

PME Webinars 2022

Preparatory Notes for Session 3:

The Critical Analysis & Surgery

1. [Defining the Critical Analysis](#)
 2. [Choice of Subject](#)
 3. [Structuring the Critical Analysis](#)
 4. [Writing Style](#)
 5. [Presentation](#)
 6. [CA Summary Sheet \(to be completed for CA Surgery\)](#)
 7. [Examples of Past Titles](#)
-

1. Defining the Critical Analysis

The Critical Analysis is one of the most important means of demonstrating that you have acquired the professional competence expected of a Chartered Forester or Chartered Arboriculturist. An inadequate or substandard Critical Analysis is the most common reason for applicants failing to reach the Professional Interview stage. For this reason, it is important that you think about your Critical Analysis well in advance of the submission deadline, ideally more than six months before submission, which should allow sufficient time for appropriate levels of planning, writing, reflection and review.

The PME Guidance Notes define the Critical Analysis as

“A written introspective examination and critique of some task or situation, or series of tasks or situations, in which the applicant has been involved.”

In other words, you are asked to describe a professional challenge you have faced at work, explain how you (or you and your colleagues) set about solving the problems identified and detail the lessons you learned.

N.B. The challenge must be **professional**, rather than technical or operational. The introspective examination, critique and lessons learned should also focus on **professional** considerations, development and learning outcomes.

Top Tip: Consider your chosen topic in the context of the [Institute's Code of Conduct](#).

2. Choice of subject

Selecting a suitable subject can be difficult so you are urged to start by discussing possible subjects with your colleagues and, if appropriate, with the Verifier you have appointed to verify your Work Records.

The subject must be sufficiently complex to be open to critical analysis: if there was only one obvious solution, there would have been no need to call on the advice of a professional. However, subjects with too many key issues cannot be adequately examined in the space allowed so are best avoided.

[Examples of subjects submitted by previous applicants are given below.](#)

As well as analysing and recommending between options, you will be expected, where appropriate, to show that you have considered matters such as health and safety, legal implications, conflicts of interest, professional standards and the Institute's Code of Conduct.

The subject should reflect the Competency Areas claimed in your wider PME submission. **However, applicants should not present a Critical Analysis with a subject matter that focuses heavily on 'Competency Area 1. Business and Management Skills.'** A Critical Analysis that focuses on your other Competency Area(s) is strongly recommended.

If a topic you are considering can easily address the questions below, it may be appropriate:

- What was the challenge?
- What was your role?
- What were the possible solutions?
- What solution was chosen and why?
- What happened?
- What would you do next time?
- What did you gain from the experience?

If a potential Critical Analysis topic that you are considering does not address these questions or if you have to force it to fit, you would be well-advised to discard it and come up with another one.

3. Structuring the Critical Analysis

As noted above, a Critical Analysis is generally expected to address the following questions, which also provide a solid base for structuring your work:

1. What was the challenge?

Briefly describe the situation, the problem encountered and the objectives set.

2. What was your role?

You are not expected to have been the manager or final decision-maker, but assessors need to know the extent to which you were involved in the decision making.

3. What were the possible solutions?

Identify and analyse the options which were (or might have been) available to you to achieve the objectives.

4. What solution was chosen and why?

Outline the process that led to your choice.

5. What happened?

Did it turn out as expected and what were the reasons for any successes or failures?

6. What would you do next time?

Recommend, with reasons, how you would handle a similar situation in the future.

7. What did you gain from the experience?

What lessons did you come away with, particularly concerning your professional development?

In combination, the answers to the first two descriptive questions should form the introduction and **should not occupy more than one-third of the completed work.**

While the first third (or less) of the Critical Analysis is descriptive, the rest should be an analytical examination of the options, solutions and results with appropriate deductions and recommendations.

A Critical Analysis does not form a simple historical account: rather you must demonstrate the professionalism being looked for by the assessors by showing your ability to identify and critically review the problems and possible solutions in a challenging professional situation.

The Critical Analysis must also demonstrate the required level of competence in:

- Written communication
- Data collection and handling
- Problem-solving
- Reflective analysis
- Understanding of the role of the professional

4. Writing style

You may choose to avoid the use of the first person and write your Critical Analysis in the style of a standard report. However, experience has shown that an individual applicant's consideration of their role and understanding are generally better expressed when written in the first person.

Of course, this more intimate style does not mean that you should fail to acknowledge your sources of information or the contribution of others or that you should use informal language.

