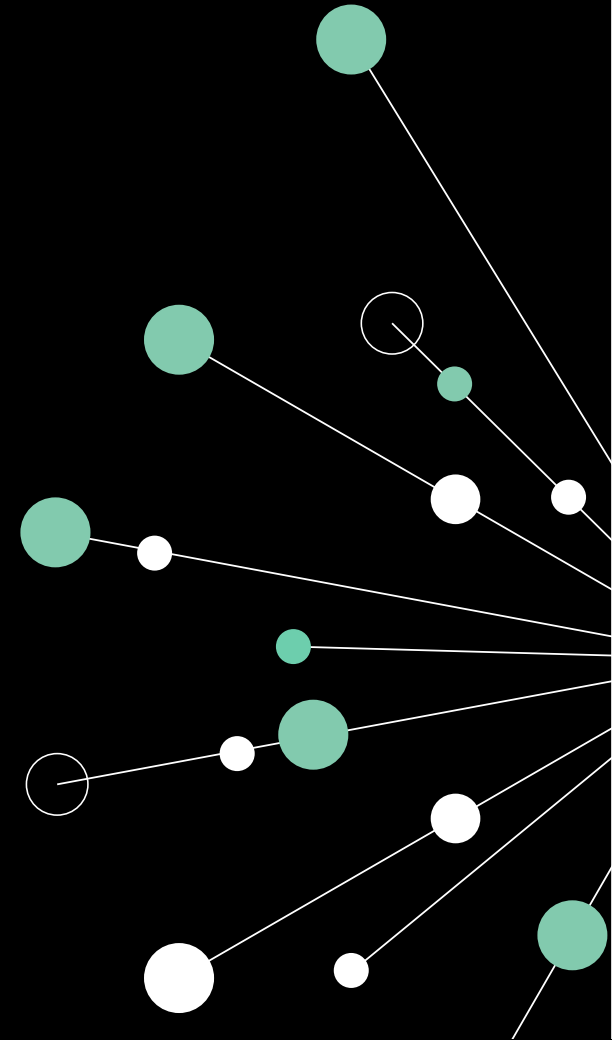
Match the term to its definition!

1 **Description**

B To **outline** theories, concepts, models, or practices.

2 **Analysis**

C To **examine** theories, concepts, models, and practices in detail – **identifying significant factors** and **alternative methods**.

3 **Evaluation**

A To **assess** the validity, coherence, or usefulness of theories, concepts, and models in practice. To **draw conclusions**, proposing evidence-based **recommendations** or **solutions**.

What does it mean to be 'critical'?

- To move beyond description, **assessing** the **validity**, **coherence**, or **usefulness** of a source.

- To **analyse** and **evaluate** information, making a logical decision about the extent to which you believe it to be true or false.

- To consider the **strengths** and **limitations** of theories, models, or concepts in practice.

- To draw **conclusions**, proposing **recommendations** or **solutions** based on this evidence.

Descriptive or Critical Writing?

A – Descriptive Writing	B – Critical Writing

A	Provides information, facts, or figures on a particular topic.

Descriptive or Critical Writing?

A – Descriptive Writing	B – Critical Writing

A Explains what a theory says or summarises an experience in the workplace.

Descriptive or Critical Writing?

A – Descriptive Writing	B – Critical Writing

B	Evaluates the strengths and limitations of a theory in practice.

Descriptive or Critical Writing?

A – Descriptive Writing	B – Critical Writing

B	Demonstrates the significance of links between pieces of information.

Descriptive or Critical Writing?

A – Descriptive Writing	B – Critical Writing

A	Lists details or describes the order in which things happened.

Descriptive or Critical Writing?

A – Descriptive Writing	B – Critical Writing

B	Explores alternative approaches, indicating which is appropriate or suitable.

Descriptive or Critical Writing?

A – Descriptive Writing	B – Critical Writing

A	Notes the methods used and how the research was undertaken.

Descriptive or Critical Writing?

A – Descriptive Writing	B – Critical Writing

**B** — Argues a case according to evidence, acknowledging gaps in the existing research.

Descriptive or Critical Writing?

A – Descriptive Writing	B – Critical Writing
Provides information, facts, or figures on a particular topic.	Evaluates the strengths and limitations of a theory in practice.
Explains what a theory says or summarises an experience in the workplace.	Demonstrates the significance of links between pieces of information.
Lists details or describes the order in which things happened.	Explores alternative approaches, indicating which is appropriate or suitable.
Notes the methods used and how the research was undertaken.	Argues a case according to evidence, acknowledging gaps in the existing research.
Presents opinions.	Draws conclusions, proposes recommendations or solutions.

