

Examples of good academic writing: level 7

Example 1: An extract of a critique of a journal article, on a research module.

Excellent written expression and critical analysis.

The study design was one of heuristic phenomenology. Phenomenology works to explore human perceptions and experiences (Johnson, 2012). Heuristic phenomenology has an autobiographical component (Goodwin, 2013) and is deemed an appropriate approach to this research given the primary researcher and interviewer was a burns survivor. The rationale behind the choice of methodology was lacking and it was not clear as to whether other methodologies had been considered. However, when the reader considered the nature of the study, it was clear that alternative methodologies would not have been appropriate. Ethnography was not suitable as Williams et al. (2016) were examining the feelings of participants, rather than observed behaviours (Smith, 2014). Grounded theory was not appropriate because this seeks to generate new theory (Lecot & Bourgoin, 2011), and the author's aim was to understand the experiences of the participants. Equally, action research would have been undesirable as it looks to influence or change the focus of the research through a cyclical process (Davidson, 2014). Heuristic research is not without its critiques and some phenomenologists criticise the approach claiming that it confuses the focus of the inquiry by changing the research goal from explication of the phenomenon to the researcher's own goals and self-development (O'Neil, 2013).

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Comment [1]: Good to give a justification for the choice of approach

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Comment [2]: Good to imply the importance of a clear rationale behind the choice of methodology

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Comment [3]: This clearly introduces what comes next i.e. consideration of alternative methodologies and why they would not have been appropriate for this study

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Comment [4]: Brief and clear overview of why alternative methodologies would not have been appropriate

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Comment [5]: At this stage, it is useful to mention possible weaknesses of the heuristic research

Example 2: Well written paragraph, with a clear argument and effective use of sources

The social worker, working at the interface between the State and service users (Johns, 2011), must tread a careful line between 'care' and 'control' (Nicholson, 2012) to build the relationships central to effective social work (Hill, 2011). Social work values, including challenging injustice and promoting empowerment (BASW, 2012a, 2012b), help to guide the way. Social work aims to achieve positive change in service users' lives (Leroux, 2012), and practice that takes account of both individual and social inputs into problems "requires both the individual and others in society to shoulder responsibility for the predicament of any given human being" (Chapman, 2010, p.92). In cases where a social worker must use

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Comment [6]: Clear topic sentence introducing the topic of the paragraph

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Comment [7]: Highly relevant to relate to Social Work values guiding the Social Worker

statutory 'control' powers, for example to protect a child at risk from parental neglect, the social problems affecting parents should also be in the social worker's mind (Young, 2014). Failure to recognise when service users are disadvantaged by social problems risks pathologising and blaming them for the factors over which they have no control (Nicholson & O'Leary, 2012), and is oppressive (Bowen, 2002).

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Comment [8]: Good to use examples for illustration and demonstration of understanding

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Comment [9]: A clear conclusion to a well-written and well-constructed paragraph