The project aimed to investigate the perception that critical thinking skills vary with cultural background.

Masters level engineering students’ perceptions of critical thinking skills were compared across cultural groups. An important conclusion was that previous educational experience has a strong influence on a student’s understanding of critical thinking. There is a need to address differences in students’ understanding of critical thinking.

Sample composition by nationality (183 students)

(Below) Sample results from questionnaire:

‘Which of the following do you use to find information for your coursework?’

(Below) Sample results from questionnaire:

‘How would you justify your use of a particular method for evaluating a set of data or results for your final MSc project?’

Conclusions and Further Work

Use of the term “critical thinking” needs to be consistent and unambiguous.

Students need a clear explanation, with examples, of what is expected in any assessment, e.g. we expect students to justify methods used in an engineering project.

Further research is needed into the different practices and expectations in different countries.