Critical Thinking 2026 v1.0

Short Course senior syllabus

July 2026

Queensland Government
QCAA Queensland Curriculum & Assessment Authority

For all Queensland schools

Queensland Curriculum & Assessment Authority
PO Box 307 Spring Hill QLD 4004 Australia

Phone: (07) 3864 0299
Email: office@qcaa.qld.edu.au
Website: www.qcaa.qld.edu.au

Contents

Queensland syllabuses for senior subjects

In Queensland, a syllabus for a senior subject is an official 'map' of a senior school subject. A syllabus's function is to support schools in delivering the Queensland Certificate of Education (QCE) system through high-quality and high-equity curriculum and assessment.

Syllabuses are based on design principles developed from independent international research about how excellence and equity are promoted in the documents teachers use to develop and enliven the curriculum.

Syllabuses for senior subjects build on student learning in the Prep to Year 10 Australian Curriculum and include General, General (Extension), Senior External Examination (SEE), Applied, Applied (Essential) and Short Course syllabuses.

More information about syllabuses for senior subjects is available at www.qcaa.qld.edu.au/senior/senior-subjects and in the 'Queensland curriculum' section of the *QCE and QCIA policy and procedures handbook*.

Teaching, learning and assessment resources will support the implementation of a syllabus for a senior subject. More information about professional resources for senior syllabuses is available on the QCAA website and via the QCAA Portal.

Course overview

Rationale

Critical Thinking, as an area of study, equips learners with the knowledge, skills and dispositions necessary to respond to contemporary challenges and opportunities. Rapidly evolving economic conditions and technological developments, including the emergence of artificial intelligence, have elevated the importance of critical thinking as a foundational capability for participation in modern society.

A defining characteristic of contemporary life is the unprecedented proliferation of information — its sources, modes of transmission and means of creation. While this expansion offers significant opportunities for learning and engagement, it also presents challenges relating to misinformation, bias and manipulation. These conditions heighten the importance of learners developing the capacity to evaluate the quality of information, evidence and reasoning, and to discern what constitutes reliable, credible and trustworthy claims.

Concurrently, the shift towards self-regulated digital environments as primary spaces for public dialogue has intensified the need for proficiency in reasoned argument. Debate on substantive social, political and ethical issues now occurs across diverse, decentralised and algorithmically curated platforms. In democratic systems of government, the legitimacy of decision-making depends upon public reason — the capacity of citizens to engage in rational, informed and respectful debate. Critical thinking underpins democratic citizenship by enabling individuals to contribute thoughtfully to public discussion, evaluate competing viewpoints and participate responsibly in collective decision-making.

The capacity for independent thought, informed by clear reasoning and competent appraisal of information and evidence, is also essential for successful engagement in post-school pathways, including higher education and vocational training. Contemporary economies are increasingly oriented towards knowledge production and innovation as primary drivers of growth (Zheng, 2022). Across a range of industries and occupations, critical thinking is consistently identified as both highly valued and in short supply (Deloitte, 2024; World Economic Forum, 2023). The development of these skills enhances learners' adaptability, problem-solving capacity and readiness for lifelong learning.

The ability to think critically is thus central to personal agency, democratic participation and economic engagement. Critical thinkers are equipped to navigate complexity and uncertainty with intellectual rigour and ethical awareness.

This short course provides an education in the concepts and skills of critical thinking, fostering learners' development as reflective and capable thinkers. The course seeks to cultivate students' ability and disposition to:

- assess the quality of information, evidence and reasoning across a range of contexts
- evaluate the strengths and limitations of their own thinking
- make well-reasoned judgments and decisions
- engage in reasoning as a social and collaborative competence
- apply critical thinking skills essential for further education, employment and active citizenship.

Syllabus objectives

The syllabus objectives outline what students have the opportunity to learn.

1. **Explain critical thinking concepts and principles.**

   Students explain critical thinking concepts and principles by giving an account of them to convey understanding. They present meaning with due regard to clarity, accuracy, relevance and significance.

2. **Apply knowledge.**

   Students apply knowledge by using their understanding of critical thinking concepts and principles to examine and appraise the quality of reasoning and information. They reflect upon their own reasoning to improve it.

3. **Use communication conventions.**

   Students use communication conventions through using language suitable for context, purpose and audience, and attending to norms of collaborative inquiry. They reference their sources to demonstrate academic integrity and concern for credibility.

