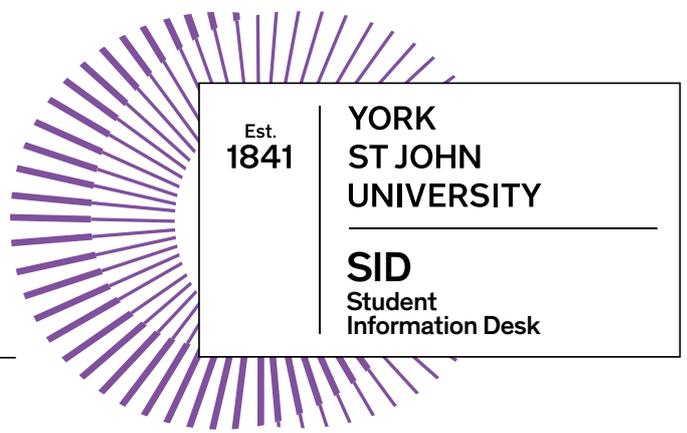


# Critical Thinking



STUDENT SERVICES FACTSHEET

**Critical thinking is a key skill for success at university. It involves examining ideas, and considering their strengths and weaknesses. Every piece of information you come across can be questioned: what you read or hear is almost certainly not the whole picture, and should be evaluated carefully.**

When reading anything at university, it is not enough to ask yourself “what is this person saying?”, or “how can I understand and memorise this?” You need to move beyond that, and start to consider that particular text in broader contexts - your module, your course, the literature in your field, and the world at large.

## Reading Critically

Being critical means questioning what you are reading - not just being negative about it, but also recognising good ideas and reliable findings. Here are some examples of questions to ask...

**To evaluate the quality of the text and ideas, relative to others in your area:**

- What are the strengths and weaknesses of this?
- Am I prepared to accept this position? If so, why? If not, why not?
- Does the author have any biases or make any assumptions?
- What evidence is the author using and how reliable is it?
- Do other claims support this idea?
- What is the basis for the author’s argument? Is it logical and why?

**To evaluate a research study:**

- What is the research question?
- What are the main findings?
- Have the findings been honestly / reliably reported?
- What methodology was used and why?
- Was that a suitable methodology for this question?
- How many participants were there?
- What sampling method was used?
- Are the discussion and conclusion soundly based on the findings – or do they go too far?
- How do these findings relate to other research studies in the field?

## Support

Study Development offers workshops, short courses, 1 to 1 and small groups tutorials.

To book an appointment, contact the Student Information Desk:

T: 01904 876477

E: [studydevelopment@yorks.ac.uk](mailto:studydevelopment@yorks.ac.uk)

# Critical Thinking

---

## To make connections with the contemporary political, social and economic climate:

- Who wrote this text, when and why?
- What is the strategic purpose of this idea? Or, why this, now?
- What does the author want me to believe and why?
- What has led to this idea?
- What would this idea lead to if implemented?

## To make connections with the real world:

- What are my experiences with this idea?
- How can this idea be applied to practical situations?
- What practical problems does this idea create or solve?
- What are the practical strengths and weaknesses?

## Writing critically:

- Be balanced: look at both sides of the argument.
- Be thorough: consider both the pros and the cons of all ideas.
- Be academic: support all claims with evidence and logical argument.
- Be clear: use precise terms and examples when needed.

## Avoid just citing what other writers say -- engage with their ideas:

- Evaluate their strengths and weaknesses.
- Compare and contrast different authors' ideas: identify similarities and differences.
- Synthesise ideas: link them together to form broader concepts.
- Identify relevant theories and evaluate them by applying them to practice.
- Explain observations through theories.
- Identify and analyse connections such as cause and effect or correlations.
- Point out problems and identify solutions.
- Explain the significance of events and theories.
- Highlight implications and draw conclusions.