



Essay Writing Workshop.

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Academic Tutor (Clinical Trainees)

Saturday 11 October 2025

10:00 – 11:00

What's getting stirred up so far?

The psychodynamics of essay writing ...



What may be going through your mind, consciously and unconsciously?

- Feelings about your work being scrutinised and assessed.
- Feelings about past experiences of learning – whether good or bad.
- Feelings about competition, and relative academic standing.
- Feelings about seminar leaders/markers of the essays.

These feelings can manifest in defensive or self-sabotaging behaviours:

- Procrastination.
- Avoidance of putting ourselves in the essay, by 'hiding' in theory or our client's material.

This workshop has been prepared to help you to really understand what is required of you and why so that you can make the most of the course.



Learning objectives

This workshop aims to:

- describe how to approach a clinical essay, and how clinical essays perhaps differ from previous essays.
- give plenty of worked examples to illustrate the crucial clinical essay skill of integrating theory, practice and self-reflection – and give a detailed example in relation to this term's essay question.
- describe how to apply the Plan-Do-Review process to essay writing.
- describe the features and qualities of a high scoring essay.
- signpost to further support and guidance if you need it.



What your markers are looking for:

3 key themes for assessment:

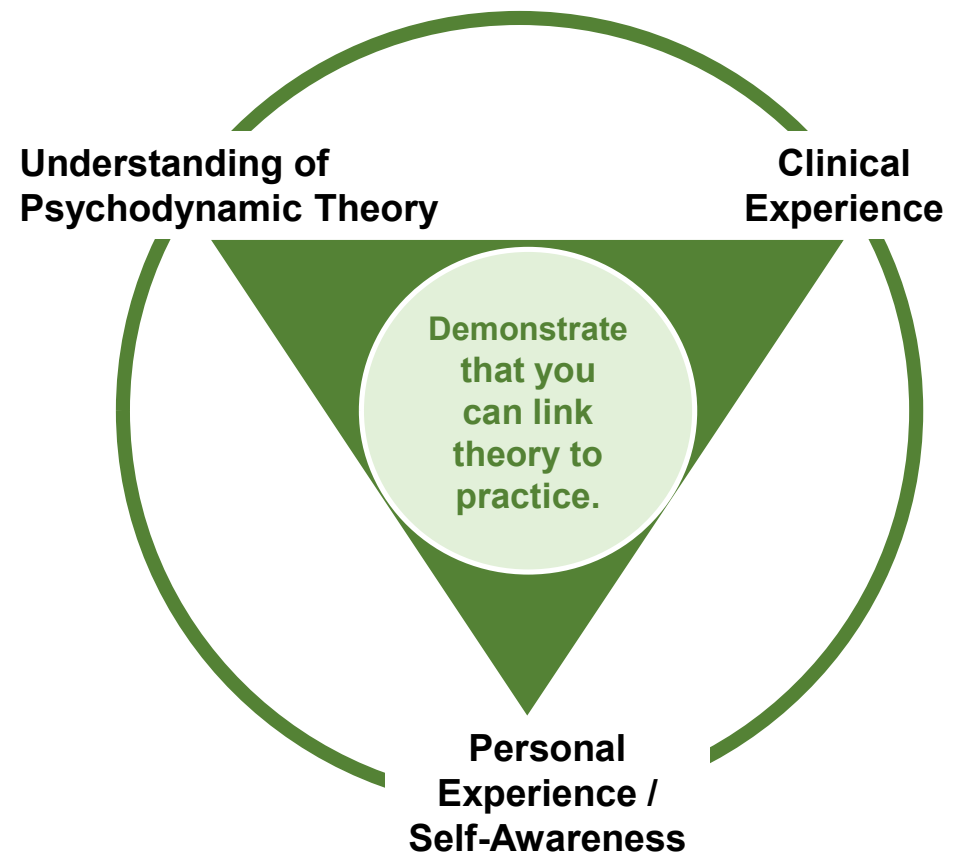
Understanding and application of
psychodynamic (and ethical) theory

- as introduced *during the course*
- and supported by your reading

Examples from your **clinical work** that illustrate
the theory

Your own experience / **self-awareness**

And bringing all this together...



To help integrate the assessment themes, ask yourself:

How do my experiences of clinical practice inform and 'bring to life' my understanding of the theory?

For example, a trainee notices a client withholding payment when angry with them about a break. They use this example to bring to life theoretical material on the subject of 'acting out'.