You are strongly advised to avoid using the passive voice (e.g. “it was decided that”) and use the active voice instead (e.g. “I decided that” or “My manager decided that”). This will help you to clearly demonstrate the extent of your input, involvement and responsibility.

In writing your Critical Analysis, you should keep the reading audience – the Assessors - in mind. The Assessors appointed to review your submission will be professionals practising in the same general field as you. Therefore, you should not write your Critical Analysis as though it is intended to be read by someone without a professional forestry or arboricultural background.

You should also note that a Critical Analysis is not merely an essay that details a particular aspect of your job. You should avoid lengthy descriptions of a technical or operational nature and concentrate on those aspects that tested your professional skills, such as problem-solving, conflict resolution and knowledge boundaries. Again, considering the topic in light of the Institute’s Code of Conduct should help with this.

5. Presentation

The final work must be between 3,000 and 3,500 words in length, excluding any tables, figures, maps, photographs, bibliographies and appendices. In combination, these supplementary items should not cover more than five additional pages (single-sided).

Your submitted Critical Analysis should be a clean professional document. There should be no spelling or typographical mistakes, grammatical errors, or erroneous punctuation. Sentences and paragraphs should be well structured, comprehensive and not overly complex or convoluted.

Tables and diagrams should have descriptive labels.

Sources of information should be suitably referenced.

Pages and sections should be numbered and section headings should be provided where appropriate.

Applicants are advised to provide a cover page and a table of contents to aid navigation.

The final word count should be noted on the cover page or at the end.

In preparing your Critical Analysis, you should consider confidentiality and ensure that you have obtained appropriate permission of named individuals or that you have suitably disguised their identities.

Where possible, you should ask colleagues, friends and family to read your drafts and suggest ways of improving your work.

As the Critical Analysis must be your own work, it should not be submitted under your employer’s branding. Similarly, as your Critical Analysis is not an Institute publication, it should not be submitted under the Institute’s branding.

Finally, the Institute requires that you upload a pdf of your final work through the PME Portal in the Members Area and send two hard copies to our Edinburgh Office by 1 August. Please consider the

environmental impact of your choice of presentation; and consider that, in the first instance, your Assessors will review the PDF.

6. CA Summary Sheet

If you are planning to attend the Critical Analysis Surgery at the end of this session, you should aim to complete the following summary table for the topic(s) you are considering. This will help you to identify a suitable topic, plan the structure, and identify questions to discuss with an assessor at the surgery.

If a topic you are considering for your Critical Analysis can easily address the following questions, it may be appropriate. If it doesn't address these questions, if you're having to force it to fit, then you may wish to steer clear of this subject matter as a topic for your Critical Analysis and come up with another one.

We advise trying to answer each of these questions about a potential topic with a sentence or two of text. If you proceed with the topic under consideration, these answers could form the basis of the first draft of your Critical Analysis.

What was the problem?	
What was your role?	
What were the possible solutions?	
What solution was chosen and why?	
What happened?	
What would you do next time?	
What did you gain from the experience?	

Examples of past subjects for critical analyses

The following are some of the topics used by previous applicants in recent years and are offered merely to assist applicants when considering the subject matter of their proposed critical analysis.

In no way does this information constitute an approved list of subjects.

- A critical analysis of managing client pressure to remove trees during the construction of an approved development.
- A critical analysis of the 2006-2013 Rural Development Programme and development of forestry measures for the 2014-2020 Rural Development Programme.
- A critical analysis of ancient semi-natural woodland management and restoration of plantations on ancient woodland sites on a mixed rural estate in the Midlands.
- A critical analysis of the challenges face following the refusal of a Tree Preservation Order (TPO) application, and during the subsequent appeal process.
- A critical analysis of the consultation for urban community woodland creation.
- A critical analysis of the introduction of a community-led approach to tree planting at Bristol City Council.
- A critical analysis of the management of a woodland enhancement operation on a highways scheme in Royal Tunbridge Wells, Kent.
- A critical analysis of the management of Forestry Commission brownfield restoration projects in the Thames Chase Community Forest.
- A critical analysis of the operational options to restore a plantation on ancient woodland site infected with *Dothistroma* (Red Band) Needle Blight.
- A critical analysis of the proposals considered and operations undertaken to plant up a 17.8 hectare restock site in Rowney Warren Woods, Bedfordshire.
- A critical analysis of the strategies undertaken to bring a SSSI woodland into positive management.
- A critical analysis of woodland deer management in Strathspey on the National Forest Estate.
- A critical review of developing policy for the Scottish forestry sector.
- Adapting a site-specific Tree Risk Identification and Management policy into a national policy document.
- Addressing the edge effect of Strathmore Forest on the Caithness and Sutherland peatlands SAC/SPA.
- Addressing the use of inappropriate ground preparation on a woodland creation site.
- Agreement of a 10-year woodland management plan on a country park designated a Site of Special Scientific Interest.
- A harvesting operation to reduce health and safety risk posed by unstable ash dieback trees.
- Amenity land management: Critical analysis of options and results.

