



The ACEDA Team

# REFLECTIVE WRITING 2: ADVANCED REFLECTIVE ANALYSIS

**Please note, these workshops are interactive!**

Please turn on your camera when the session starts. Message the lecturer if you are unable to unmute your microphone during the session.

- If you are having difficulties seeing the screen or hearing, sign out and back in again.
- Please mute your microphone when joining the session.
- You can unmute yourself when necessary.

**Session will start at:**

**XXXXX**



# Session Content

The ACE Team

Overcome  
common  
challenges of  
reflective  
writing

Learn how to  
further  
improve the  
criticality of a  
reflective  
section

Practise  
critiquing  
academic  
theories with  
reference to  
professional  
experiences

**By the end of the lesson you will be able to:**

Evaluate both theory and practice at a high level to write compelling reflective assignments

Task

**In groups, discuss the following questions:**

- 1) What is the *purpose* of reflective writing (especially at higher levels)?
- 2) What do you find challenging about reflective writing?

## The purpose of reflective writing

- To develop a **questioning, critical attitude** towards professional practice which can help yield new insights and **identify areas for change** and improvement.
- To showcase to the academic team the ability to **analyse complex phenomena** and **apply a wide range of relevant theories** in meaningful ways.
- To comment on the **strengths and weaknesses of specific theories** using practical experience.

## What learners typically find challenging:

1. Remembering what happened! (in order to critique)
2. Using a relevant reflective model and justifying your choice
3. Being sufficiently critical of your practice
4. Considering a range of alternative options / strategies
5. Interrogating the validity of academic theories
6. Relating theory to practice and vice versa
7. Linking to future practice and making recommendations

Task

**In groups, discuss strategies for overcoming 2 – 3 of these challenges**



# Criticality in Reflective Writing

# QA Criticality in Reflective Writing

The ACE Team

Task

## 1. What does it mean to be 'critical'?

Please post your answers in the chat!

Answer

## 1. What does it mean to be 'critical'?

- To analyse information and make a logical decision about the extent to which you believe something to be true or false.
- To move beyond description, evaluating the validity, usefulness, or coherence of theory in practice.





## Tip

1

Ensure that examples of professional practice analysed are specific and personal to your own experience

2

Explore counterarguments / alternative methods and theoretical frameworks to justify your position

3

Reflect on the extent to which theory and practice align

Task

**Match the tip to the appropriate example in the chatbox**

## Example

A

'While Author A states that..., my experience aligned with Author B, perhaps because...'; 'In future I will try Approach C, as this may...'

B

'While model D is influential in terms of..., it appears to make some industry-specific assumptions which do not apply in the case of...'; 'Model E worked as expected in this case, as...'

C

'The obstacles I faced while working on Project F were the following...'; 'Working within role G, I am often expected to do...'



## Tip

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## Example

C

'The obstacles I faced while working on Project F were the following...'; 'Working within role G, I am often expected to do...'

A

'While Author A states that..., my experience aligned with Author B, perhaps because...'; 'In future I will try Approach C, as this may...'

