



Critical Thinking and Reflection

How staff and students define critical thinking

Different subject areas have different interpretations of and uses for critical thinking, as illustrated in the following quotes from **staff** at the University of Plymouth and at other institutions:

Educational development: 'Critical thinking is the intellectual process of analysing, evaluating and synthesising observations or assertions'

Tourism: 'Critical thinking is the ability to not just describe something or accept perceived wisdom, but develop a conceptual understanding of what happens and transfer that to different situations'

Engineering: 'Critical thinking gives problem-solving wings!'

Education: 'It means not just accepting what you are told but a willingness to question it, to think it through for yourself'

Learning development: 'Taking a challenging attitude to what you read, hear and observe and being able to develop robust and cogent arguments of your own – either in writing, speaking or in decision making contexts and being willing to act on this, not just academically but in the 'real' world.'

Architecture and fine art: 'Stepping outside a situation and using analysis to form a judgement by balancing different approaches or facts.'

Music, humanities and media: 'The ability to reflect, recognise and synthesise key ideas so that learning takes place. The leaning then becomes part of your knowledge and effects you future thinking.'

University of Plymouth **students** also have a variety of interpretations of what critical thinking means to them.

'To analyse a subject equally on both sides of an argument and to critique sources and to explore all aspects of the issue, i.e., who, what, where, why, when etc.'

'You understand something fully in different contexts then you can argue fore and against the case from your own perspective.'

'Evaluating things, but not just text book things, try and maybe look outside the box and look at things from different angles.'

'Be wary and ask questions about why the information says what it says'

'Looking at what something does/how it works and does it achieve this. What if it was built another way/used different elements'

'It's not enough to just use the research, you have to analyse it and present your point of view'