Designing a course of study in Critical Thinking

Syllabuses are designed for teachers to make professional decisions to tailor curriculum and assessment design and delivery to suit their school context and the goals, aspirations and abilities of their students within the parameters of Queensland's senior phase of learning.

The syllabus is used by teachers to develop curriculum for their school context. The term *course of study* describes the unique curriculum and assessment that students engage with in each school context. A course of study is the product of a series of decisions made by a school to select, organise and contextualise subject matter, integrate complementary and important learning, and create assessment tasks in accordance with syllabus specifications.

It is encouraged that, where possible, a course of study is designed such that teaching, learning and assessment activities are integrated and enlivened in an authentic setting.

Course structure

Critical Thinking is a Short Course senior syllabus. It contains two QCAA-developed topics from which schools develop their course of study.

This course has been developed with a notional time of 55 hours of teaching and learning, including assessment.

More information about the requirements for administering senior syllabuses is available in the 'Queensland curriculum' section of the *QCE and QCIA policy and procedures handbook*.

Curriculum

Senior syllabuses set out only what is essential while being flexible so teachers can make curriculum decisions to suit their students, school context, resources and expertise.

Within the requirements set out in this syllabus and the *QCE and QCIA policy and procedures handbook*, schools have autonomy to decide:

- how and when subject matter is delivered
- how, when and why learning experiences are developed, and the context in which learning occurs
- how opportunities are provided in the course of study for explicit and integrated teaching and learning of complementary skills.

These decisions allow teachers to develop a course of study that is rich, engaging and relevant for their students.

Assessment

Senior syllabuses set out only what is essential while being flexible so teachers can make assessment decisions to suit their students, school context, resources and expertise.

Short Course senior syllabuses contain assessment specifications and conditions for the assessment instruments that must be implemented with Topics 1 and 2. These specifications and conditions ensure comparability, equity and validity in assessment.

Within the requirements set out in this syllabus and the *QCE and QCIA policy and procedures handbook*, schools have autonomy to decide:

- specific assessment task details
- assessment contexts to suit available resources
- how the assessment task will be integrated with teaching and learning activities
- how authentic the task will be.

In Topics 1 and 2, schools develop two assessments using the assessment specifications and conditions provided in the syllabus.

More information about assessment in senior syllabuses is available in 'The assessment system' section of the *QCE and QCIA policy and procedures handbook*.

Subject matter

Each topic contains a description, objectives and subject matter. Subject matter is the body of information, mental procedures and psychomotor procedures (see Marzano & Kendall 2007, 2008) that are necessary for students' learning and engagement with the subject. Subject matter itself is not the specification of learning experiences but provides the basis for the design of student learning experiences.

Subject matter has a direct relationship with the objectives and provides statements of learning that have been constructed in a similar way to objectives.

Aboriginal perspectives and Torres Strait Islander perspectives

The QCAA is committed to reconciliation. As part of its commitment, the QCAA affirms that:

- Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islander peoples are the first Australians, and have the oldest living cultures in human history
- Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islander peoples have strong cultural traditions and speak diverse languages and dialects, other than Standard Australian English
- teaching and learning in Queensland schools should provide opportunities for students to deepen their knowledge of Australia by engaging with the perspectives of Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islander peoples
- positive outcomes for Aboriginal students and Torres Strait Islander students are supported by successfully embedding Aboriginal perspectives and Torres Strait Islander perspectives across planning, teaching and assessing student achievement.

Guidelines about Aboriginal perspectives and Torres Strait Islander perspectives and resources for teaching are available at www.qcaa.qld.edu.au/k-12-policies/aboriginal-torres-strait-islander-perspectives.

Where appropriate, Aboriginal perspectives and Torres Strait Islander perspectives have been embedded in the subject matter.

Complementary skills

Opportunities for the development of complementary skills have been embedded throughout subject matter. These skills, which overlap and interact with syllabus subject matter, are derived from current education, industry and community expectations and encompass the knowledge, skills, capabilities, behaviours and dispositions that will help students live and work successfully in the 21st century.