To help integrate the assessment themes, ask yourself:

How do I use and apply the theory as I am working 'in the room'?

For example, a trainee describes how they used their understanding of theoretical material about the importance of 'setting the frame', when contracting with their client in the first session.



To help integrate the assessment themes, ask yourself:

How do my experiences of counselling practice inform my understanding of myself?

For example, a trainee notices that that they find it difficult to end sessions on time. They describe how they used this observation within personal therapy to reflect on the way they relate to and feel about managing endings in general.



To help integrate the assessment themes, ask yourself:

How does my understanding of myself help to make me a better and safer practitioner?

For example, a trainee notices that they are strongly identifying with an aspect of their client's story and are at risk of merging with their client. They describe how they used therapy and supervision to help them to keep what is 'theirs' distinct from what is their 'client's', so that they could see their client for the individual that they are.



To help integrate the assessment themes, ask yourself:

How do I use supervision to help me integrate theory and practice, and develop my self-awareness as a practitioner?

For example, a trainee develops feelings of anger when working with a client. They describe how, in supervision, they reflected on what this anger might reveal about the client's inner world, their own inner world, and how they then practically used this insight within the work.



How do I put into practice the ethical principles that are described in theory in the BACP Ethical Framework?

For example, a trainee notices that their client – who was ‘sent’ by their partner – seems hesitant about therapy. The trainee describes how they showed respect in discussing this hesitation, and went on to ethically establish a basis for the work in the client’s considered consent.



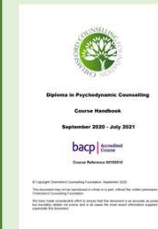
How might this look, when thinking about your first essay....



‘The first relationship is often seen as the prototype for all future relationships’.

Discuss this statement in the context of the psychodynamic theory that you have studied so far, drawing on examples from your own clinical work, clinical supervision or from personal experience.

Key Resources:



Course Handbook.
(Essays and
Assignments)

A real example from a previous student's essay:

The trainee made use of a therapeutic experience to illuminate the concept of the first relationship as a 'prototype'.

The trainee had discovered, halfway through DICS, that another trainee had just started work with the same therapist as the trainee (when the other trainee disclosed identifying details about their therapist). The trainee had strong feelings about 'sharing' their therapist, and the trainee noticed that they started reacting to the situation as if the therapist was their mother, and the other trainee was their younger sibling. This felt like a repetition of their lived childhood experience (as an eldest sibling) of suffering when they were 'dethroned' by their younger sibling, and the impact this had on their first relationship with their mother. This illustrated how the trainee's first relationship acted as a prototype, and was repeated in later relationships.



A real example from a previous student's essay:

Integration with theory: The trainee made use of Freud's 'Remembering, Repeating and Working Through' paper, which explores how repetition is a transference of the forgotten past. Reliving the dethronement with their therapist, and having it made sense of consciously, was healing for the trainee as they 'worked through' it in therapy – just as the paper suggests.

Integration with self-awareness: the trainee believed they would now hopefully spot when they were repeating the same pattern (e.g. in supervision groups, when they were envious of 'sibling' trainees being allocated clients ahead of them.)

Integration with their own practice: They hoped they would now be more mindful of how their own clients might feel about 'sharing' them with other clients.

Integration with ethical thinking: They examined whether it was ethical that their fellow trainee had disclosed the identity of their therapist, and thus revealed to the trainee the shared connection. They noted that their therapist had always declined to confirm or deny whether it was true that they were working with the other trainee, in line with confidentiality guidelines.



Academic standards for essays

This is a Level 4 (First Year University) Course.

Wordcount: 3000 +/- 10% (so 2700 – 3300). Quotations must be included in the word count and account for no more than 10%.

Exclusions to Wordcount: Title and Contents pages, References and Bibliography.

No footnotes or endnotes.

Correct referencing (Harvard) as applied by CCF

Formatting requirements: MS Word, Arial 12pt, double spaced, headers and footers. Front page. Written in the first person.

Ethical considerations:

- Confidentiality; anonymisation and/or disguise of all identifying details of clients, students and other individuals. No mention of CCF.
- Correct approach to safeguarding / clinical risk if applicable.
- Essay must be password protected.
- Original work of the student – no plagiarism.

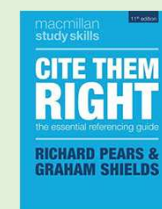
Key Resources:



Course Handbook.



