



**ACE Workshop:**

# **Reflective Writing 2 – Advanced Reflective Analysis**

**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**

## Reflective Writing 2: Workshop Content

List common challenges of reflective writing and plan how to overcome these

Modify a reflective section to improve the grade received for critical analysis

Explain how to critique academic theories with reference to professional experiences

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

Evaluate both theory and practice at a high level to write compelling reflective assignments.

## Reflective Writing

Task

1

What is the purpose of reflective writing at higher levels?

2

What do you find challenging about reflective writing?

## The Purpose of Reflective Writing

Answer

At higher levels, reflective writing allows you to:

Demonstrate a **questioning, critical attitude** towards professional practice, and **identify** concrete and realistic **areas for change** and improvement.

Develop the ability to **analyse complex phenomena** and **apply a wide range of relevant theories** to well-chosen practice examples in meaningful ways.

Assess the **strengths and weaknesses of specific theories** using practical experience to create new knowledge.

## The Challenge of Reflective Writing

Answer

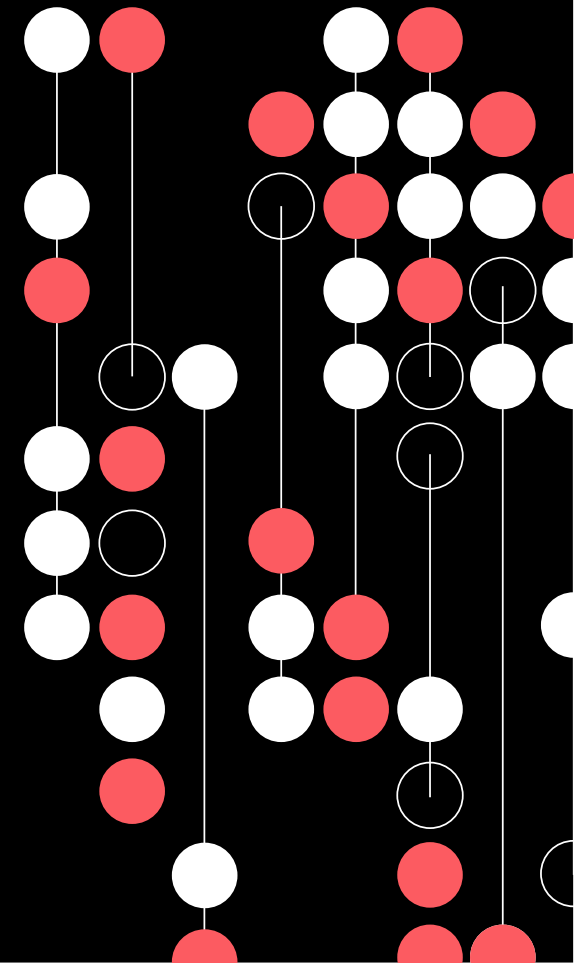
Typical challenges include:

1. Remembering what happened! (to critique)
2. Using a relevant reflective model and justifying your choice
3. Being sufficiently critical of your practice
4. Considering a range of alternative options / strategies
5. Interrogating the validity of academic theories
6. Relating theory to practice and vice versa
7. Linking to future practice and making recommendations

Task

Can you think of strategies for overcoming any of these challenges?

# 1. Improving Criticality in Reflective Writing



## Tip

- 1 Ensure that examples of professional practice analysed are specific and personal to your own experience.
- 2 Explore counterarguments / alternative methods and theoretical frameworks to justify your position.
- 3 Reflect on the extent to which theory works in practice.

## Examples

- A
- 'While Author A states that..., my experience aligned with Author B, perhaps because...'
  - 'In future I will try Approach C, as this may...'
- B
- 'While model D is influential in terms of..., it appears to make some industry-specific assumptions which do not apply in the case of...'
  - 'Model E worked as expected in this case, as...'
- C
- 'The obstacles I faced while working on Project F were the following...'
  - 'Working within role G, I am often expected to do...'

### Task

Match the tip (1-3) to the appropriate examples (A-C).

## Tip

- 1 Ensure that examples of professional practice analysed are specific and personal to your own experience.
- 2 Explore counterarguments / alternative methods and theoretical frameworks to justify your position.
- 3 Reflect on the extent to which theory works in practice.

## Examples

C

- 'The **obstacles I faced** while working on Project F were the following...'
- 'Working within role G, **I am often expected to do...**'

A

- 'While Author A states that..., **my experience aligned with Author B**, perhaps because...'
- 'In future **I will try Approach C**, as this may...'