These complementary skills are:

- literacy — the knowledge, skills, behaviours and dispositions about language and texts essential for understanding and conveying English language content
- numeracy — the knowledge, skills, behaviours and dispositions that students need to use mathematics in a wide range of situations, to recognise and understand the role of mathematics in the world, and to develop the dispositions and capacities to use mathematical knowledge and skills purposefully
- 21st century skills — the attributes and skills students need to prepare them for higher education, work, and engagement in a complex and rapidly changing world. These skills include critical thinking, creative thinking, communication, collaboration and teamwork, personal and social skills, and digital literacy. The explanations of associated skills are available at www.qcaa.qld.edu.au/senior/senior-subjects/general-subjects/21st-century-skills.

It is expected that aspects of literacy, numeracy and 21st century skills will be developed by engaging in the learning outlined in this syllabus. Teachers may choose to create additional explicit and intentional opportunities for the development of these skills as they design the course of study.

Additional subject-specific information

Additional subject-specific information has been included to support and inform the development of a course of study.

Conceptualising critical thinking

For the purpose of this short course, critical thinking is the area of study concerned with developing the capacity to critically reflect on the quality of one's thinking and the thinking of others. It involves examining claims through the construction, analysis and evaluation of arguments. Central to this process is an understanding of the principles and methods of good reasoning, and the criteria to assess the quality and reliability of evidence, information and the reasoning process itself.

The knowledge, skills and dispositions that the short course seeks to develop are organised under two broad lines of inquiry.

- Assessing the quality of reasoning processes. This involves the learner:
  - appreciating themselves as a reasoning agent, including key critical thinking dispositions and modes of thinking
  - engaging in the giving and taking of reasons (i.e. argument) as a social competency
  - understanding the factors that can influence the quality of their thinking, e.g. cognitive biases, social influences
  - investigating reliable and unreliable forms of reasoning, e.g. prevalent logical fallacies
  - identifying and analysing arguments to make the reasoning process clear
  - constructing and evaluating arguments using principles of good reasoning.
- Assessing the quality of information and evidence. This involves the learner understanding and applying:
  - factors that affect the credibility of information, e.g. expertise
  - evaluative concepts such as representativeness, corroboration, conflict, neutrality, bias, vested interest and the weight and balance of evidence
  - criteria to assess the quality of information generated through artificial means, e.g. generative artificial intelligence
  - criteria and processes to assess the credibility of media such as images, audio and video.

Teaching and learning considerations

This short course syllabus has been developed with a notional allocation of 55 hours for teaching, learning and assessment. Although the syllabus comprises two topics, schools have discretion in determining the amount of time allocated to each. The topics are interconnected, with the first three guiding questions in Topic 1 introducing critical thinking more broadly.

A course of study developed from this syllabus should allow for experiences that provide learners the opportunity to develop critical thinking knowledge, skills and dispositions through engagement with real-world materials and issues in current affairs and across a variety of domains. In this respect, critical thinking subject matter can be contextualised in ways that suit the specific interests and needs of learners, as well as the discipline familiarity of the teacher. Information should be construed broadly to include data, images and other media.

Reasoning is a social and intellectual competence, and is exercised with greater quality when engaged in collaboratively. As such, in creating and delivering a course of study based on the

syllabus, collaborative pedagogical approaches, such as *community of inquiry*, are encouraged to assist learners to develop the dispositions and skills to reason effectively.

Community of inquiry involves learners engaging in orderly and purposeful discussion to collectively explore open questions. Learners propose ideas, give reasons, challenge assumptions, explore perspectives, and build on one another's thinking to gain a deeper understanding of the issue under inquiry. Discussions provide context for the targeted development of learners' reasoning skills and opportunities to cultivate critical thinking dispositions and mutual respect (Splitter & Sharp, 1995).

Reporting

General information about determining and reporting results for senior syllabuses is provided in the 'Determining and reporting results' section of the *QCE and QCIA policy and procedures handbook*.

Reporting standards

Reporting standards are summary statements that describe typical performance at each of the five levels (A–E).