B

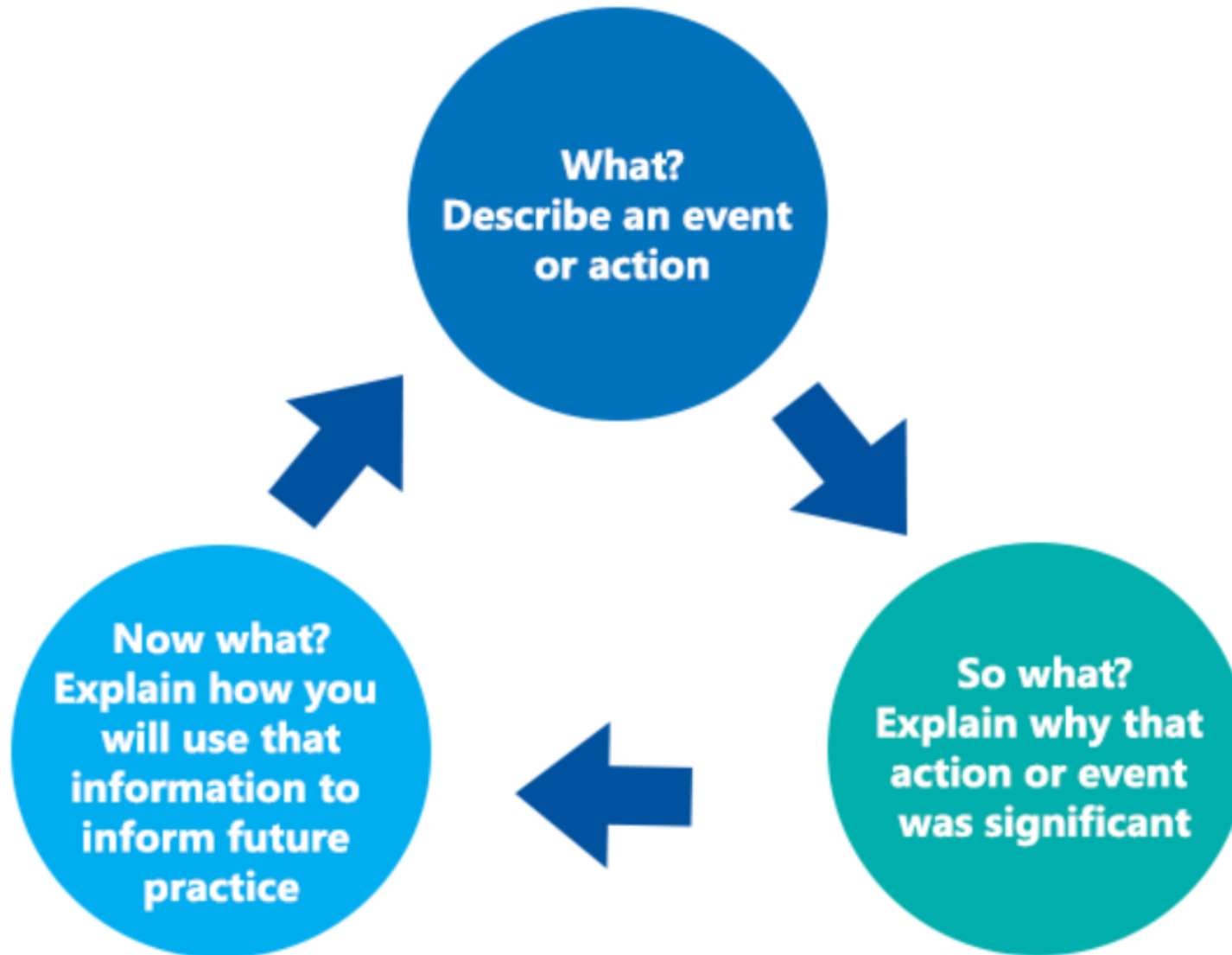
'While model D is influential in terms of..., it appears to make some industry-specific assumptions which do not apply in the case of...'; 'Model E worked as expected in this case, as...'



# **Improving Criticality Using Driscoll's 'What? So What? Now What?' Model**

# QA Model 1: Driscoll (What? So what? Now what?)

The ACE Team



(NursingAnswers, 2018, adapted from Driscoll, 2007)

## Improving Criticality in Reflective Writing

Below is an example paragraph from the 'What?' stage of Driscoll's (2007) 'What? So What? Now What?' model

During the Winter 2022 term I found myself following Smith (2015) and questioning the reliability and validity of journal articles, as I encountered conflicting studies and contradictory data in our weekly sessions. I was surprised at how my classmates appeared to automatically trust the content of peer-reviewed journals and sometimes felt that what was presented back to the group was accepted as factual as long as there was a reference attached (Jones, 2018). This created challenges when we used these sources for a group presentation.

### Task

**What critical analysis might you expect to find in the following 'So what?' section? How will the student make sense of and find value in their experience?**

## QA Improving Criticality in Reflective Writing

Example of an analysis section which evolves from the preceding paragraph. The work of four authors has been used as the student has attempted to understand their experience.

