



NATURE OF LEARNING AT UNIVERSITY: CRITICAL THINKING

Developing critical thinking skills is essential to your academic success at university where there is an emphasis on teaching students how to think and not what to think. Whatever your discipline, you will engage with a wide variety of sources of information, evidence and discussion. **Critical thinking is therefore a core academic skill** that teaches students to question or reflect on their own knowledge and information or evidence presented to them.

DEFINITION:
Critical thinking is essentially the ability to objectively think, analyse and evaluate an issue or an idea to form an informed opinion.

CRITICAL THINKERS...

acquire knowledge to understand links between ideas

challenge consensus

recognise, build and appraise arguments

determine the importance and relevance of arguments and ideas

approach problems consistently and systematically

identify inconsistencies and errors in reasoning

reflect on the justification of their own assumptions, beliefs and values.

Critical thinkers ask:

"How do you know that?"

"What are the alternatives?"

"Why is this the case?"



CRITICAL THINKING REQUIRES...



Scepticism

healthy questioning attitude about new information you are exposed to

Curiosity

want to learn more, be open to new ideas, seek evidence

Curiosity

Scepticism

Not Blindly Believing

Supporting Evidence

Supporting Evidence

wanting to see the evidence supporting an argument or conclusion

Not Blindly Believing

not blindly believing arguments and conclusions

Humility

Humility

the ability to admit that your opinions and ideas are wrong when new and convincing evidence shows otherwise



CRITICAL THINKING INVOLVES:

Reflecting on your own biases

Ask yourself:

What do I think I know?
How do I know it is true?



Reflecting about others' claims

Standing back from the information given and reflecting about others' claims



Looking from different points of views

Looking at the information from different points of views



Checking accuracy

Checking how accurate the information is



Examining the given information

Ask yourself:

- What is the evidence supporting this claim?
- How reliable/accurate is the evidence? (looking for flaws in reasoning, hidden assumptions, evidence and how conclusions are drawn, if the evidence come from a trusted source?)
- What is the evidence not telling me?
- Is there another side to the issue?
- What is the other side to the issue?



Examining components and their relations

Examining each component of the given information to identify how they relate to each other



ASSESS YOUR CRITICAL THINKING:

How often do I ask insightful
“why” questions?



How frequently do I generate
compelling new ideas?



How inclined am I to challenge the
validity of new information?



How vigorously do I tackle unfamiliar
and complex problems?



REMEMBER:

Critical thinking is not to be confused
with being argumentative or being
critical of other people.