A
The student provides comprehensive explanations of relevant critical thinking concepts and principles. Critical thinking concepts and principles are applied effectively to examine and appraise the quality of reasoning and information. Understandings are expressed through effective use of communication conventions suitable for the context, purpose and audience.
B
The student provides explanations of relevant critical thinking concepts and principles. Critical thinking concepts and principles are applied appropriately to examine and appraise the quality of reasoning and information. Understandings are expressed through appropriate use of communication conventions suitable for the context, purpose and audience.
C
The student provides explanations of some relevant critical thinking concepts and principles. Critical thinking concepts and principles are applied to examine and appraise the quality of reasoning and information. Understandings are expressed through use of communication conventions suitable for the context, purpose and audience.
D
The student provides partial explanations of critical thinking concepts and principles. Critical thinking concepts and principles are partially applied to examine and appraise the quality of reasoning and information. Understandings are expressed through partial use of communication conventions suitable for the context, purpose and audience.
E
The student provides minimal explanations of critical thinking concepts and principles. Critical thinking concepts and principles are minimally applied to examine and appraise the quality of reasoning and/or of information. Understandings are expressed through sporadic use of communication conventions suitable for the context, purpose and audience.

Determining and reporting results

Schools make A–E judgments on individual assessment instruments.

Schools also determine a final subject result by making an on-balance judgment using evidence in a folio matched to the reporting standards.

The folio includes responses to the two school-developed assessment instruments, which provide evidence of achievement in relation to the objectives of the syllabus and standards matched to the instrument-specific standards (ISS).

Schools report the subject result to the QCAA as an A–E or, where appropriate, a not rated (NR) in the case of an NR for one or both instruments.

Topics

Topic 1: Assessing the quality of reasoning

This topic examines what it means to think critically, the benefits of doing so, and the dispositions and behaviours that support critical engagement. In exploring factors that influence our capacity to think critically, students investigate different modes of thinking, with particular attention to the distinction between intuitive and deliberative processes as described in dual-process theory, e.g. Kahneman, 2011. Understanding this distinction enables students to recognise common barriers to critical thinking, including the influence of cognitive biases — systematic and often unconscious influences that can distort judgment. Students are introduced to logical argument as the basis of reasoning and learn to deconstruct arguments into their constituent components to evaluate the quality of reasoning. Common errors in reasoning, known as fallacies, are examined alongside cognitive biases.

The topic also emphasises the social dimension of reasoning. Students explore the importance of collaboration to effective reasoning and engage in collaborative inquiry to refine and extend their reasoning skills.

Objectives

1. Explain concepts and principles relevant to assessing the quality of reasoning.
2. Apply knowledge to assess the quality of reasoning.
3. Use communication conventions.

Subject matter

Guiding question: What does it mean to think critically?

Suggested content includes explaining and applying:

- thinking critically as metacognitive evaluation — assessing the quality of our thinking (as well as that of others)
- the dispositions of a critical thinker, e.g.
  - regard for truth
  - curious and questioning
  - open-minded and appreciative of the fallibility of beliefs
  - proportions belief on the strength of evidence
  - prepared to scrutinise one's values and beliefs
  - comfortable with uncertainty
  - metacognitive, i.e. monitors and assesses the quality of thought processes.

Guiding question: Why is it important to be able to think critically?

Suggested content includes explaining and applying knowledge of:

- misinformation, disinformation, Frankfurt's notion of 'bull', 'infoglut'
- the benefits that accrue from thinking critically, e.g. personal agency, engaged citizenship.

Guiding question: What factors influence our capacity to think critically?

Suggested content includes explaining and applying knowledge of:

- the distinction between intuitive thinking and deliberative thinking (dual process theory of thinking)
- the role of emotions in reasoning
- the tendency towards motivated reasoning
- the effect of cognitive biases
- the influence of prior knowledge and beliefs on reasoning
- collaborative reasoning.

Guiding question: What are arguments, and how are they structured?

Suggested content includes explaining and applying knowledge of:

- the role of argument in reasoning
- the distinction between arguments and other forms of persuasion, e.g. rhetorical assertions, commands, explanations
- components of arguments
  - premises (reasons)
  - hidden premises (assumptions)
  - conclusions (claims)

- the structure of arguments through argument diagramming, including arguments containing
  - hidden premises (assumptions)
  - reasons operating independently to support claim/s
  - reasons operating jointly to support claim/s
- the rules of inference.

Guiding question: How do I assess the quality of reasoning that supports claims?

Suggested content includes explaining and applying knowledge of:

- the impact on reasoning of logical fallacies, including
  - personal attacks (*ad hominem* — direct and circumstantial)
  - strawman argument
  - irrelevant appeals (to emotion, ignorance, hypocrisy, wrong authority, nature, etc.)
  - circular argument
  - slippery slope argument
  - hasty generalisation
  - mistaking correlation for causation
  - faulty analogy
  - false dilemma
  - composition/division
  - non sequitur
- the impact on reasoning of cognitive biases, including
  - confirmation bias
  - self-serving bias
  - in-group bias
  - rationalisation
  - framing
  - anchoring
  - availability bias
  - affect heuristic
  - halo effect
  - groupthink.

