The advice in this brochure is a general guide only. We strongly recommend that you also follow your assignment instructions and seek clarification from your lecturer/tutor if needed.

Purpose of a critical review

The critical review is a writing task that asks you to summarise and evaluate a text. The critical review can be of a book, a chapter, or a journal article. Writing the critical review usually requires you to read the selected text in detail and to also read other related texts so that you can present a fair and reasonable evaluation of the selected text.

What is meant by critical?

At university, to be critical does not mean to criticise in a negative manner. Rather it requires you to question the information and opinions in a text and present your evaluation or judgement of the text. To do this well, you should attempt to understand the topic from different perspectives (i.e. read related texts) and in relation to the theories, approaches and frameworks in your course.

What is meant by evaluation or judgement?

Here you decide the strengths and weaknesses of a text. This is usually based on specific criteria. Evaluating requires an understanding of not just the content of the text, but also an understanding of a text's purpose, the intended audience and why it is structured the way it is.

What is meant by analysis?

Analysing requires separating the content and concepts of a text into their main components and then understanding how these interrelate, connect and possibly influence each other.

Next: Structure of a critical review