B

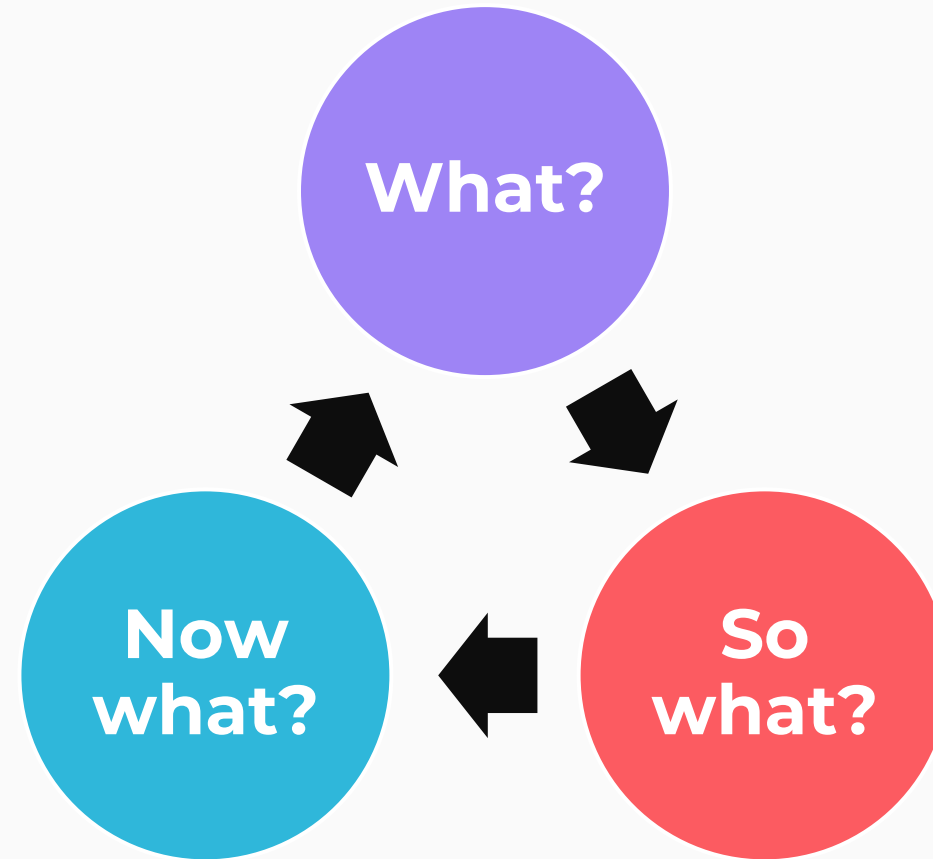
- 'While model D is influential in terms of..., it appears to make some **industry-specific assumptions which do not apply** in the case of...'
- '**Model E worked as expected in this case**, as...'

**Answer**

Match the tip (1-3) to the appropriate examples (A-C).



## Improving Criticality – Driscoll's Reflective Model



We will first consider the '**So what?**' stage, as this section is likely to include substantial **critical analysis**.

## Improving Criticality – ‘So What?’

The ‘So what?’ paragraph below answers the following task:

**‘Reflect on your learning from the module in terms of its impact on future practice’.**

The learner is frustrated about the seeming lack of connection between theory and practice.

As an apprentice working at the cutting edge of the industry, there is a limited amount I can learn from university modules. Soady (2024) demonstrates that seemingly current concepts in AI and Big Data can become obsolete within a few years and, as it takes roughly 6-12 months to publish a journal article (Seath, 2023) it is unlikely that my programme’s reading list will reflect the newest ideas in the field. My company aims to ‘lead the digital transformation in all its forms’ (Organisation x, 2024) and so has already implemented many of the technological processes explored in the module, with the remainder being unsuitable for our workplace, and therefore irrelevant for my future practice.

## Improving Criticality – ‘So What?’

Task

Discuss **possible counterarguments** to the claims presented in this ‘So what?’ section of a reflective piece. A phrase to start with is highlighted in pink.

As an apprentice working at the cutting edge of the industry, there is a limited amount I can learn from university modules. Soady (2024) demonstrates that seemingly current concepts in AI and Big Data can become obsolete within a few years and, as it takes roughly 6-12 months to publish a journal article (Seath, 2023) it is unlikely that my programme’s reading list will reflect the newest ideas in the field. My company aims to ‘lead the digital transformation in all its forms’ (Organisation x, 2024) and so has already implemented many of the technological processes explored in the module, with the remainder being unsuitable for our workplace, and therefore irrelevant for my future practice.

