

Thinking Skills



Exam Board Cambridge Assessment

Qualification GCE AS-Level

Entry Requirements Although there are no strict entry requirements, we would expect students who opt for Thinking Skills to have achieved largely grades 7–9 in all their subjects.

Content (Outline of Course)

The course consists of two components: Problem Solving and Critical Thinking. This set of transferable skills can be applied by students across a wide range of subjects and complex real world issues.

The Problem Solving content covers the organisation and processing of information, the analysis of data, and the consideration of wider problems. It is about making use of available information to deduce further information, draw conclusions, and make choices and decisions. Confidence in handling numerical, statistical or algebraic information and performing mental arithmetic is important for developing efficient problem-solving skills, but the focus of the syllabus is on developing these skills themselves.

The Critical Thinking content covers the evaluation and use of evidence, and the analysis, evaluation and construction of reasoning. It is about judging the value or usefulness of evidence, and understanding how sound arguments are constructed. Students will encounter a broad variety of topics, often reflecting real-world situations or subjects of debate. Although a student’s own thinking about a topic sometimes makes a valuable contribution to their critical thinking – for example, when constructing an argument – knowledge of the topics themselves will never be assessed directly. Students should develop the skills to judge evidence and argument by the relevant criteria, draw logical conclusions and suggest plausible explanations, and construct persuasive arguments that have a clear structure and which make valid use of the available evidence.

Assessment

Students complete two papers before the end of Year 12 in May/June.

Paper 1: Problem Solving (1 hour and 30 minutes – 50 marks)
Approximately twelve compulsory questions based on a range of scenarios.

Paper 2: Critical Thinking (1 hour and 45 minutes – 50 marks)
At least five compulsory questions based on multiple sources of evidence.

Careers Guidance

Thinking Skills develops a specific set of intellectual skills, independent of subject content. It reflects the need voiced by universities and employers for more mature and sophisticated ways of thinking. The Thinking Skills syllabus also enables students to approach their other subjects with an improved ability to understand, analyse and resolve problems.

Students will find the course of great benefit when preparing for higher education – particularly if they are considering applying to Oxford, Cambridge or any medical school, which may involve sitting critical thinking/problem solving-based entrance papers – and for a wide range of careers, including those in law, scientific research, journalism, business, accounting and engineering.