At university, as in the workplace, you will be required to make a shift from reproductive thinking and learning to critical thinking and learning. It is central to everything that you do at university.

Critical thinking can be defined as examining your own ideas, and those of others; synthesising and assessing these different ideas and arguments; and applying ideas in different contexts.

You will need to think critically when reading, note taking, doing assignments, preparing for exams, organising your time, and attending lectures and tutorials.

Critical thinking requires skills in:

- **Analysing the information** – examining it in detail
- **Thinking creatively** – thinking about different perspectives and possibilities
- **Problem solving** – considering available information before making an appropriate decision
- **Reasoning** – thinking logically; making links between ideas and information
- **Evaluating** – examining information, to assess whether it is useful, relevant for your purpose and/or a particular context, and reliable

Critical thinking is also about attitudes

- **Open-mindedness** – willing to examine multiple points of views, including your own
- **Flexibility** – able to change your point of view
- **Persistence** – able to follow a line of reasoning
- **Interpersonal sensitivity** – willing to respect the opinions of others
- **Intercultural sensitivity** – respecting diversity of culture, socioeconomic variations, etc.
The process of critical thinking

You engage in critical thinking every day, at university and elsewhere. Such thinking involves several processes. These are illustrated below through the use of an example about making the decision to attend university.

**Analysing and interpreting the question**

In this example, the question is: “Which university should I attend?”

**Immersion in the topic**

You immersed yourself in the topic area, by seeking information about different universities.

**Asking questions**

To understand the topic area, you may have asked questions about the university, programs of study, and aspects such as location, weather, accommodation, potential career paths…

**Making links**

As you gathered this information, you may have started to link relevant types of information – e.g. How would choosing Griffith University impact on a future career in education?

**Understanding the topic from a variety of perspectives**

Using different sources gives you a range of perspectives. Such sources might include: University open days; guidance counsellors; current students; and professionals in the field.

**Understanding the topic in the light of the relevant theoretical frameworks in the field**

Along the way, you became familiar with terminology and concepts relevant to universities, e.g. ‘undergrad’, ‘postgrad’, ‘entry requirements’, ‘courses’, ‘programs’, ‘prerequisites’.

**Developing a position and arguments to support it**

Finally, you made a decision or took a position – and had arguments/reasons to support it!

**References**