

Example of descriptive and critical writing

The excerpts from the essay below illustrate how descriptive and critical writing fit together in academic writing. The essay task is: *Critically analyse how an integrative approach to counselling supports a client's change process.*

| Essay | Feature |
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| <p>There is a current trend amongst counsellors to adopt an integrative approach when working with clients (Atheorist, 2016, Btheorist, 2015 & Ctheorist, 2014). Ctheorist explains that an integrative approach to counselling draws on a variety of theoretical concepts, strategies and skills to facilitate a change process for the client (2015). This essay outlines what an integrative approach encompasses, and then analyses its limitations and benefits. It argues that whilst poor decision making by the counsellor impacts the efficacy of an integrative approach, that overall, when skilfully facilitated, an integrative approach supports the clients' change processes.</p> | <p>Descriptive writing: describes the topic, and the content of this essay.</p> <p>Critical writing: defines the task identifies and refines the thesis.</p> |
| <p>An integrative approach is a recent development in counselling approaches. The key authors of this approach are Atheorist, Btheorist and Ctheorist. In their 2016 survey, they identified that counsellors were working in more eclectic ways and introduced the term <i>integrative approach</i>.</p> | <p>Descriptive writing: outlines the background to this topic.</p> |
| <p>According to Atheorist (2016), a counsellor who uses an integrative approach has a broad knowledge of theoretical perspectives and strategies, and makes informed decisions about which ones would best support a client at any given stage in their counselling process. Btheorist (2015) and Ctheorist (2014) add that a critical component of an integrative approach is the counsellor's capacity to evaluate the client's</p> | <p>Critical writing: synthesises ideas and evidence from a variety of sources</p> |

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| <p>situation and draw on the most helpful responses.</p> | |
| <p>Dtheorist (2017) argues that it is the flexibility of this approach that enhances and accelerates the change process for clients. Dtheorist states that when counsellors respond to clients in relevant and meaningful ways at the time of need, change is more likely to occur (2017).</p> | <p>Critical writing: analyses the concepts and arguments and constructs consistent and well-supported arguments</p> |
| <p>However, Etheorist (2017) found that in cases where the counsellor switched too frequently from one theoretical perspective to another, and from one strategy to another, the client became overwhelmed and less likely to process the information and explore change. This suggests that, whilst flexibility is an important feature of an integrative approach, it can also be an inhibiting feature for client change.</p> | <p>Critical writing: discusses the issue in a balanced way</p> |
| <p>Nonetheless, Btheorist and Ctheorist (2017) in response to Etheorist's (2017) findings, suggest that the counsellor's decision making capacity is in question rather than the integrative approach itself. They counterargue by pointing out that it is the counsellor's capacity to accurately evaluate the client's situation that determines the efficacy of a switch for the client; not the switch itself.</p> | <p>Critical writing: evaluates the ideas and arguments of others</p> |
| <p>As a relatively new approach to counselling, an integrative approach encompasses a flexible and eclectic facilitation of strategies from a variety of conceptual perspectives to meet the client's needs at the time. However, the facilitation requires skilful decision-making by the counsellor to avoid disruption of the client's change process. In conclusion, the arguments against the use of an integrative approach are outweighed by the evidence supporting the efficacy of the approach itself.</p> | <p>Descriptive writing: summarises the key points</p> <p>Critical writing: makes evidence based judgements</p> |