(Adapted from Cottrell, 2003)

Building a Critical Argument
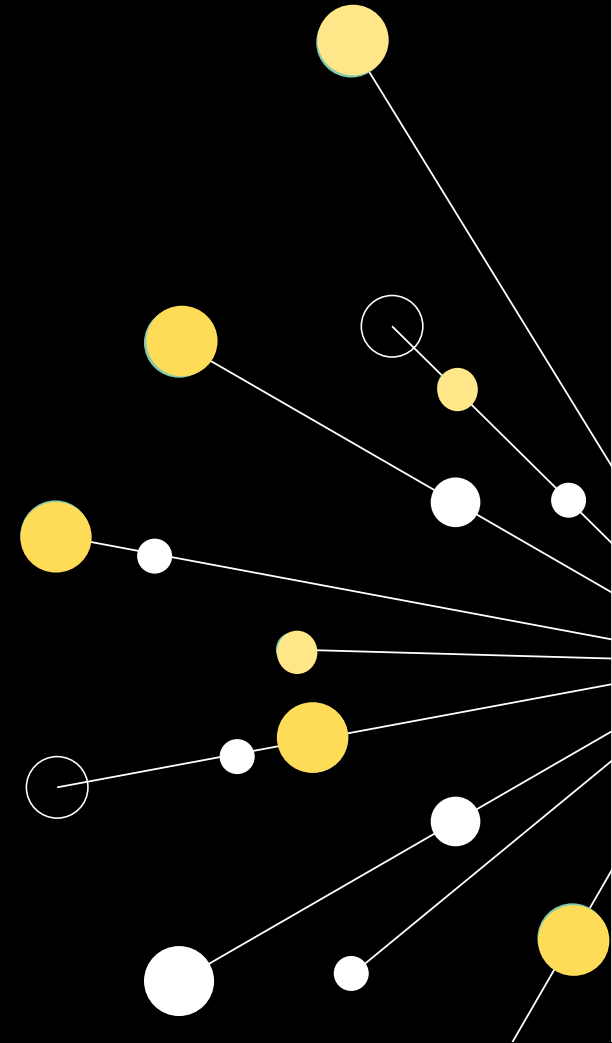
Building a Critical Argument

	You can use the acronym TEEEL to organise your critical paragraphs!
Topic	Clearly and succinctly tell the reader what the paragraph will be about.
Expand	Make sure your reader understands the main idea by defining industry terms and / or relating it back to your experiences in the workplace.
Evidence	Incorporate some evidence to back up your main idea. This evidence should be a paraphrase supported by a reference to a scholarly resource. You should also consider the strengths and limitations of this evidence, demonstrating its value, coherence, or relevance.
Explanation	Explain how the evidence supports or develops your argument. You should also discuss the extent to which its findings apply to your organisation and explore potential counterarguments where appropriate.
Link	Conclude your paragraph by either linking back to your main idea or linking forward to the next paragraph. You may also propose a recommendation.

(Adapted from University of West London, 2020)

TEEEL – Topic

Task

Consider the following topic sentences. Which is an example of descriptive writing? Which is an example of critical writing? Why?

A There is a large amount of research that examines digital intercultural communication.

B Digital communication has enhanced the capacity of people to connect across cultures but replicating the human connection felt in physical interactions remains an industry-wide challenge (Smith, 2016).

TEEEL – Descriptive Topic Sentence

Answer

A There is a large amount of research that examines digital intercultural communication.

The topic sentence lacks precision, describing the 'large' amount of research that has been conducted.

It is not clear whether the research tends to support a certain perspective on digital intercultural communication or who it has been conducted by.

Whilst the broad topic of digital intercultural communication is introduced, its relevance to the learner's industry is not.

TEEEL – Critical Topic Sentence

Answer

B Digital communication has enhanced the capacity of people to connect across cultures but replicating the human connection felt in physical interactions remains an industry-wide challenge (Smith, 2016).

The topic is succinctly introduced through a paraphrase and its accompanying citation to a scholarly resource.

Through this research, an 'industry-wide challenge' is identified.

It is clear that the learner will explore this challenge in detail, demonstrating their understanding of relevant theories and technologies – proposing a recommendation for practice.

TEEEL – Evidence

Task

Consider the learner's use of scholarly evidence. Which is an example of critical writing? Why?

