

What is Critical Thinking?

It is not the study of a specific subject, but aims to develop skills which are fully transferable to other AS and A level subjects, and especially to everyday life. Students following this course will spend most of their time learning to analyse arguments and messages which are trying to tell us what to think and believe. Since so many of our ideas are based on what other people tell us, in writing, on TV or by word of mouth, the critical thinker needs to see through the phoney arguments and identify examples of convincing reasoning,

Is this the right course for me?

Students from all disciplines can study Critical Thinking. It fits well with humanities subjects such as History, Law and Sociology, but may also appeal to students who are taking mainly Science courses or more practical courses such as Art, Media Studies and Music.

Critical Thinking AS is available as a fourth or fifth course in the first or second year. It is taught as a reduced timetable option (2 hours per week) and has a very low level of content as it is primarily skills based.

If taken in the first year, Critical Thinking can provide :

- excellent support for analysis and essay writing in the three core A levels.
 - a natural progression to the Extended Project (Perspectives on Science) in the second year, possibly as part of the AQA Baccalaureate (see separate leaflets for details).
 - valuable preparation for the Oxbridge Thinking Skills Assessment Tests.
- The course may also appeal to second year students who want a course with less content and who want to develop their thinking skills in preparation for university.

What are the entry requirements?

The general entry requirements for A level programmes apply. You should enjoy taking part in lively discussions and have reasonable essay writing skills.

What is the course content?

Students begin by studying the language of reasoning, i.e. presenting an argument with a clear conclusion supported by sound reasons. You will learn to recognise and evaluate different kinds of reasoning and hidden assumptions behind the messages; to assess evidence and judge the credibility of sources. You will also learn to develop your own well structured persuasive arguments.

How will my work be assessed?

All students will study the course over 1 year, sitting the Unit 1 examination in January and Unit 2 examination in June.

Unit 1 (50%) Introduction to Critical Thinking. 1 hour 30 minutes written exam

Unit 2 (50%) Assessing and developing argument. 1 hour 30 minutes written exam.

There is no coursework.

What do students say about Critical Thinking AS?

"It taught me very useful techniques that I will be able to apply to everyday life."

"I think it will be useful for university interviews."

"It made me realise how doing simple things can improve the quality of my essay writing in all subjects."

Do universities value Critical Thinking AS?

Critical Thinking is widely recognised by top universities to be an attractive addition to the three core A levels. It is a rapidly expanding subject, and many universities now make UCAS points offers that include Critical Thinking AS.

Critical Thinking

AS Level

A first or second year course to be studied alongside three or four other subjects

A component of the AQA Baccalaureate