

# Learning Skills.

## Guidance Notes 19

### **DISCUSSION AND CRITICAL ANALYSIS**

#### Discussion and Critical Analysis

Students often remark that, when they receive work back from lecturers, there are comments about it being descriptive and lacking in critical analysis. Work of this kind is unlikely to achieve a mark beyond the 2:2 category, and may well be marked lower than this.

#### Referring to the work of others

It is a common mistake to think that including references/quotations from books and articles is all that is required for a 'discussion'. Similarly including the criticisms of other authors does not demonstrate 'critical analysis'. Referring to other published work is essential but if an essay just contains descriptions of others' criticisms, then it remains a descriptive essay.

#### Discussion

This involves structuring and building a logical and coherent argument. A discussion should flow smoothly from one point to the next, draw upon evidence, and possibly present alternative points of view.

Discussion might also involve evaluating the quality of the evidence presented to support an argument, not simply describing it.

An unconnected list of 'who said what' is not a discussion, even if it is littered with authors' names and dates.

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# DISCUSSION AND CRITICAL ANALYSIS

### Critical Analysis

Here you need to show you have looked at the material in a critical manner and not just taken it at face value. There are several strategies you could use:

- Try to look at the value of the evidence presented.
- Address inconsistent or incompatible evidence stemming from research and seek to explain it.
- Weigh up the pros and cons of different positions but don't be afraid to come down on the side of one argument if the quality of the evidence favours it.
- Try to find original links between different sources or different strands of an argument.
- Show originality by presenting new ideas or interpretations based upon your own understanding of the material.

For more resources, see the Learning Skills Hub:  
[canterbury.ac.uk/learning-skills-hub](https://canterbury.ac.uk/learning-skills-hub)

Email us at [learner@canterbury.ac.uk](mailto:learner@canterbury.ac.uk)

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