Criticism and evaluation

Evaluating arguments:

1   What are the key claims made by the author?
2   Does he/she develop them consistently?
3   Do his/her conclusions follow from the reasons he/she gives?
4   Does he/she leave some parts undeveloped which could lead to alternative conclusions?
5   Have any assumptions been made without acknowledging them?

Evaluating evidence:

1   Does he/she use enough reliable evidence to back up his/her arguments?
2   What kind of evidence is it and does he/she describe it accurately?
    - From primary or secondary sources?
    - Statistical – how is it described? Is it accurate?
    - Anecdotal – how reliable/representative is this?
3   Does he/she draw reliable inferences from it to develop his/her arguments?
    - Does he/she draw conclusions that are too strong?
    - Is the evidence relevant to his/her arguments?
4   Are his/her inferences relevant?
5   What alternative inferences can be drawn from the evidence?
6   What do other authors have to say about this?

Evaluating language:

1   Is he/she consistent in the way he/she uses words or do they mean different things at different times?
2   Is the meaning of his/her arguments obscured by the use of jargon and abstractions?
3   Do we need to analyse concepts to reveal the hidden implications of his/her arguments?