Criterion C: Critical thinking

This criterion assesses the extent to which critical-thinking skills have been used to analyse and evaluate the research undertaken.

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Level	Descriptor
0	The work does not reach a standard outlined by the descriptors below.
1–3	The research is limited. • The research presented is limited and its application is not clearly relevant to the RQ. Analysis is limited. • There is limited analysis. • Where there are conclusions to individual points of analysis these are limited and not consistent with the evidence. Discussion/evaluation is limited. • An argument is outlined **but** this is limited, incomplete, descriptive or narrative in nature. • The construction of an argument is unclear and/or incoherent in structure hindering understanding. • Where there is a final conclusion, it is limited and not consistent with the arguments/ evidence presented. • There is an attempt to evaluate the research, but this is superficial. If the topic or research question is deemed inappropriate for the subject in which the essay is registered no more than three marks can be awarded for this criterion.
4–6	The research is adequate. • Some research presented is appropriate and its application is partially relevant to the Research question. Analysis is adequate. • There is analysis **but** this is only partially relevant to the research question; the inclusion of irrelevant research detracts from the quality of the argument. • Any conclusions to individual points of analysis are only partially supported by the evidence. Discussion/evaluation is adequate. • An argument explains the research **but** the reasoning contains inconsistencies.

Level	Descriptor
	• The argument may lack clarity and coherence but this does not significantly hinder understanding. • Where there is a final or summative conclusion, this is only partially consistent with the arguments/evidence presented. • The research has been evaluated but not critically.
7–9	The research is good. • The majority of the research is appropriate and its application is clearly relevant to the research question. Analysis is good. • The research is analysed in a way that is clearly relevant to the research question; the inclusion of less relevant research rarely detracts from the quality of the overall analysis. • Conclusions to individual points of analysis are supported by the evidence but there are some minor inconsistencies. Discussion/evaluation is good. • An effective reasoned argument is developed from the research, with a conclusion supported by the evidence presented. • This reasoned argument is clearly structured and coherent and supported by a final or summative conclusion; minor inconsistencies may hinder the strength of the overall argument. • The research has been evaluated, and this is partially critical.
10–12	The research is excellent. • The research is appropriate to the research question and its application is consistently relevant. Analysis is excellent.

Level	Descriptor
	• The research is analysed effectively and clearly focused on the research question; the inclusion of less relevant research does not significantly detract from the quality of the overall analysis.
	• Conclusions to individual points of analysis are effectively supported by the evidence.
	Discussion/evaluation is excellent.
	• An effective and focused reasoned argument is developed from the research with a conclusion reflective of the evidence presented.
	• This reasoned argument is well structured and coherent; any minor inconsistencies do not hinder the strength of the overall argument or the final or summative conclusion.
	• The research has been critically evaluated.