

## ***LEARNING TO THINK WITH CAMBRIDGE***

A key skill for today's students is being able to think. Universities and employers are increasingly looking for students who can demonstrate a high level of objective and rigorous thinking.

The University of Cambridge International Examinations (CIE) offers Thinking Skills as a curriculum subject. It involves the learning of a specific set of intellectual skills independent of subject content.

This reflects the need to encourage students to develop more mature and sophisticated ways of thinking. By taking a course in Thinking Skills and applying these skills to their wider academic learning, students approach their other subjects with an improved ability to understand, analyse and resolve problems.

Students find Thinking Skills of great benefit in preparation for higher education and a wide range of careers, including the fields of law, scientific research, social science, journalism, medicine, business, accounting and engineering.

Lively debate, critical and investigative thinking are encouraged in the lessons, coupled with informed and disciplined reasoning.

There are two aspects to Thinking Skills: Problem Solving and Critical Thinking.

Problem solving is about ability to analyse numerical and graphical information in the context of real life situations and applying appropriate numerical techniques in order to find new information or derive solutions. Problem solving draws on a range of skills such as data handling, reading, modelling, logic and reasoning.

Central to Critical Thinking is the notion of argument. From the start students learn to recognise when someone is engaged in reasoned argument, as distinct from quarrelling, disputing, reporting or explaining. They explore different examples of reasoning and argument in order to understand their common characteristics, and most importantly the use of reasons to support conclusions.

A range of New Zealand schools have implemented Thinking Skills into their curriculum including Manurewa High School, where teacher Paul Lees comments, "My students certainly find both the Problem Solving and Critical Thinking aspects challenging. I am expecting most of my students to go on to university and for their Thinking Skills experience to greatly assist their Tertiary studies."

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