Hints and tips for inclusive learning and teaching

Critical Thinking

Critical thinking is a way to explore and discover the underpinning meaning or implications of ideas, concepts and discipline specific knowledge. Developing critical thinking skills equips students with the ability to draw out more reasoned arguments and understand the wider implications of their knowledge.

*Rerum Cognoscere Causas,* “to discover the causes of things” - original University motto

When thinking about critical thinking:

- Consider the many definitions of critical thinking. Some are more accessible and relevant to a particular discipline than others. Use the links below to help you to consider how best to communicate ideas about critical thinking that relate to your students understanding.
  - [www.open.ac.uk/skillsforstudy/critical-thinking](http://www.open.ac.uk/skillsforstudy/critical-thinking)
    A good student-friendly introduction to critical thinking from the Open University.
  - [www.peoplelearn.homestead.com/criticalthinking.html](http://www.peoplelearn.homestead.com/criticalthinking.html)
    A more academic exploration of critical thinking.

- Introduce critical thinking into assessment and teaching exercises gradually over the semester, perhaps as early as year one.

- Help students by explaining simple approaches to critical thinking e.g. P.E.E
  - **Point** (make a point, statement or suggest an idea about the subject material).
  - **Explain** (explain your point, idea or statement).
  - **Evidence** (reinforce your point with theoretical knowledge or examples from the subject material).

- Highlight to students the critical thinking elements of assessments at the start of a module. This will give students time to consider their critical thinking skills and whether they may need to access study skills support. A list of study skills support services for students can be found here:
  - [www.shef.ac.uk/lets/projects/inclusivel&t/support_for_students.html](http://www.shef.ac.uk/lets/projects/inclusivel&t/support_for_students.html)

What is a pass mark?

Students will have very different previous experiences of assessment. You may want to explore with them what these experiences have been. Be explicit about the methods of assessment you are using and why. It can also be a shock that a grade of 60 is a good mark! Explain to students that only on rare occasions will they achieve a grade of 75-100 for truly exceptional work.

For more information go to: [www.shef.ac.uk/lets/inclusive](http://www.shef.ac.uk/lets/inclusive)