

Assessment Guidance and Support

Module Aim:

Supported Self Study:

This module is based on self-study which will enable you to undertake a project that specifically relates to your own areas of interest, develop independence in learning and feel confident about your own ability.

This is your own independent project which draws on your own academic authority and judgement. There will be tutorial support available, but ultimately what you submit will be the product of your own judgement.

Learning Outcomes:

To achieve each outcome a student must demonstrate the ability to:

1. Collect and evaluate relevant information from a wide variety of sources using appropriate manual and electronic systems.
2. Employ appropriate academic conventions in the production and presentation of work.
3. Carry out a project independently.
4. Analyse a coherent synthesis of arguments from a range of contesting theories relating to care and well-being issues.
5. Reflect on and review progress in their own studies, and seek assistance or guidance as appropriate in order to enhance their personal development planning.

N.B. You will notice that to be able to meet learning outcome number 5, that you will need to attend supervision sessions with your module tutor. The module tutor list is up on the Moodle page. If your name is not on the list please notify the module coordinator immediately.

Assessment:

The submission of an independent critical project of 5,000-6,000 words (weighting 100%)

Assessment Submission:

Final submission TBA FEBRUARY 2019

Submission Format:

1. The front page will have the title clearly stated
2. The work will be in Times New Roman style
3. The work will be **double spaced** and .12 font size
4. There will be a reference list at the end of the piece

Critical Literature Review:

Your work will be in the format of a critical literature review (there are no participants involved). See below for some book sources.

Project Guidance:

1. **Introduction** – not an abstract

2. **Question:**

Description of the question/problem you are seeking to address

3. **Background:**

Why this question? What is the background from which this exploration arises?

4. **Discussion:**

What have you found in researching this topic? You need to identify some areas or themes and then discuss them. To do this you need to **make reference** to **authoritative** texts (see below). To make reference to, literally means, that you need to then cite a reference in the text to say from where the information comes.

5. **Critique/Analysis:**

You will then need to reflect on what you have discussed (i.e. other people's work), by thinking about what the implications are for your question

6. **Conclusion:**

Your conclusion will make an evaluation of the work by summing up in a concise way the 5 points above, and confirming the 'result' of your investigation. You do not introduce any new material into the conclusion.

N.B. Please note that there are no headings in the completed text, the above headings are merely guidance for you to help structure the work.

Authoritative Texts:

Books – try to be as up-to-date as possible

Documents from the website – these need to be from acknowledged sites, e.g. Welsh Government, NICE, NHS.

Websites – please ensure that these are credible, e.g. pokeintheeye.com is not a credible source and repeated use of one website is bad academic practice and will get low marks. You will notice that one of the learning outcomes (2) is specifically about satisfying academic conventions.

Journal articles- please ensure that these are as up-to-date as possible and again represent a good range of discussion.

Remember that your job is to synthesise other people's research, theories, claims and arguments, which you bring together into a conclusion at the end of the work to demonstrate an 'answer' to your question.

Academic Support:

To support your progress and to meet Learning Outcome 5, there will be:

- a. One-to-one supervision support. It is a general rule of thumb that there will normally be 3 x 20 minute meetings per student. To make the most of these sessions it is advised that you are clear about what support you want and that you prepare in advance. If you want the supervisor to read any work then it will need to be sent at least 5 working days in advance of the meetings. It is not possible to submit complete drafts for feedback.
- b. A record of the meetings will be kept as evidence of completion of Learning Outcome 5.
- c. There will be workshops available to support students with writing style and presentation of the work.
- d. Although this is an independent project linked to your own area of research, don't forget that you will be assessed not only on the content of your project, but also on the academic standard of your work. There are many books and excellent websites available that can give you support in this. There is also additional support available from the study skills tutor in Student Services should anyone require it.

So remember when constructing your piece to take into account the following considerations:

A. Content –

- a. range of sources
- b. use of argument and critique
- c. originality of thought and conception

B. Conventional academic standards –

- a. referencing
- b. grammar
- c. structure

Standard of work:

From the Academic Quality Agency (AQA) the benchmark standard for work at level 6 states that work at this level must include the following:

Achievement at Level 6 reflects the ability to refine and use relevant understanding, methods and skills to address complex problems that have limited definition. It includes taking responsibility for planning and developing courses of action that are able to underpin substantial change or development, as well as exercising broad autonomy and judgement. It also reflects an understanding of different perspectives, approaches or schools of thought and the theories that underpin them.

Reading List:

Examples of Useful Literature:

Aveyard, H., 2010. *Doing a literature review in health and social care: a practical guide*.

Maidenhead: McGraw-Hill/Open University Press.

Cottrell, S., 2005. *Critical Thinking Skills*, Palgrave: Basingstoke.

Hart, Chris, 2009. *Doing a literature review*.

Jensson, Jill K., et al. 2011. *Doing your literature review: traditional and systematic techniques*. London: Sage

Paul, R., and Elder, L., 2005. *Critical Thinking: Tools for Taking Charge of Your Learning and Your Life*. 3rd ed. London: Pearson.

