Frequently asked questions

1 What does critical thinking mean?

Critical thinking means *questioning* what you read, hear or see. It doesn't mean never believing anything; it means holding open the possibility that what you know at any given time may only be part of the picture.

2 How do I develop the skills I need to be a more critical thinker?

To develop your critical thinking ability, you might imagine that you are developing a detective-like mind. This involves being able to read between the lines to identify false, unfair or unsupported assumptions. Skills in critical thinking can be developed through a better understanding of what critical thinking entails and through practice.

3 How might developing my critical thinking help me?

Critical thinking skills give you the tools you need to analyse what is in front of you and bring precision to the way you think and work. Developing your critical thinking skills involves taking structured approaches that can help you to question, or to trust, the probability of an outcome. Comments from tutors indicate that many students are prevented from gaining better marks because their work lacks evidence of rigorous critical thinking so developing skills in this area can help you to improve your grades.

4 How do I apply critical thinking skills to my academic work?

Critical thinking is one important way of becoming engaged with the subject matter of your course. You are usually expected to consider different points of view and alternative interpretations - to enter into a 'critical dialogue' or debate with the material. Critical thinking can help you to take a more structured approach to reading, writing and listening. It helps you to make better, and more informed, decisions about whether something is likely to be true, effective or productive.