## Possible Counterarguments

Answer

- The assertion that 'concepts in AI and Big Data **can** become obsolete within **a few years**' is not a guarantee, and the '**6-12 months** to publish a journal article' should ensure the research's timeliness regardless.
- The suggestion that 'it is unlikely that my programme's reading list will reflect the newest ideas in the field' **appears improbable** given the likely repercussions of an outdated course on learner enrolment / retention etc.
- The claim that processes are 'unsuitable for our workplace' is **not evidenced with reference to professional practice** and deeming such processes 'irrelevant for my future practice' ignores the possibility of the learner's **career developing at a different company**.

## Rewriting the 'So What?' Section

Having identified potential counterarguments, the 'So what?' section can be rewritten to **evidence a growth mindset** where the learner **utilises theory** to **continue** their **professional development**:



'Soady (2024) demonstrates that seemingly current concepts in AI and Big Data can become obsolete within a few years... [so] it is unlikely that my programme's reading list will reflect the newest ideas in the field'



'With aspects of AI and Big Data both evolving and growing obsolete so rapidly (Soady, 2024), apprentices must remain familiar with the newest research in the field.'

## Rewriting the 'So What?' Section

Having identified potential counterarguments, the 'So what?' section can be rewritten to **evidence a growth mindset** where the learner **utilises theory** to **continue** their **professional development**:



'[My organisation] has already implemented many of the technological processes explored in the module, with the remainder... irrelevant for my future practice.'



While Organisation x has adopted many of the technological processes explored in the module... there is no guarantee that the company will retain market dominance in future, and so employees have the responsibility to upskill and be open to new approaches to ensure the company continues to [lead].'

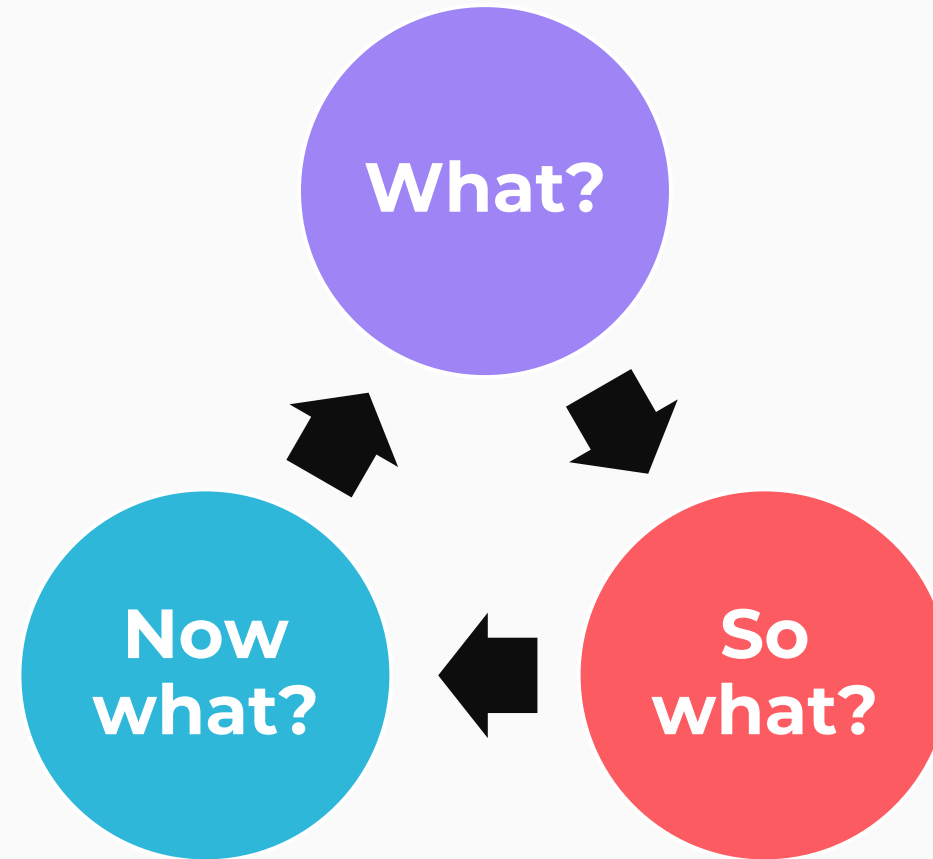
## Improved 'So what?' Paragraph



With aspects of AI and Big Data both evolving and growing obsolete so rapidly (Soady, 2024), apprentices must remain familiar with the newest research in the field. Most degree apprentices have reported finding it difficult to acquaint themselves with novel conceptual approaches during working hours (Perry, 2023) and so it is imperative to utilise self-study time to engage with the literature, especially as this has been shown to enhance the transferable skills of abstract reasoning and problem solving (Collins, 2023). While Organisation x has adopted many of the technological processes explored in the module (Wrigley, 2024), there is no guarantee that the company will retain market dominance in future, and so employees have the responsibility to upskill and be open to new approaches to ensure the company continues to 'lead the digital transformation in all its forms' (Organisation x, 2024).

