



# STUDY SKILLS: DESCRIPTIVE VERSUS CRITICAL

| <b>Descriptive writing</b>                | <b>Critical analytical writing</b>                         |
|---|--|
| States what happened                      | Identifies the significance                                |
| States what something is like             | Evaluates strengths and weaknesses                         |
| Gives the story so far                    | Weighs one piece of information against another            |
| States the order in which things happened | Makes reasoned judgements                                  |
| Says how to do something                  | Argues a case according to evidence                        |
| Explains what a theory says               | Shows why something is relevant or suitable                |
| Explains how something works              | Indicates why something will work (best)                   |
| Notes the method used                     | Indicates whether something is appropriate or suitable     |
| Says when something occurred              | Weighs up the importance of component parts                |
| States the different components           | Gives reasons for selecting each option                    |
| States options                            | Evaluates the significance of details                      |
| Lists details                             | Structures information in order of importance              |
| Lists in any order                        | Shows the relevance of links between pieces of information |
| Gives information                         | Draws conclusions  |

Adapted from: Cottrell, S, (2003) *The study skills handbook*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.