A

Harrison (2017, p. 9) argues that while technology has increased the capacity for people to communicate across cultures, it fails to 'foster in-depth relationships'.

B

Although Harrison (2017) argues that such forms of communication often fail to produce meaningful relationships, he neglects to consider the possibility of organisation-driven interventions like the Connection Index utilising big data and artificial intelligence (AI) to connect people with similar interests from around the world.

TEEEL – Explanation

Task

In Example B, the learner begins to engage critically with Harrison's argument, identifying a potential limitation. How could the learner strengthen these claims in the Explanation section of TEEEL?

Although Harrison (2017) argues that such forms of communication often fail to produce meaningful relationships, he neglects to consider the possibility of organisation-driven interventions like the Connection Index utilising big data and artificial intelligence (AI) to connect people with similar interests from around the world.

(Adapted from University of Technology Sydney, 2022)

TEEEL – Explanation

Answer

1	Demonstrate an understanding of alternative scholarly perspectives by incorporating counter-arguments.
2	Explore related sub-issues and associated benefits, applications, challenges, and limitations of utilising big data and AI in the workplace.
3	Provide additional supporting evidence and / or a case study on the 'Connection Index' – utilising the appendices.

TEEEL – Explanation

Answer

In Example B, the learner begins to engage critically with Harrison's argument, identifying a potential limitation. How could the learner strengthen these claims in the Explanation section of TEEEL?

In the past 18 months 85% of users participating in the Connection Index trial reported a more fulfilling digital experience with an increased number of "strong connections" (Appendix A), which appears to challenge Markson's (2018) contention that online communication tends not to facilitate profound interpersonal experiences.

TEEEL – Link

Task

Consider the following linking sentence. What does it neglect to consider? How could it be improved?

A Further research is perhaps required to examine how new digital technologies can be utilised to encourage meaningful intercultural communication.

TEEEL – Link

Answer

Consider the following linking sentence. What does it neglect to consider? How could it be improved?

A Further research is perhaps required to examine how new digital technologies can be utilised to encourage meaningful intercultural communication. *The methods by which the Connection Index exploits big data and AI for connectivity are therefore explored in more detail below, as are additional ways this tool might be employed to foster meaningful connections across cultures online.*

Writing Critically

✓ Consider a range of different perspectives and counter-arguments.

✓ Consider what worked, and the degree to which it worked. What were the challenges and limitations? To what extent can the model / theory be applied to your organisation?

✓ Use a range of academic sources and work-based evidence to support your findings / claims / arguments.

✓ Synthesise different sources, theories, and positions to develop your own arguments, solutions, and conclusions.

✓ Provide insight and recommendations into how practice / theory could be improved and further areas for development.

The ACE Critical Thinking Checklist

Critical Thinking Checklist	✓ or ✗
Have I presented an argument?	
Have I justified my argument?	
Have I explained its significance?	
Is my argument convincing?	
Have I connected my ideas with appropriate signalling language?	
Are my ideas supported with evidence?	
Have I engaged critically with scholarly resources, evaluating the potential validity, coherence, and usefulness of their arguments?	
Have I considered the strengths and limitations of their positions?	
Have I engaged in comparative analysis, exploring relevant disparities, contradictions, or alternatives proposed by the wider academic community?	

You can use the ACE Critical Thinking Checklist to assess the criticality of your work!

To access the full checklist, please follow the link provided.

Relating Theory to Practice
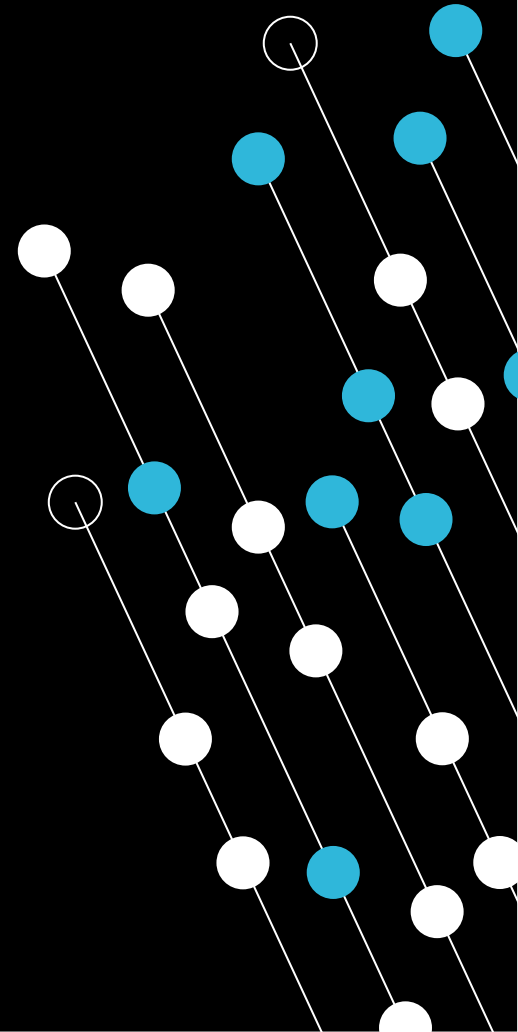
Supporting Theory with Practice