Guiding question: How do I demonstrate the skills of good reasoning?

Suggested content includes explaining and applying knowledge of:

- the onus of proof
- the *values of inquiry*, e.g. clarity, accuracy, precision, breadth, depth, relevance, significance, coherence and cogency
- the importance of collaboration to effective reasoning, e.g. to mitigate bias, the assembly bonus
- the dispositions of a critical thinker through engaging in collaborative inquiry (e.g. *community of inquiry*).

Topic 2: Assessing the quality of information

This topic equips students with the skills to assess the reliability, relevance and significance of information. Students investigate what it means for information sources to be credible, and why this matters. They explore a broad range of considerations to apply when determining the reliability and trustworthiness of information. The relationship between plausibility of claims and strength of evidence is examined, opening inquiry into phenomena such as conspiratorial thinking and pseudo-science. Augmenting the broader credibility criteria examined, students have the opportunity to inquire into, and apply further specific considerations to technologically generated information including images, video and audio, and products from generative artificial intelligence tools.

Objectives

1. Explain concepts and principles relevant to assessing the quality of information.
2. Apply knowledge to assess the quality of information.
3. Use communication conventions.

Subject matter

Guiding question: How do I assess the reliability of evidence and information?

Suggested content includes explaining and applying knowledge of:

- the importance of reliable information, e.g. maintaining trust, social cohesion
- factors influencing the credibility of sources of information, including
  - expertise (and how to identify it)
  - reputation
  - neutrality versus vested interest
  - biases
  - ability to accurately perceive, cf. apophenia
  - corroboration versus conflicting sources of evidence and information
  - direct versus circumstantial evidence
  - methodology, e.g. peer review, double-blind and randomised trials, falsifiability, fact-checking
  - medium of delivery, e.g. prone to manipulation — digital image, video (deep-fakes)
- the concepts of weight and balance of evidence, cf. false balance
- the relationship between plausibility of claims and strength of evidence required for reliability, e.g.
  - distinction between science and pseudo-science
  - conspiracy theories
  - David Hume on miracles, Carl Sagan on extraordinary claims
- the reliability of statistical evidence, e.g.
  - adequate sample size
  - selectivity and variability of samples
  - how the selection, presentation and interpretation of data can influence perception.

Guiding question: How do I assess the reliability of technological outputs?

Suggested content includes explaining and applying knowledge of:

- additional criteria relevant to the reliability of information generated by artificial intelligence, e.g.
  - transparency of working
  - model reputation
  - source acknowledgment
  - bias mitigation
  - use of diverse and representative data
  - inclusion of diverse perspectives
  - logical consistency of response

  - corroboration of outputs with reputable sources
- the potential influence of cognitive biases when using generative AI tools, e.g. in selection of input prompts, in AI outputs, and in the evaluation of outputs
- the phenomena of deepfakes and the need for scepticism toward online content
- additional criteria relevant to the credibility of images, video and/or audio, e.g.
  - source/provenance acknowledgment
  - ability to corroborate
  - absence of distortions, asymmetries, inconsistencies.

Guiding question: How do I demonstrate the skills of information evaluation?

Suggested content includes explaining and applying knowledge of:

- how the presentation and framing of information and the way we process it influences our thinking
- how to engage critically with generative AI tools and other media, e.g. by designing critical prompts, evaluating the credibility of AI outputs
- how to interact dialogically with generative AI tools, e.g. to engage in inquiry, challenge ideas, explore alternatives, and improve the quality of our reasoning
- the dispositions of a critical thinker through discerning use of information.

Assessment

Students must complete two assessment tasks designed using the specifications and conditions provided below. One task must relate to Topic 1 (either option A or option B), and the other task must relate to Topic 2 (either option C or option D).

Internal assessment option A: Assessing reasoning

Students complete an extended response using the knowledge and skills studied in Topic 1.

Assessment objectives

1. Explain concepts and principles relevant to assessing the quality of reasoning.
2. Apply knowledge to assess the quality of reasoning.
3. Use communication conventions.