Please take a screenshot of this paragraph as we will use it in the activity!

## Improving Criticality Using Driscoll's Reflective Model



Next, we will consider at the '**Now what?**' stage – this section is also likely to include substantial **critical analysis**.



## Improving Criticality – Now What?

Task

Following on from the improved 'So what?' paragraph, generate 2-3 **critical action points** to implement in the 'Now what?' section.



## Possible Action Points

Answer

- **Proactively engage with innovative research** in the field, including latest issues of AI and Big Data journals with largest citation scores.
- **Utilise more effective time management techniques**, to enable self-study during working hours.
- **Establish monthly knowledge sharing meetings**, where employees can introduce new concepts / approaches to consolidate best practice.
- **Explore technological processes covered in module yet to be implemented at work**, to understand if these are genuinely 'unsuitable for our workplace'.

# The ACE Critical Thinking Checklist

Critical Thinking Checklist	✓ or X
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.

## Improving Criticality

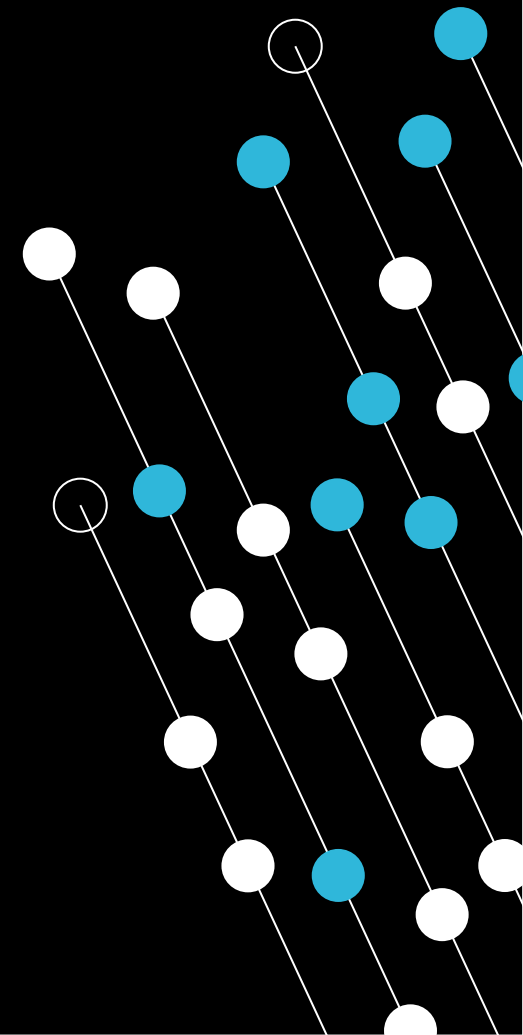
Use theory to:

- Suggest **reasons** and **explanations** for actions / outcomes
- Identify possible **alternative approaches** to the situation

But also to:

- Consider more than one theoretical approach / explanation
- **Evaluate** the **merits** and **weaknesses** of each in your context
- Identify which of these theories, singly or in combination, offers the best prospect for **better outcomes** in future

## 2. Critiquing Theory by Reflecting on Practice



## Critiquing Theory by Reflecting on Practice

Have you recently tried to apply a theory in a professional context? What was the outcome?

For example:

- Did a certain **theory work exactly** as specified? Why or why not?
- Did a particular approach have some **advantages** but also some **limitations**?
- Could two models be combined to **mitigate the weaknesses** of each?

TIP!

Thinking like this is the first step to **evaluating** the **strengths** and **weaknesses** of theories by reflecting on professional practice!

# Critiquing Theory by Reflecting on Practice

Task

How could you either **confirm** or **challenge** the applicability of the theories below by reflecting on practice? Share your suggestions!