At the most basic level, theory should be used to support choices made in your professional practice. You can see this in the example below:

Company X's project teams are established on an opt-in basis following the idealistic model (Smith, 2021), where individuals are motivated by clear long-term goals and a working knowledge of the skills required to achieve them.

Professional practice is shown to **align with** recent **research** in the field.

Theory is reinforced by a **specific example** of practice according with it in an exact and detailed way.

Progressing to Analysis and Evaluation

(Adapted from RMIT University, 2021)

After introducing relevant, well-chosen concepts to justify workplace decisions it is crucial to then **analyse and evaluate the success of both theory and practice**, as seen in italics below.

Company X's project teams are established on an opt-in basis following the idealistic model (Smith, 2021), where individuals are motivated by clear long-term goals and a working knowledge of the skills required to achieve them. *The idealistic model validates the diverse skills that individuals may bring to a team, ensuring personal satisfaction alongside the team's success.*

Task

How could this analysis / evaluation be improved?

Progressing to Analysis and Evaluation

Answer

The idealistic model validates the diverse skills that individuals may bring to a team, ensuring personal satisfaction alongside the team's success.

1	Has not considered **alternative perspectives** / theories / experiences.
2	No sources or **evidence** used to back up claim / argument.
3	Does not discuss **limitations**, challenges, "to what extent" the model can be applied.
4	Does not provide **insight** into how things could be improved.

Progressing to Analysis and Evaluation

Answer

1 Considering **alternative perspectives** / theories / experiences.

> Singh (2023) explores possible drawbacks associated with this model, including...

2 Using additional sources or **evidence** used to back up the claim / argument.

> Furthermore, as Rodriguez (2022) demonstrates...

3 Discussing **limitations**, challenges, "to what extent" the model can be applied.

> However, Smith's (2020) theory neglects to consider the potential impact of employee disengagement. At Company X...

4 Providing **insight** into how things could be improved.

> Following Hoffman et al. (2019), Company X's project teams would therefore benefit from...

Methods of Relating Theory to Practice

✓ Always think "what purpose does this theory serve in my paragraph?"

✓ Consider how different theories link to one another and can be used to build you argument, engaging in comparative analysis.

✓ Reinforce or challenge theory by using specific, detailed, and meaningful examples from your own workplace.

✓ Always be critical about the theory and your practice!

Challenging Theory with Reference to Practice

Task

Read the following paragraph, in which the learner challenges theory with reference to practice:

In Company X, tasks are distributed amongst team members according to the strengths and weaknesses identified during personal appraisals. Patel (2020) advocates the use of cross-training to provide team members with exposure to new roles and responsibilities but fails to recognise possible drawbacks, including inefficiency, underperformance, and discontent. Although Wheatley et al. (2023) suggest that teams comprised of members with experience in all positions operate more effectively under time pressure, it is important to consider the potential increase in employee workload during training periods. As Company X's project teams are frequently required to meet challenging deadlines, Smith's (2021) idealistic model is therefore more appropriate.

Challenging Theory with Reference to Practice

Task

1 How does the learner challenge theory with reference to practice? Consider the strengths and limitations of their approach.

2 How could the learner take a more critical approach to theory?

Challenging Theory with Reference to Practice

Answer

In Company X, tasks are distributed amongst team members according to the strengths and weaknesses identified during personal appraisals. Patel (2020) advocates the use of cross-training to provide team members with exposure to new roles and responsibilities but fails to recognise the potential drawbacks, including inefficiency, underperformance and discontent. Although Wheatley et al. (2023) suggest that teams comprised of members with experience in all positions operate more effectively under time pressure, it is important to consider the potential increase in employee workload during training periods. As Company X's project teams are frequently required to meet challenging deadlines, Smith's (2021) idealistic model is therefore more appropriate.