Specifications

This task requires students to:

- analyse arguments sourced from real-world contexts containing logical fallacies, cognitive biases and/or assumptions
- for each argument, apply your knowledge of arguments to
  - identify its components and structure via an argument diagram
  - explain the logical fallacy, cognitive bias and/or assumption and how it undermines the strength of the argument
  - provide advice on how the reasoning in the argument could be improved.

It is recommended that this task is designed so that students can develop a response in approximately 10–15 hours of class time.

Stimulus specifications

The teacher provides 3–5 arguments sourced from real-world contexts (e.g. social media post, vlog, article) containing one or several logical fallacies, cognitive biases and/or assumptions.

Conditions

- Students can develop their responses in class time and their own time.
- This is an individual task.

Response requirements

One of the following:

- Multimodal (at least two modes delivered at the same time): up to 7 minutes, up to 10 A4 pages, or equivalent digital media
- Spoken (live or recorded): up to 7 minutes, or signed equivalent
- Written: up to 1000 words.

Instrument-specific standards (IA option A)

Explain, apply knowledge, use communication conventions	Grade
The student response has the following characteristics:	
• comprehensive explanation of relevant logical fallacies, cognitive biases and/or assumptions • effective diagramming of arguments and provision of reasoning advice • effective use of communication conventions for the context, purpose and audience	A
• explanation of relevant logical fallacies, cognitive biases and/or assumptions • appropriate diagramming of arguments and provision of reasoning advice • appropriate use of communication conventions for the context, purpose and audience	B
• explanation of some relevant logical fallacies, cognitive biases and/or assumptions • diagramming of arguments and provision of reasoning advice • use of communication conventions for the context, purpose and audience	C
• partial explanation of some logical fallacies, cognitive biases and/or assumptions • partial diagramming of arguments and provision of reasoning advice • partial use of communication conventions for the context, purpose and audience.	D
The student response does not match any of the descriptors above.	E

Internal assessment option B: Community of inquirers

Students complete a project using the knowledge and skills studied in Topic 1.

Assessment objectives

1. Explain concepts and principles relevant to assessing the quality of reasoning.
2. Apply knowledge to assess the quality of reasoning.
3. Use communication conventions.

Specifications

This task requires students to:

- participate in a *community of inquiry* to demonstrate the skills of collaborative reasoning in seeking to achieve a resolution, or deeper understanding, of a topical issue or question
- document the process of participating in the community of inquiry by providing
  - a reflective appraisal of the quality of reasoning personally demonstrated as a collaborative inquirer and as a community of inquirers, and
  - a justified argument in relation to the topical issue/question formed after reflection on the points raised in the community of inquiry.

It is recommended that this task is designed so that students can develop a response in approximately 10–15 hours of class time.

Stimulus specifications

The teacher provides the topical issue or question to be investigated in the community of inquiry. Material related to the question/issue to assist the inquiry may also be provided.

Conditions

- Students can develop their responses in class time and their own time.
- This is an individual task. The following aspects of the task may be completed as a group
  - engagement in the community of inquiry.

Response requirements

Community of inquiry

Spoken (live or recorded): up to 5 minutes per person per inquiry, or signed equivalent

Documented process

One of the following:

- Multimodal (at least two modes delivered at the same time): up to 4 minutes, up to 4 A4 pages, or equivalent digital media
- Spoken (live or recorded): up to 3 minutes, or signed equivalent
- Written: up to 400 words.

Instrument-specific standards (IA option B)

Explain, apply knowledge, use communication conventions	Grade
The student response has the following characteristics:	
• comprehensive explanation of reasoning principles employed • effective application of critical thinking concepts and principles to – skilfully participate as a collaborative inquirer – appraise the quality of reasoning – create a well-reasoned argument in response to the inquiry topic • effective use of written and oral communication conventions for the context, purpose and audience	A
• explanation of reasoning principles employed • appropriate application of critical thinking concepts and principles to – participate as a collaborative inquirer – appraise the quality of reasoning – create a justified argument in response to the inquiry topic • appropriate use of written and oral communication conventions for the context, purpose and audience	B
• explanation of some reasoning principles employed • application of critical thinking concepts and principles to – participate as a collaborative inquirer – appraise the quality of reasoning – create an argument in response to the inquiry topic • use of written and oral communication conventions for the context, purpose and audience	C
• identification of some reasoning principles employed • partial application of critical thinking concepts and principles to – participate in the community of inquiry – make a judgment on the quality of reasoning – provide a response to the inquiry topic • partial use of written and oral communication conventions for the context, purpose and audience.	D
The student response does not match any of the descriptors above.	E

Internal assessment option C: What to believe?

