

The word "critical" can mean different things in different contexts. For example, it can refer to the importance of something, or can also mean pointing out the negative aspects of something, that is to criticise something.

However, critical thinking at university does not mean looking only for the most important aspects of a topic or just criticising ideas. It is also about not accepting what you read or hear at face value, but always questioning the information, ideas and arguments you find in your studies.

Being critical does not just mean finding fault. It means assessing evidence from a variety of sources and making reasoned conclusions. As a result of your analysis you may decide that a particular piece of evidence is not robust, or that you disagree with the conclusion, but you should be able to state why you have come to this view and incorporate this into a bigger picture of the literature.

Being critical goes beyond describing what you have heard in lectures or what you have read. It involves synthesising, analysing and evaluating what you have learned to develop your own argument or position.

University of Edinburgh (2021), suggest “Critical thinking is important in all subjects and disciplines – in science and engineering, as well as the arts and humanities”.

The types of evidence used to develop arguments may be very different but the processes and techniques are similar. Critical thinking is required for both undergraduate and postgraduate levels of study.

Critical thinking is an approach to thinking that requires an open mind and rational thought (University of Leeds, 2021).

