



# ACE Quick Guide to Evaluating Sources and Reading Critically

## Introduction

**Evaluating sources** and **reading critically** is central to academic study. It enables the reader to **analyse information** and make a logical **decision** about the extent to which they believe something to be **true or false**.

**Questioning sources** and their application to organisational practice enables the reader to **evaluate their validity**, usefulness, and coherence. Not only does this demonstrate an **engagement with relevant research** and theory but it can also facilitate the **creation of new ideas** and inform **future decision making**.

## Evaluating Sources and Reading Critically in your Degree Apprenticeship

You are expected to demonstrate a sophisticated approach to assessing a wide range of sources. This involves:



Identifying a range of relevant concepts, theories, and models to help demonstrate you understand an issue.



Exploring relevant sub-issues and associated problems, benefits, challenges, drawbacks and limitations.



Demonstrating an understanding of alternative perspectives, issues, concepts, theories and models.



Assessing gaps in research and contributing new ideas and applications.

(Adapted from Glasgow Caledonian University, 2022)



## Identifying Appropriate Resources

### The CRAAP Test:

Developed by librarians at California State University-Chico, the **CRAAP Test** is a helpful 'checklist' for **assessing** the **reliability** and **credibility** of a resource. This checklist is usually presented as a list of questions:

#### Currency

#### The timeliness of the information

- When was the information published or posted?
- Has the information been revised or updated?
- Is the information current or out-of date for your topic?

#### Relevance

#### The importance of the information for your needs

- Does the information relate to your topic or answer your question?
- Who is the intended audience?
- Have you looked at a variety of sources before choosing this one?

#### Authority

#### The source of the information

- Who is the author/publisher/source/sponsor?
- What are the author's credentials or organizational affiliations given?
- What are the author's qualifications to write on the topic?

#### Accuracy

#### The reliability, truthfulness, and correctness of the content

- Is the information supported by evidence?
- Has the information been reviewed or refereed?
- Can you verify any of the information in another source?

#### Purpose

#### The reason the information exists

- What is the purpose of the information?
- Do the authors/sponsors make their intentions or purpose clear?
- Does the point of view appear objective and impartial?

(Adapted from Benedictine University, 2019)

### Benefits of applying the CRAAP Test Model:

- Is an effective evaluation tool which can help to assess the credibility and relevance of a source.
- Questions outlined in the model promote critical thinking and interrogation rather than accepting sources at face value.
- Can save time during the research stage of assignments by enabling learners to identify and prioritise relevant material.
- Can be applied to a wide range of sources and academic literature.

## Reading Critically: The Critical Thinking Model

Having identified a credible resource for use in assignments, it is **important** to **ask meaningful questions**. Your questions should assess a source's **strengths and limitations**, rather than accepting the information at face value. This **three-stage model** will help you **generate questions** to **describe, analyse,** and **evaluate** scholarly resources.

### Descriptive Questions: Who? What? Where? Why?

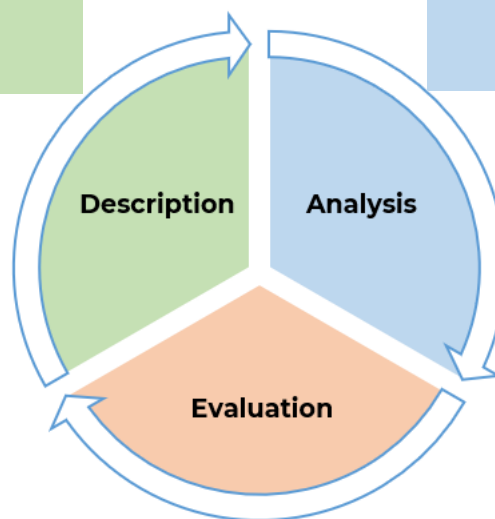
These will help you to **establish the background and context**.

- **Who** wrote this?
- **What** is it about?
- **When** was it written?
- What is the **aim** of the text?

### Analytical Questions: How? Why? What if?

These will help you to **examine methods, processes, causes, and alternatives**.

- **How** was the **research conducted**?
- **How** might one factor **impact** another?
- **Why** are these theories discussed?
- What are the **alternatives**?



### Evaluative Questions: So What? What Next?

These questions enable you to make **judgments**, draw **conclusions** and make **recommendations**.

- **What** do I **think** about this?
- Is it **significant** or **convincing**? Why/Why not?
- **How** does this **compare** to other research I have read?
- **What** can be **learnt** from it?
- What should be **done next**?



## Reading with Purpose

As you read, **annotate** your **sources** using these **descriptive, analytical, and evaluative questions**. This will enable you to:

- Read with **purpose**.
- **Engage critically** with the author's findings, assessing **strengths** and **limitations** of academic theories.
- **Locate evidence** to support your arguments.
- Propose **reasonable solutions** and **recommendations**.

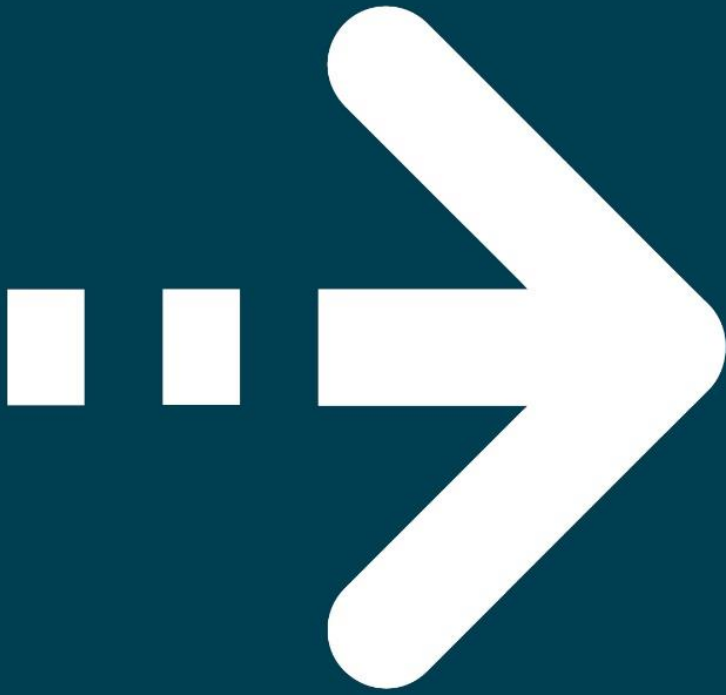
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