Students complete an extended response using the knowledge and skills studied in Topic 2.

Assessment objectives

1. Explain concepts and principles relevant to assessing the quality of information.
2. Apply knowledge to assess the quality of information.
3. Use communication conventions.

Specifications

This task requires students to:

- evaluate the credibility of various sources of information
- communicate a reasoned argument for the most plausible explanation of an event or phenomenon based on the interpretation, weight and balance of evidence.

It is recommended that this task is designed so that students can develop a response in approximately 10–15 hours of class time.

Stimulus specifications

The teacher provides sources of information of varying degrees of credibility that present a diversity of explanatory views on a selected event or phenomenon, e.g. a contested occurrence, a conspiracy theory, a pseudo-science.

Conditions

- Students can develop their responses in class time and their own time.
- This is an individual task.

Response requirements

One of the following:

- Multimodal (at least two modes delivered at the same time): up to 7 minutes, up to 10 A4 pages, or equivalent digital media
- Spoken (live or recorded): up to 7 minutes, or signed equivalent
- Written: up to 1000 words.

Instrument-specific standards (IA option C)

Explain, apply knowledge, use communication conventions	Grade
The student response has the following characteristics:	
• comprehensive explanation of relevant credibility criteria • effective application of critical thinking concepts and principles to – skilfully evaluate the credibility of all relevant sources of information – create a well-reasoned argument • effective use of communication conventions for the context, purpose and audience	A
• explanation of relevant credibility criteria • appropriate application of critical thinking concepts and principles to – evaluate the credibility of all relevant sources of information – create a justified argument • appropriate use of communication conventions for the context, purpose and audience	B
• explanation of some relevant credibility criteria • application of critical thinking concepts and principles to – evaluate the credibility of sources of information – create an argument • use of communication conventions for the context, purpose and audience	C
• partial explanation of some credibility criteria • partial application of critical thinking concepts and principles to – make a judgment on the credibility of some sources of information – make a claim • partial use of communication conventions for the context, purpose and audience.	D
The student response does not match any of the descriptors above.	E

Internal assessment option D: Critically engaging with technology

Students complete an investigation using the knowledge and skills studied in Topic 2.

Assessment objectives

1. Explain concepts and principles relevant to assessing the quality of information.
2. Apply knowledge to assess the quality of information.
3. Use communication conventions.

Specifications

This task requires students to:

- document the process of critically engaging with a generative AI tool to inquire into a topic or solve a problem

OR

- produce a resource that explains, through the use of examples, how to apply key criteria to assess the credibility and authenticity of digital products, e.g. images, video and/or audio.

It is recommended that this task is designed so that students can develop a response in approximately 10–15 hours of class time.

Conditions

- Students can develop their responses in class time and their own time.
- This is an individual task.

Response requirements

One of the following:

- Multimodal (at least two modes delivered at the same time): up to 7 minutes, up to 10 A4 pages, or equivalent digital media
- Spoken (live or recorded): up to 7 minutes, or signed equivalent
- Written: up to 1000 words.

Instrument-specific standards (IA option D)

Explain, apply knowledge, use communication conventions	Grade
The student response has the following characteristics:	
• comprehensive explanation of relevant critical thinking concepts and principles • effective application of critical thinking concepts and principles to produce information OR provide advice • effective use of communication conventions for the context, purpose and audience	A
• explanation of relevant critical thinking concepts and principles • appropriate application of critical thinking concepts and principles to produce information OR provide advice • appropriate use of communication conventions for the context, purpose and audience	B
• explanation of some relevant critical thinking concepts and principles • application of critical thinking concepts and principles to produce information OR provide advice • use of communication conventions for the context, purpose and audience	C
• partial explanation of some critical thinking concepts and principles • partial application of critical thinking concepts and principles to produce information OR provide advice • partial use of communication conventions for the context, purpose and audience.	D
The student response does not match any of the descriptors above.	E

Glossary

The syllabus glossary is available at www.qcaa.qld.edu.au/downloads/senior-qce/common/snr_glossary_cognitive_verbs.pdf.

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Version history

Version	Date of change	Information
1.0	July 2026	Published for implementation