I learned that publication bias (Soady, 2022) has been widely documented in recent years, with Wrigley (2021, p. 138) arguing that although reputable journals adopt a robust peer review process, articles still get published with significant flaws as ‘journals have to publish to survive.’ Furthermore, Rollinson (2019) highlights the fact that statistical significance increases the likelihood of a researcher’s work being published, which might tempt some researchers to tamper with the data. I did not want to appear cynical to the rest of the group and kept these concerns to myself, which on reflection I perhaps could have volunteered to foster free and open communication (Walker, 2022).

(Adapted from University of Birmingham, 2014)



Task

# Improving Criticality in Reflective Writing

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Read the paragraph again and think about the scope to raise some counterarguments in this analysis (So what?) section of a reflective piece

I learned that publication bias (Soady, 2022) has been widely documented in recent years, with Wrigley (2021, p. 138) arguing that although reputable journals adopt a robust peer review process, articles still get published with significant flaws as ‘journals have to publish to survive.’ Furthermore, Rollinson (2019) highlights the fact that statistical significance increases the likelihood of a researcher’s work being published, which might tempt some researchers to tamper with the data. I did not want to appear cynical to the rest of the group and kept these concerns to myself, which on reflection I perhaps could have volunteered to foster free and open communication (Walker, 2022).


(Adapted from University of Birmingham, 2014)


## QA Examples of Possible Counterarguments

- The claim that journals have a **'robust peer review process'** seems **inconsistent** with their **need to publish flawed work 'to survive'** and so surely further research is needed to prove or disprove this allegation.
- The suggestion that researchers might **alter their data for personal gain** is a serious charge and **appears improbable** given the likely academic repercussions.
- The author's **reluctance to voice concerns** about 'publication bias' may have been **indicative of a lack of conviction**, alongside a desire not to appear cynical to colleagues.



## QA Examples of Possible Counterarguments

- The claim that journals have a **'robust peer review process'** seems **inconsistent** with their **need to publish flawed work 'to survive'** and so surely further research is needed to prove or disprove this allegation.  


Consider counterexamples and evaluate academic evidence to build a more compelling argument
- The suggestion that researchers might **alter their data for personal gain** is a serious charge and **appears improbable** given the likely academic repercussions.  


Reflect on different interpretations of behaviour for deeper insight
- The author's **reluctance to voice concerns** about 'publication bias' may have been **indicative of a lack of conviction**, alongside a desire not to appear cynical to colleagues.

# QA Improving Criticality in Reflective Writing

Task

Following on from this 'So what?' paragraph,

- 1) Can you create three action points the author can implement in future practice?
- 2) How can you improve the criticality of these action points?

I learned that publication bias (Soady, 2022) has been widely documented in recent years, with Wrigley (2021, p. 138) arguing that although reputable journals adopt a robust peer review process, articles still get published with significant flaws as 'journals have to publish to survive.' Furthermore, Rollinson (2019) highlights the fact that statistical significance increases the likelihood of a researcher's work being published, which might tempt some researchers to tamper with the data. I did not want to appear cynical to the rest of the group and kept these concerns to myself, which on reflection I perhaps could have volunteered to foster free and open communication (Walker, 2022).

(Adapted from University of Birmingham, 2014)

## QA Improving Criticality in Reflective Writing

Compare this 'Now what?' section to your group's answer

Following these realisations, I will have to adopt a more robust approach in selecting appropriate journal texts when researching for my next assignment (Johnson, 2017). Following McIntosh (2021) I will use the snowball method to find useful sources which are referenced in my set texts and communicate these to my classmates during groupwork. Through this I aim to become a more proactive and engaged participant in the creation and diffusion of knowledge, which will hopefully further prompt me to overcome my shyness and share ideas with confidence in academic settings (Adams, 2020).

(Adapted from University of Birmingham, 2014)



# ACE Critical Thinking Checklist



You can use the ACE Critical Thinking Checklist to assess the **criticality of your work!**

Have I presented an argument?	
Have I justified my argument?	
Have I explained its significance?	
Is my argument convincing?	
Have I connected my ideas with appropriate signalling language?	
Are my ideas supported with evidence?	
Have I engaged critically with scholarly resources, evaluating the validity, coherence, and usefulness of their arguments?	
Have I considered the strengths and limitations of their positions?	
Have I engaged in comparative analysis, exploring relevant disparities, contradictions, or alternatives proposed by the wider academic community?	
Have I effectively refuted their findings and / or explained why they should be regarded as less important or contextually relevant?	