- Analysis of past claim patterns related to local authority procedures concerning trees and related subsidence.
- Analysis of the design plan process for a 500 hectare woodland in a National Park.
- Analysis of the issues, and the consequent research needs, involved in the conservation of remnant ancient oaks in an important heritage area.
- An analysis and examination of the applicant's role using appropriate technology in a developing country.
- An analysis of management regimes and their effect on windblow in the Welsh uplands.
- An analysis of the challenges faced and decisions made when objections were received in respect of timber harvesting operations.
- An analysis of the impact of development plans on veteran trees in an historic parkland landscape.
- An approach to PAWS restoration on conifer shelterwoods at Great Wood, Somerset.
- An examination of the economic and practical options for individual tree protection on a disputed site.
- An investigation of the circumstances before and during instances of unauthorised timber removal.
- A review and analysis of a Forest Certification audit.
- A review of operations and planning procedures to negate landslide risk within the Aultderg Gully.
- A review of specific protection measures required for an individual tree on a construction site.
- A review of the National Forest Company's woodland management grant in 2016.
- Assessing the implications of retaining prominent trees on development sites.
- Assessment of successes and failures associated with a farm woodland project based on a case study approach.
- Between a road and a river – Clearfelling a small, but challenging woodland in South Scotland.
- *Ceratocystis platani*: Protecting and preparing the UK.
- Coed Cathilas harvesting access: Which of three rights of way should be exercised to create a new haulage road and unlock 13,000 tonnes of timber?
- Compliance with a statutory plant health notice and ensuring the delivery of client objectives.
- Conducting forest operations in the vicinity of private water supplies in West Scotland.
- Creating wildlife infrastructure in Radnor Forest, Mid Wales.
- Creation of a Tree Management Strategy for Breckland Council.
- Creation of the Council's Tree and Woodland Strategy: An analysis of the process.

- Critical Analysis – Ash dieback surveying.
- Critical Analysis: Investigation and resolution of alleged damage attributable to the action of Poplar tree roots.
- Critical analysis of a forest road Scottish Rural Development Programme grant claim.
- Critical analysis of an SRDP application for a new woodland creation on Dunach Estate.
- Critical analysis of response to a water supply issue related to EIA consent conditions.
- Critical analysis of the construction of a forest road network and associated infrastructure for a 300-hectare woodland.
- Critical analysis of the tree protection process during the phased upgrading of holiday accommodation units within a woodland holiday park.
- Critical analysis of the watercourse management project to promote forestry as a positive land use for improving water quality.
- Critical analysis of works at Gib Torr Forest, Peak District.
- Critical analysis on the use of an issues log to aid the development of large scale woodland creation schemes.
- Critical examination of methods of putting a monetary value on amenity trees.
- Dealing with the *Phytophthora ramorum* outbreak in South West Scotland.
- Decision on the division of lots and the market approach to woodland sales, recognising the potential conflict of interest through loss of woodland management of the site.
- Design and sourcing requirements for a wood fuel storage depot at biomass-fuelled plant.
- Design, implementation and management of a tree risk strategy.
- Designing a short rotation forestry planting scheme.
- Determination of the fuel supply mix for a proposed biomass power plant, considering the optimum balance from a range of fuel sources.
- Determining the growth rate of trees in the urban environment.
- Developing and introducing a new tree safety management system.
- Developing the use of the network contribution dataset in planning forest design and operations.
- Developing tree Health and Safety inspections and management: Managing Massaria disease in Plane trees in a public park.
- Development of a small scale woodland creation project in Pembrokeshire with particular focus on the stakeholder consultation process.
- Digital data capture and meeting the needs of a client.
- Elements of the Oak Processionary Moth control programme in Pangbourne, West Berkshire.
- Ensuring successful tree protection strategies in relation to a difficult water main diversion.