CCF Harvard Ref Guide.
(Member's Area)



Cite Them Right,
Pears & Shields, (2019)

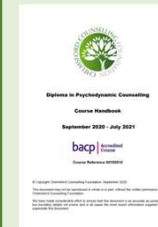
Anglia Ruskin Resource
[Harvard referencing 201920-ugqim.pdf](#)

Before you start ...

Make sure you understand the question and what is required of you!

Who? What? Where?
Why? How? What is...?
What is the significance of
.... ? Describe... Outline
... Comment on ...
Compare and contrast
Criticise... Evaluate ...
Critically evaluate...
Discuss ... Critically
discuss Assess

Key Resources:



Course Handbook.
(Tips / Procedure /
Preparation /
Framework)

A recommended process

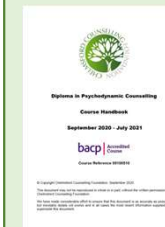
- Don't leave it too late.
- Make relevant notes throughout the course
- Organise your thinking (notes, brainstorm, mind maps)
- Draw up an essay plan



- Allow enough time for reading.
- Decide your approach and select your content.
- What is your line of argument?
- Set up your structure.
- Write your first draft.

- Plan time for reviewing and editing.
- Have you complied with Academic Standards?
- Review against the Marking Criteria.
- Review against the Essay Checklist.

Key Resources:



Course Handbook.
(Essay Criteria)
(Checklist)

Structure

1. Introduction (around 350-500 words)

- Show us that you understand the question and why it is important.
- Tell us how you have approached the issue, what you are going to write about and why.
- Explain what theory you will be drawing on and why.

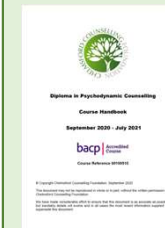
2. Main body of essay (1700 – 2600 words)

- Demonstrate your understanding of the issue, backed up by elements of the relevant theories (note: at this stage in your training you should be quoting original sources wherever possible, rather than secondary texts).
- Discuss and contrast different possible approaches or ways of understanding the issue, to 1) show us that you have examined the issue critically, and 2) avoid 'concrete thinking'.
- Provide examples from clinical experience or personal experience / self awareness that illustrate the theory in practice, and show us what you have learned and how you apply it in practice.

3. Conclusion (around 350-500 words)

- Summarise the key points covered and your line of argument.
- State your conclusion (tentative) and explain your rationale.
- State any wider implications or scope for further consideration.

Key Resources:



Course Handbook. (Framework)

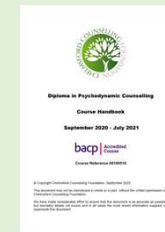
What does a good essay look like?

8 key characteristics

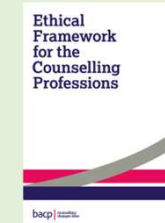


1. Demonstrates wide reading, including original sources.
2. Shows an accurate and nuanced understanding of the relevant theory in context.
3. Acknowledges the limitations of theory and its provisional nature. Critically evaluates theory where possible/appropriate.
4. Illustrates how the theory can be applied to clinical practice (at least 2 or 3 discussion points on the integration of theory and practice).
5. Demonstrates self awareness, with a clear explanation of how this insight was gained, and how it could be useful.
6. Demonstrates ethical awareness and reflection.
7. Relevant, clearly structured and addresses/answers the question set in an easy-to-read format.
8. Compliant with academic standards and correctly referenced.

Key Resources:



Course Handbook.



BACP Ethical Framework.



Anglia Ruskin Resource
A Helpful Guide to
Essay Writing
[Helpful guide to essay writing - Student Services](#)
[A Helpful Guide to Essay Writing! By Vivien Perutz - Studocu](#)

Further support and guidance ...

- Most universities have sections on their websites (public area) to help students with this. Google “academic writing” and you will find several listed.
- If you are struggling with academic writing you might like to try an Open Learn course at:
<https://www.open.edu/openlearn/education-development/essay-and-report-writing-skills/content-section-0?active-tab=content-tab>
You can take the whole course or just one module i.e. Essay Planning. The course is free.
- CCF offer 30 minute, one to one, Academic Tutorials on one Saturday of each term. (Course Handbook).
- Talk to each other (and to your seminar leaders), especially when you are at the planning stages of your essays. Sharing and exploring ideas with others can really help.



Over to you ...



Questions and Answers



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Thank you.