# Improving Criticality

The ACE Team

## Use theory to:

- Suggest **reasons** and **explanations** for actions / outcomes
- Identify possible **alternative approaches** to the situation

## But also to:

- Consider more than one theoretical approach / explanation
- **Evaluate** the **merits** and **weaknesses** of each in your context
- Identify which of these theories, singly or in combination, offers the best prospect for **better outcomes** in future



# **Critiquing Theory by Reflecting on Practice**

# QA Critiquing Theory by Reflecting on Practice

Have you recently tried to apply a theory in a professional context? What was the outcome?

For example:

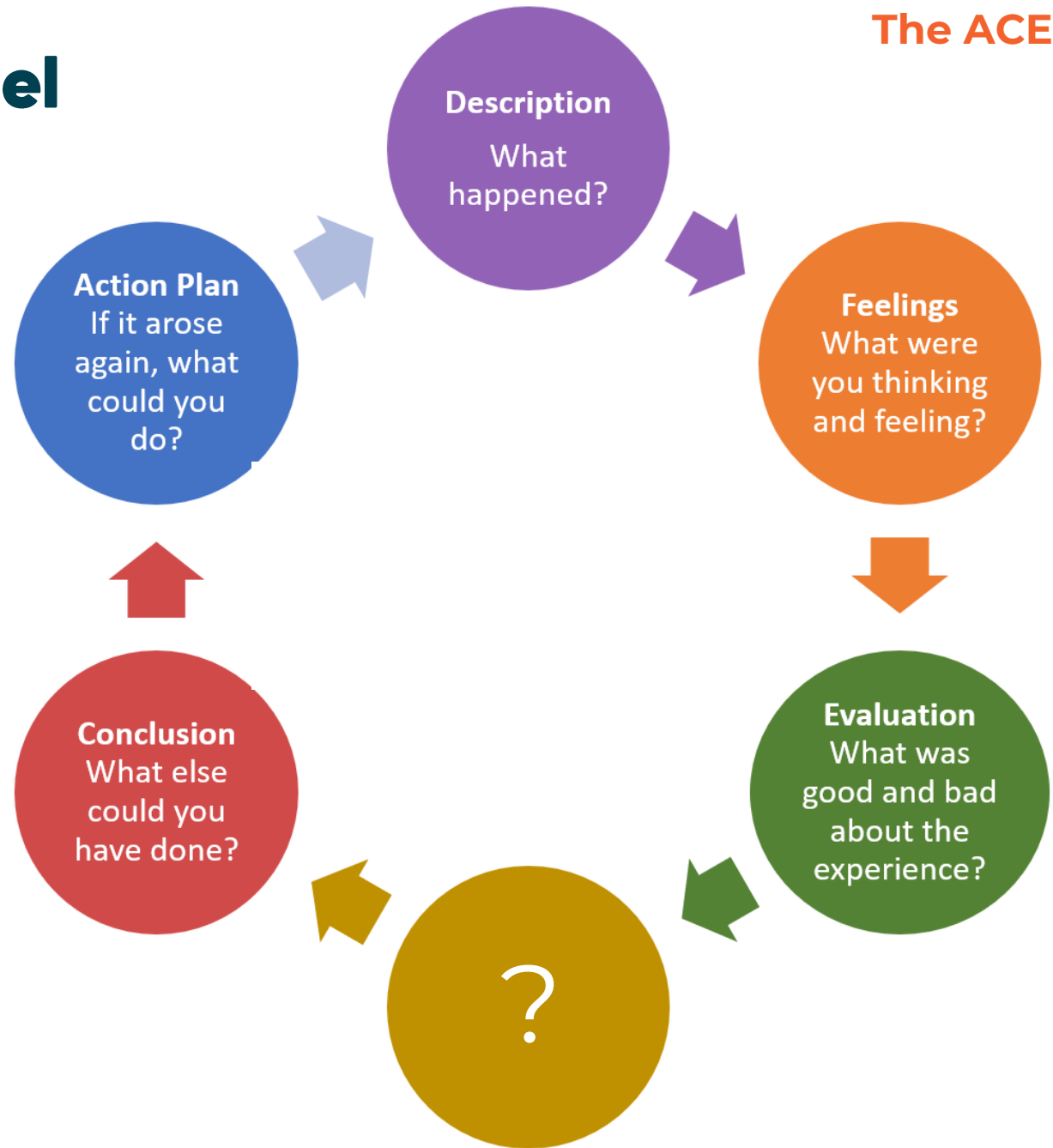
- Did a certain theory work exactly as specified? Why or why not?
- Did a particular approach have some advantages but also some limitations?
- Could two models be combined to mitigate the weaknesses of each?