Challenging Theory with Reference to Practice

Answer

Whilst Patel (2020) advocates the use of cross-training to provide team members with exposure to new roles and responsibilities, she fails to recognise possible drawbacks, including inefficiency, underperformance, and discontent.

In an interview conducted on the potential impact of cross-training within departments (Appendix A), line managers at Company X therefore raised concerns regarding...

As such, Patel's (2020) theory does not take into account the corporate ethos of Company X, which...

Challenging Theory with Reference to Practice

Answer

Although Wheatley et al. (2023) suggest that teams comprised of members with experience in all positions operate more effectively under time pressure, it is important to consider the potential increase in employee workload during training periods.

For Donaldson (2024), this increase in workload could lead to burnout and a significant talent retention problem.

At Company X, employee wellbeing is prioritised alongside team efficiency and performance, as demonstrated by...

Relating Theory to Practice

✓ Demonstrate clear links between your experiences and the theories, models, and concepts studied on the course.

✓ Indicate how your practical experiences assist you in understanding the theories, models, and concepts.
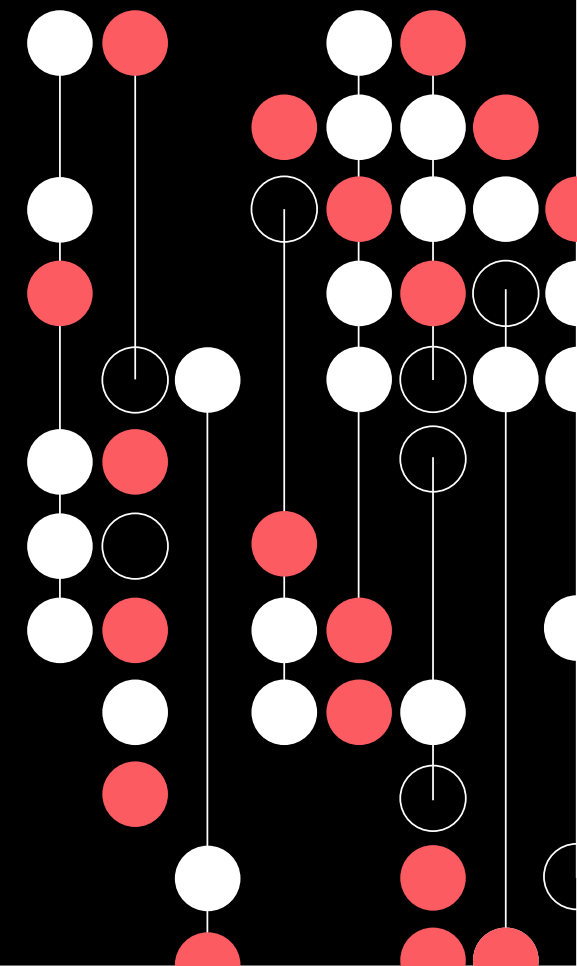
✓ Explore whether your observations are consistent with what those theories suggest. Does your experiences challenge or negate these concepts?

✓ If your experience is different, analyse this discrepancy to identify why your practice contracts established theory and what this means in a practical setting.

Review

Critical Analysis 2 - Review

The 'T' in TEEEL stands for Task

Critical Analysis 2 - Review

You should only discuss one theory per paragraph

Critical Analysis 2 - Review

It is important to consider the strengths and limitations of a theory when using it in practice

References and Further Reading

References

Cottrell, S. (2003) *The Study Skills Handbook*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

RMIT University (2021) *Body*. Available at: https://emedia.rmit.edu.au/learninglab/content/body-0 (Accessed: 18 September 2024).

University of Technology Sydney (2022) *How to Write Critically*. Available at: https://www.uts.edu.au/current-students/support/helps/self-help-resources/academic-skills/how-write-critically (Accessed: 18 September 2024).

University of West London (2020) *Writing Critical Paragraphs*. Available at: https://www.uwl.ac.uk/current-students/support-students/study-support/writing-critical-paragraphs (Accessed: 18 September 2024).

Further reading

The ACE Critical Thinking Checklist
The ACE Quick Guide to Critical Writing: Building an Argument
The ACE Quick Guide to Evaluating Sources and Reading Critically

ACE Feedback

Thank you for attending this ACE Workshop.
We would be grateful if you could take 2 minutes to
complete our **feedback form**.

Do you require further academic support?

Look on the ACE Page for resources

Check out our upcoming workshops

Book a 1-2-1 tutorial

Any questions?