Websites:

This is a short bullet pointed description of how to put together a literature review. Very useful.

<http://writing.wisc.edu/Handbook/ReviewofLiterature.html#intro>

This is a very useful page, with a downloadable PDF. It specifically addresses the critical nature of a Literature Review.

<http://www.writing.utoronto.ca/advice/specific-types-of-writing/literature-review>

You might find the following points useful to reflect on when putting your study together

1. Purpose: What do you intend to address in the study?

It can be helpful to list some ‘concepts’ that you will use in this project. A concept is something that can have more than one interpretation; the word Counselling itself is a good example of a concept, as there are many different ideas of what Counselling is. If you spend some time with these concepts and come to your own definition with the help of other sources it can act as a good way into your project. Concepts are the ideas, facts, values and beliefs that we refer to when engaging in academic work – it is crucial to have a full understanding of the concepts that you will use in your work to be able to describe them as fully as possible. This task is important at this stage because the understanding and description of the concepts will demonstrate your wider understanding of possible different interpretations and competing claims of knowledge, which can help to form your critical stance.

2. What questions are you raising?

The purpose of the project is to ask a question about a particular area within the field of Counselling which interests you. However, the task is not to choose a topic that you ‘like’ and think is ‘wonderful’ and want to say wonderful things about it, because this will not have a critical edge. The trick is to ask the question: Why is this as it is? How could this be different?

Does someone say something different? What evidence is there for this idea/theory/policy, these politics? Who said it should be like this?

An example of this from a recent Independent Project was where the student critiqued the Welsh Government initiative of School-based Counselling from the perspective of an education support worker, arguing that the role also had a significant ‘counselling’ element, which raised and addressed a question regarding the definition of Counselling and its legitimacy within support roles in work outside the Counselling environment. The argument was very well put forward and a convincing case was made.

Is there anything you want to challenge and put forward an alternative argument for?

The secret of a good critique is that it is balanced and fair, yet puts forward sufficient evidence for the claim you are making.

3. Assumptions? Are there any assumptions that you are making in the work?

Often when we feel interested and engaged in a topic, we can get drawn into the ‘rightness’ of our own position. It is a very skilful task within critical writing to be able to stand back from what can be a ‘blinkered’ way of seeing something. To do this it can help if we ‘self-position’, to declare where our own ideas, judgments and values about a particular concept come from. This often helps us to see that there might be another position that has legitimacy and needs also to be acknowledged – we don’t have to agree, but we need to acknowledge other positions or perspectives.

You need to demonstrate the ability to recognise and to ‘think outside your own box’.

By exploring your own positioning, it may help you to recognise when you come across assumptions in other authors’ works. They may be basing their arguments on ideas that have not been fully explored, or things that are taken for granted and assumed.

4. Information: What are your sources of information?

Remember that your sources need to demonstrate a breadth of engagement, including the context of the theme, those who ‘support’ and those who ‘challenge’ the theme you have chosen. Sources based on authoritative texts and texts written from an evidence base are expected. Do not use websites that do not use authorities in the field or texts that have not been peer reviewed as journal articles.

5. Inferences and Conclusions:

What at this stage might be the idea(s) that the work is leading to and any conclusions that might be emerging?

The conclusion is a significant part of your final piece. Students lose a significant amount of marks by not fully addressing the conclusion. The conclusion rounds up the work and tells the reader what can be understood from the argument, ideas, authors that you have introduced in the body of the text. As you complete each significant paragraph you need also to be building up a rough sketch of your likely conclusion. This is the element which many students fall down on – please give it significant attention. With no substantial conclusion it can feel to the reader, that the writer has not understood their own work, and does not have the knowledge and understanding to make a summary of the work, which rounds up the main points – concludes – after the points, argument and discussion is done. Even at the beginning of your process a good critical question or theme will have within it some possible suggestions of why the question is being asked and what can be said regarding an ‘outcome’ from the question. The more clarity you can have around this the more it will help you to structure your work.

6. Implications and Consequences: What might be the implications and consequences of the above?

The most skilful work then moves from a conclusion to further stretch the work and project into the future. What might be the implications and consequences of the conclusion that you might be coming to? This understanding comes from the idea that all knowledge and ideas have consequences and implications: knowledge is not a neutral value according to critical thinking.

10 pitfalls which have challenged students in the past:

- 1 There is no clear title – too long and complicated. Not representative of the work
 - 2 The introduction is not clear with regards to the purpose of the study
 - 3 The work is descriptive rather than an analysis/critique
 - 4 The paragraph structure within the body of the text is not conducive to supporting an argument
 - 5 The work is fragmented; there is little linking between paragraphs
 - 6 There are assumption in the text which aren't questioned and therefore the work becomes unbalanced and reads as opinion
 - 7 The conclusion is limited and weak
 - 8 There is no extended analysis which offers implications and inferences from the conclusion
 - 9 Too few or too many direct quotes and too long
 - 10 Direct quotes that hang in mid-air with no analysis
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