**Tip** : Thinking like this is the first step to evaluating the strengths and weaknesses of theories by reflecting on professional practice!

# QA Gibbs' Reflective Model

The ACE Team

Which section is missing from Gibbs' model?







# Critiquing Theory by Reflecting on Practice

The ACE Team

Below is an excerpt from an **analysis** section of a reflection on *healthcare practice*.

Task

**Please read and share suggestions for how to critique theory by reflecting on practice.**

'Smith and Brown (2010), and Evans (2011), both conducted large scale trials which show the benefits to healing time of leaving paediatric surgical wounds exposed rather than covered following surgery. However...'

(Adapted from University of Southampton, 2010)

# QA Critiquing Theory by Reflecting on Practice

Here, the writer challenges the theory with reference to their own workplace experience:

‘Smith and Brown (2010), and Evans (2011), both conducted large scale trials which show the benefits to healing time of leaving paediatric surgical wounds exposed rather than covered following surgery. However, **personal experience** of children’s distress at seeing their wounds and wanting ‘a plaster on it’ or it ‘taken away’ suggests that *perhaps* the authors have overlooked the psychological toll of this approach.’

# QA Critiquing Theory by Reflecting on Practice

Below is another excerpt from an **analysis** section of a reflection on healthcare practice.

Task

**Please read and share suggestions for how to critique theory by reflecting on practice.**

‘While evidence (Jones 2005; Brown 2007) suggests that it is safe for children’s tonsillectomies to be conducted as a ‘day case’, McGuigan (2009) favours an overnight stay. She argues that because haemorrhage is a rare event, sample size in these studies is too small to show whether or not the day case is actually safe. Furthermore, a qualitative study by James (2008) of 20 parents delivering home care following day case tonsillectomy, shows parents find the post operative night very stressful. Personal experience ...’

(Adapted from University of Southampton, 2010)

## QA Critiquing Theory by Reflecting on Practice

‘While evidence (Jones 2005; Brown 2007) suggests that it is safe for children’s tonsillectomies to be conducted as a ‘day case’, McGuigan (2009) favours an overnight stay. She argues that because haemorrhage is a rare event, sample size in these studies is too small to show whether or not the day case is actually safe. Furthermore, a qualitative study by James (2008) of 20 parents delivering home care following day case tonsillectomy, shows parents find the post operative night very stressful. Personal experience ...’

**Personal experience reinforces this point; one parent recently told me she set her alarm every hour to check her child was safe. Thus *at the present time* there is *arguably insufficient evidence* to support day case tonsillectomy in children.**

**\*Here, the writer confirms the theories’ validity** (Adapted from University of Southampton, 2010)

# QA The Purpose of Critiquing Theory by Reflecting on Practice

- To **confirm the validity of a theory** by emphasising its applicability across contexts.
- To **challenge the universality of a theory** by drawing attention to its flaws or limitations.
- Whether you are commenting on the strengths or weaknesses of a given theory, remember to do so using **exact** and **detailed** examples of practice **specific only to you!**



# Review



## Review

- 1. *'Model A appears to make some industry-specific assumptions which do not apply in my case as...'* is an example of exploring the correlation between theory and practice**



## Review

- 1. *'Model A appears to make some industry-specific assumptions which do not apply in my case as...'* is an example of exploring the correlation between theory and practice**







