



AS/A2 Critical Thinking Course Outline

Overview

Critical Thinking is a skills based subject. It involves the student in analysis and evaluation of information and argument to encourage development of a range of intellectual skills. The skills learnt in this subject are widely transferable to other areas and will provide a sound foundation for essay based subjects. The course gives an opportunity to think deeply and in a structured and academic way, about the issues that are key to participating in society. It enables students to come to decisions that are based on evidence and argument rather than assumption or prejudice and helps students appreciate the importance of examining knowledge and beliefs critically.

This course provides students with a balanced and coherent study of the principles that underlie the subject of Critical Thinking. It can be defined as a form of reflective reasoning which analyses and evaluates information and arguments by applying a range of intellectual skills in order to reach clear, logical and coherent judgements within a given context. It helps students evaluate reasoning of different kinds, make connections and synthesise information and arguments, recognise and evaluate assumptions and generate their own arguments and express them clearly. Classes will involve lively discussion and debate of a variety of source materials to enable study to acquire the skills needed to be successful in the course. The study of Critical Thinking supports reasoning to use in life, work and further academic study. Students will develop their analytical and evaluative skills and thinking processes, and this will support other subjects in writing essays, weighing up evidence and assessing different points of view. The A2 level will further develop ideas from AS.

Course Structure & Content

AS:

The course seeks to bring together the skills involved in thinking and arguing in a critical and logical way. The aim is to provide candidates with a framework that can be applied in a practical manner to a range of materials, situations, problems and issues. There is not an obvious major body of content to deliver, but rather a range of skills which candidates should be enabled to acquire. For the AS there are seven main areas of study, and one personal response unit:

- Language of Reasoning
- Patterns of Reasoning
- Clarifying Expressions and Ideas
- Different Claims and Special Kinds of Reasoning
- Credibility
- Assessing Arguments
- Basic Statistical Representations
- Students own Argument

A2:

A2 differs from AS by the greater challenge presented through the nature and depth of material studied, the greater complexity of the reasoning involved, the wider range of arguments and argument types, the variety of contexts and issues encountered, and the complexity of the concepts dealt with. A2 level will extend beyond the AS, therefore, in terms of complexity and higher-level skills as reflected in the assessment objectives.

Assessment:

All units are externally assessed with the assessment set and marked by the examination board.

Assessment Objectives (OCR):

- Analyse critically the use of different kinds of reasoning in a wide range of contexts;
- Evaluate critically the use of different kinds of reasoning in a wide range of contexts;
- Develop and communicate relevant and coherent arguments clearly and accurately in a concise and logical manner.

Entry qualifications

Students are expected to have a good level of achievement in a range of GCSE courses including Science and Humanities subjects.

Career Prospects

The course offers students suitable foundation for progression into further and higher education. The study of Critical Thinking supports reasoning to use in life, work and further academic study. Students will also find critical thinking skills of great benefit in preparation for a wide range of careers in the following fields: Law, Social Sciences, Journalism, Medicine, Business and Engineering.