

## **Critical Questions for Analysis of Research Papers**

A large part of being able to write deliberately and deconstructively is getting used to asking particular questions in your head whenever you read research papers. The more you do this, the better you will get at it, and your writing will gradually improve and become more critical and thoughtful. These questions are a good way to start with each research paper that you read:

### **Section 1: Relevance**

1. What are the credentials of the writers? Do they have credibility? How?
2. Of what relevance is the study or piece of work? What is the motivation for the work? Are the objectives clearly stated?
3. Who is the intended audience? Is the work elitist in this respect? How?
4. Does the work deal with issues of importance in practice? Does this matter?
5. Is the study likely to impact practice patterns or change beliefs?

### **Section 2: Informational**

1. Is the study of reasonable scope for meaningful analysis to be made?
2. Are assumption, inference and implication used correctly? Give examples.
3. Is the judgement of research evidence based on original sources or secondary studies?
4. Are there any cultural assumptions that render the work of limited application? How?
5. Does the work make fallacious comparisons with other similar studies? How?

### **Section 3: Validity**

1. How truthfully does the study evaluate, assess or measure what it purports to do?
2. Are there any fundamental systematic errors in the work that reduce its core validity?
3. What are the indicators by which we can say that the study is representational, in either quantitative or qualitative terms?
4. Do the measures used truly capture the relationship between the variables in the study, and the conclusions reached?
5. Are the implications for further research discussed and linked to the outcomes of this particular study?

### **Section 4: Persuasion and Clarity of Argument**

1. Are graphs and charts used to clarify any arguments made? Do they?
2. How are the three forms of argument – logos, ethos and pathos – used? Is one used more than the others? How?
3. How is literature used in the work? Is it used mainly in support or rebuttal of the central argument?
4. Are description and prescription used interchangeably?
5. Are conclusions and implications clearly stated?

### **Overall Questions**

1. What are the big concepts or ideas that stand behind the paper in question?
2. Does the paper argue well, and provide enough evidence for their arguments/hypotheses?
3. Where do you stand in relation to these? Do they make sense to you? Do any findings 'ring true' to you?
4. Do the final conclusions seem to resonate with you professionally, personally and intuitively? If yes why? If not, why not?
5. Finally, what have you learned from the paper? About the topic? About yourself? About your knowledge and understanding?