# Review

**2. You must give a counterargument for every single example of professional practice**

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## Review

**3. In reflective writing you should personalise and contextualise academic theories as far as possible**



# Review

**3. In reflective writing you should personalise and contextualise academic theories as far as possible**



## You might also like...

### ACE materials

- **Relating Theory to Practice** – available on your VLE
- **Critical Writing: Building an Argument** – available on your VLE
- **Use of Sources** – available on your VLE

### External resource

- University of Hull's overview of reflective writing:  
<https://libguides.hull.ac.uk/reflectivewriting/vsummary>



# Academic Concern?

The ACE Team

## Step 1

Look on the ACE page for resources (3 formats)

[ACE Page](#)

## Step 2

Check the upcoming workshops

[Book a Workshop](#)

## Step 3

If you are still unclear, book in a tutorial

[Book a Tutorial](#)

Thank you for attending today's ACE workshop.  
We would be grateful if you could take 2 minutes  
to complete our **feedback form**.

[ACE Team Feedback Form](#)

# References and Further Reading

Cottrell, S. (2017) *Critical Thinking Skills: Effective Analysis, Argument and Reflection*. 3rd edn. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Driscoll, J. (2007) *Practising Clinical Supervision: A Reflective Approach*. London: Bailliere Tindall.

Fowler, J. (2007) 'Thinking and writing at Masters level: a reflective passage', *British Journal of Nursing*, 16(14), pp. 887-90.

University of Birmingham (2014) *A Short Guide to Reflective Writing*. Available at: <https://intranet.birmingham.ac.uk/as/libraryservices/library/asc/documents/public/short-guide-reflective-writing.pdf> (Accessed: 12 June 2024).

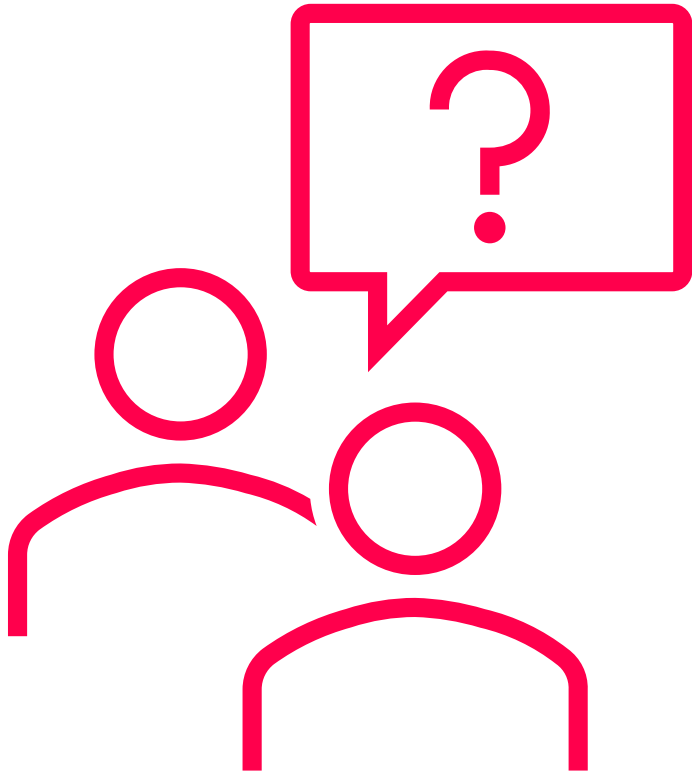
University of Hull (2022) *Overview of reflective writing*. Available at: <https://libguides.hull.ac.uk/reflectivewriting/vsummary> (Accessed: 8 June 2024).

University of Southampton (2010) *Writing at Master's Level*. Available at: [https://www.southampton.ac.uk/assets/imported/transforms/content-block/UsefulDownloads\\_Download/6CF753BB278C48A2813BCB6E783A4D94/M\\_level%20presentation2011%20handout.ppt](https://www.southampton.ac.uk/assets/imported/transforms/content-block/UsefulDownloads_Download/6CF753BB278C48A2813BCB6E783A4D94/M_level%20presentation2011%20handout.ppt) (Accessed: 9 June 2024).



QA

# Any Questions?



**Thank You!**