- Environmental Impact Assessment regulations: A barrier to woodland creation in England?
- Eurasian Beavers in the Greathough Brook, Forest of Dean. A natural solution to a man-made problem?
- Failing to Deliver: A critical analysis of managing a contract in crisis.
- Fencing – Creating boundaries, in both the physical and professional sense.
- Finding a cost effective way to clear young *Phytophthora ramorum* infected larch crops to leave sites in a suitable condition for cultivation and restocking.
- Forest establishment operations: A critical analysis of using alternative ground preparation methods.
- Gaining felling approval on a large estate.
- Harvesting operations in a multi-use forest.
- Hazard assessment and report – Mature English Oak on a village green.
- How can the woodland management planning process be improved upon? A consultant's perspective.
- Influencing and managing a client's expectations.
- Implications of logging in natural forests in a developing country.
- Investigation into tree harvesting adjacent to a Scheduled Ancient Monument.
- Investigation into unauthorised felling within a Tree Protection Order area.
- Issues arising in the identification and delivery of compensatory planting under the policy on the control of woodland removal.
- Land management options for heathland restoration in upland forest areas.
- Land management planning for the Flow Country: Determining appropriate responses to the call for bog restoration.
- Liever Island, Argyll: Harvesting and monitoring of the uplift of timber.
- Low ground pressure timber haulage: An economically viable alternative where stone quality limits forest road capacity.
- Management of a byway open to all traffic during forest operations.
- Management of a novel silvo-pastoral research project, an analysis covering fund-raising, building internal support, local community engagement and media management.
- Management of a timber harvesting and marketing programme, with particular reference to developing relationships with customers and contractors, and improving quality control.
- Managing a complex site with multiple stakeholders.
- Managing a thinning parcel on a mixed estate for a new client: A review and lessons learned.
- Managing physical damage to a Scots Pine subject of a tree preservation order on an urban development site.

- Managing Sitka Spruce regeneration for woodland creation – Carron Valley Trial.
- Managing stakeholder resistance to an approved felling licence.
- Modelling of the suitability for acquisition of land in Central Scotland, from a woodland creation perspective.
- Morenish Woodland creation: A study in the feasibility of implementing productive upland planting in 21st century Scotland.
- Negotiating management options for two broadleaf shooting estates in North Wales.
- Oak Processionary Moth – Integrating the complex arrangements for management of this notifiable pest with expectations of a wide range of stakeholders.
- Production of a tender response for delivery of a large scale native woodland creation scheme.
- Provision of forestry advice to a windfarm developer.
- Reducing surveyor risk during environmental surveys adjacent to the highway network.
- Removal of storm damaged roadside trees using explosive charges.
- Researching, developing and establishing a firewood supply business.
- Respacing naturally regenerating Sitka spruce.
- Respacing regeneration: A critical analysis.
- Responding to a statutory plant health notice on a challenging site.
- Restocking at scale: A critical analysis.
- Retaining trees on development sites: Balancing the often conflicting objectives.
- Safeguarding Britain’s green corridors.
- Selection of suitable sites for woodland diversification.
- Small scale harvesting in the Midlands.
- Snowden Close – Contractor management during woodland creation.
- Solving the GIS requirements of a UK wide HLF-funded ancient woodland restoration project.
- SSSI’s, accepting woodland management and including sycamore in the species mix.
- Taking the Public Forest Estate in England through UKWAS audit: Pivoting on a tipping point.
- The design and build of a coupe planning database incorporating EPS licencing toolkit.
- The effectiveness of a range of management options in meeting specified objectives for a small area of state-owned recreation and amenity woodland.
- The effects of discovering a protected species on a harvesting site.
- The influx of *Chalara fraxinea* reports to Forest Research in winter 2012-2013.
- The issuance of a Statutory Plant Health Notice (SPHN) on an estate in the west of Scotland.

- The Long Wood: A case of woodland removal.
- The management of broadleaf elements of a woodland creation project.
- The management of young memorial woodland at first thin.
- The scoping, production and implementation of a tree risk management strategy for Elmbridge Borough Council.
- Towards achieving optimum arboricultural outcomes for a major redevelopment project: A critical analysis of the effectiveness of combined emphases of professional approach.
- Tree felling at Doncaster Racecourse: The use of legislation to secure a mutually beneficial outcome.
- Tree growth projection modelling: A critical analysis.
- Tree Risk Assessment – An evaluation of a project risks, costs and rewards.
- Trees in relation to the implementation of an approved development.
- Vegetation surveys for utility management, the short-comings and benefits of different approaches.
- Windfarm sterilisation of forested land and timber marketing at Halfmark Forest 2016.
- Woodland Creation Cultivation Issues – A Critical Analysis.
- Woodland Creation Forestry Grant Scheme Applications: A critical analysis of the role of the Woodland Officer in the assessment process in relation to FGS compliance and aspirational National Woodland Creation targets.