



Innovating Education for Better Health

CRITICAL  
THINKING



**Critical thinking** applies reasoned consideration to evidence, context, and methods to inform decision-making. Critical thinking is best supported when individuals or groups apply evidence-based approaches to evaluate problems and propose potential solutions.

### Cultivating Critical Thinking

Critical thinking involves developing a deep understanding of the problem to inform data-driven decisions. The following table represents key components involved in the critical thinking process.

Components of Critical Thinking	Description	Questions Addressed
Interpret the problem	Apply multiple perspectives and knowledge (often multidisciplinary) to pinpoint the actual nature and cause of the problem.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• What is the problem?</li><li>• Why is this an important problem to explore?</li></ul>
Identify relevant information	Develop actionable lines of inquiry to provide and synthesize well-founded, objective information that captures the context of the problem.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• What information is necessary to understand this problem?</li><li>• What contextual factors may influence the problem?</li></ul>
Analyze and evaluate evidence	Analyze extant evidence to better understand the problem, including the dynamics and assumptions that underlie them, and evaluate alternate approaches to solving the problem.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• What story does the evidence tell?</li><li>• How can we view this problem from another perspective?</li></ul>
Propose solutions	Generate solutions that apply logical, purposeful judgment and decision-making.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Based on available information, what solution(s) can best address this problem?</li></ul>
Self-regulate decision-making	Monitor own reasoning and proposed solutions for possible assumptions or deficiencies involved in the decision-making process.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• What assumptions or self-interest may impact my analysis of the problem and/or proposed solutions?</li></ul>

### Assessing Your Critical Thinking Competency

Critical thinking promotes an evidence-based approach to decision-making. As you assess personal development in this competency, consider the extent to which you have:

- employed diverse, multi-disciplinary thinking regarding the nature of the problem,
- gathered broad information to understand the underlying context of the problem,
- evaluated alternate approaches to solving the problem, and/or
- decided future direction based on all available evidence.

### References

1. Facione P. Critical Thinking: A Statement of Expert Consensus for Purposes of Educational Assessment and Instruction. Research Findings and Recommendations. 1990. Millbrae, California. The California Academic Press.
2. Richard P, Elder L. The Miniature Guide to Critical Thinking Concepts and Tools. Vol 8th ed. The Foundation for Critical Thinking; 2019. London, United Kingdom. Rowman & Littlefield Publishing Group.

3. Rowles J, Morgan CM, Burns S, Merchant C. Faculty Perceptions of Critical Thinking at a Health Sciences University. *Journal of the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning*. 2013;13(4):21-35.