

Critical Proposal

Detailed Guidance 2024/5

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Detailed Critical Proposal Briefing

You are asked to write an 1,800 word critical evaluation on an empirical paper from a Psychology Journal within your chosen field of research, including critical reflection of how you and your group might improve upon it, and/or build on its strengths.

- 70% of your mark will depend on the quality of your critical assessment
- 30% will depend on your suggestions for how your individual and group efforts in the Mini-Dissertation might improve research in this area. (See Rubric for more detail.)

Important notes:

- We stop marking at 1,800 words. No penalty for going over, but the words you use after 1,800 words cannot win you marks.
- Worth 15% of your module grade for PS52007D (30 Credits).
- Your reference list does not count towards the word count and you **MUST** include a reference list.
- You must **ONLY** your 8-digit Student ID in the filename.
- You must focus on an empirical article (i.e. an article that reports the collection of quantitative data) from a Psychology Journal. You are encouraged to confirm the suitability of your paper with your Lab Tutor and Personal Tutor.
- You **MUST** provide a full APA reference to your chosen paper at the top of your essay.
- Although lab groups are collaborative, this must be your individual work, and collusion or plagiarism may result in a penalty or misconduct review.
- An AI declaration (regardless of whether you used AI or not) is compulsory.

Learning outcomes:

- To encourage a deeper and more rigorous approach to reading published research

- Appraise the process of psychological research and assess the merits of particular studies or tools
- Assess the reporting of research in published sources
- Critically reflect on how research practices may be improved, or strengths built upon, and how your Mini-Dissertation, although modest in scale, may actually improve research in the field

Your work should be in an essay format with an introduction and critical reflection/conclusion. It should not have sub-headings within the text, but you are recommended to cover all of the general areas presented below, with a focus on the most important aspects as they relate to your chosen project and paper.

The deadline for handing in your Critical Proposal is: Friday, 1st November 2024, before midday.

Suggested Outline

Summary (Compulsory and Important)

Provide a summary of the article in 150-200 words in which you capture the essentials of the Target Paper.

- What is the research domain and core question of the paper and what is of interest to you?
- What is the method that you are focussing on?
- What are the relevant results?
- Were there significant flaws or limitations in the study that might give you insight into your own research ahead?

Research Question

Do the authors link their experiment to wider issues and theories in psychology? What question is the paper trying to answer? Is the hypothesis clear? Is it well-argued?

Method

Is it clear and unambiguous? Could another (better) method have been used? Could you carry out a replication from this report? Is the design the most efficient for the purpose? Have broad theoretical constructs been well operationalized into specific variables?

Outcome

Is the Results section clear? Is the analysis unambiguous? Are all analyses and statistical choices appropriate? Did the experimenter answer the question?

Discussion

Are the inferences from the results justified? Well-argued? Do they advance our knowledge? What further questions are raised by the results? What experiments might be done to answer them?

Suggested Improvements

Which aspects of the research project could be improved? Is there a better research design? Are there extraneous or confounding variables? How would you remove them? Could the results be more clearly analysed and presented? Think also about which aspects of the paper itself could be improved. Were the hypotheses clearly reported and well-justified? Would you have displayed information differently (e.g., in figures or graphs)?

Critical Reflection and Conclusion

- What were the key strengths and/or weaknesses of the paper? Did you find the paper clear? Do you think it provides a persuasive answer to the research question set out, or are there important limitations that limit its overall usefulness?
 - How will your Mini-Dissertation improve the research presented?
 - Why is it important that YOU do this research? How will you implement 'Best Practice' in the Mini-Dissertation?
 - What has this exercise taught you, and how has it developed your metacognitive abilities?
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