

Handout 1. Taking a Critical Approach

When researching and reading ask yourself:

- What is the main purpose of this text?
- What is(are) the author(s) trying to argue?
- What kind of evidence does the author use to support their argument?
- Has the author given consideration to alternative points of view?
- What agenda(s) might the author have?
- Is the evidence up-to-date and reliable?
- What are the implications of the text?

When writing aim to:

- Show a clear line of reasoning (argument).
- Present evidence (e.g. information from sources) to support your points / reasoning.
- View the subject from more than one perspective, i.e. considering sources which do not necessarily support your line of reasoning.
- Consider the implications of what you have written.
- Make sure you are addressing the 'how' and 'why' of an issue, as well as the 'what', i.e. not just describing.

Other questions to consider when reading:

What is the research methodology – do you have any criticisms of the methods used?

Are you aware of other evidence which supports, or challenges the arguments presented?

How does this piece of writing relate to others you have read and should it be included in your essay or report?