## Confirm

A hierarchical organisational structure has been shown to positively impact clarity of communication (Hodges, 2024) and employee productivity (Butler, 2023). **This can be seen in...**

## Challenge

A hierarchical organisational structure has been shown to positively impact clarity of communication (Hodges, 2024) and employee productivity (Butler, 2023). **However...**

## Critiquing Theory by Reflecting on Practice

### Confirming theory with reference to practice (positive critique):

A hierarchical organisational structure has been shown to positively impact clarity of communication (Hodges, 2024) and employee productivity (Butler, 2023). **This can be seen in Project y where well-defined lines of authority enabled stakeholders to receive required answers and thus complete tasks quickly, as confirmed in an employee survey (Appendix A).**



## Critiquing Theory by Reflecting on Practice

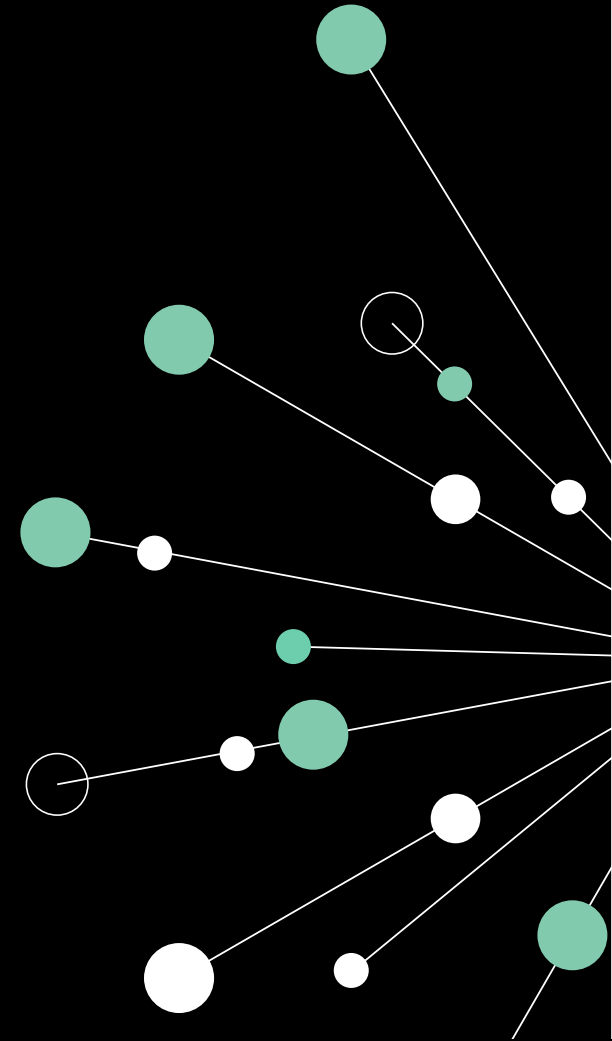
**Challenging theory** with reference to practice (negative critique):

A hierarchical organisational structure has been shown to positively impact clarity of communication (Hodges, 2024) and employee productivity (Butler, 2023). **However, in Project y the complex chain of command impeded decision-making and contributed to budget overrun and significant delays in completion (Appendix B).**

## The Purpose of Critiquing Theory by Reflecting on Practice

- To **confirm the validity of a theory** by emphasising its applicability across contexts.
- To **challenge the universality of a theory** by drawing attention to its flaws or limitations.
- Whether you are commenting on the strengths or weaknesses of a given theory, remember to do so using **exact** and **detailed** examples of practice **specific only to you!**

# Review



## Reflective Writing 2 - Review



In reflective writing you should personalise and contextualise academic theories as far as possible

## Reflective Writing 2 - Review



You must give a counterargument for all examples of professional practice



## Reflective Writing 2 - Review



The validity of theories and models can only be confirmed in reflective writing, never challenged

# References and Further Reading

Driscoll, J. (2007) *Practising Clinical Supervision: A Reflective Approach*. London: Bailliere Tindall.

Gibbs, G. (1988) *Learning by Doing: A guide to teaching and learning methods*. Oxford: Oxford Polytechnic.

Jasper, M. (2003) *Beginning Reflective Practice*. Cheltenham: Nelson Thornes.

Porter, J. (2017) 'Why you should make time for self-reflection (Even if you hate doing it)'. *Harvard Business Review*. Available at: <https://hbr.org/2017/03/why-you-should-make-time-for-self-reflection-even-if-you-hate-doing-it> (Accessed: 30 September 2024).

University of Hull (2022) *Overview of reflective writing*. Available at: <https://libguides.hull.ac.uk/reflectivewriting/vsummary> (Accessed: 30 September 2024).

University of Waterloo (2023) *Critical Reflection*. Available at: <https://uwaterloo.ca/writing-and-communication-centre/critical-reflection> (Accessed: 26 September 2024).

## 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?**