

# Course induction resource

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Site: INASP Moodle

Course: Questioning as we learn: An introduction to critical thinking (AQHEd-SL)

Book: Course induction resource

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# About the course

Welcome to INASP's online self-study programme '**Questioning as we learn: An introduction to critical thinking**'. The programme is delivered through an online course which consists of six units:

1. Thinking and questioning
2. Purposeful reading
3. Arguments and reasoning
4. Analysis of information – think critically!
5. Perspectives and biases
6. Apply your learning!

The self-study programme aims to support the development of your skills when assessing information. You will learn how to analyse and evaluate argumentative text and speech. This will help you with your studies while being in higher education and also increase your employability. Employers demand soft skills like critical thinking, since they affect performance in many areas of work, e.g. strategic planning, troubleshooting, problem-solving, and evaluating projects and processes. Critical thinking can also change the way you see the world in every day life and supports you to make a difference as a responsible citizen. Brookfield (2012) goes so far to say that “the ability to think critically about one’s assumptions, beliefs, and actions is a survival necessity” (1).

As the title of this course suggests, it's an *introduction* to critical thinking; it's meant as a starting point. After each unit your lecturer may give you the opportunity to deepen your understanding and apply the skills you have learned in face-to-face lessons.

We also want to encourage you to go back to the course units and your own reflections while progressing with your studies over the next few years. This will support your continuous learning when practising and developing your skills.



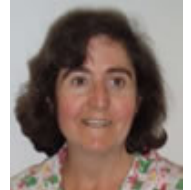
Comic taken from Crimes Against Hugh's Manatees by Hugh D. Crawford (licensed under CC BY-NC-ND 3.0)

# Our development team

The online course has been developed by an international team:

## Content development

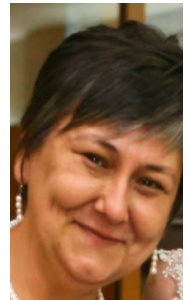
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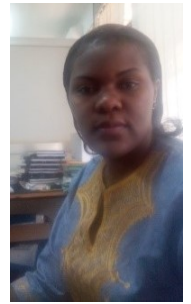


## Advisors

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### **Technical assistance**

Ravi Murugesan, INASP associate, India



INASP wants to express its gratitude to our colleagues who helped with the course development; we appreciate the good team work and are extremely grateful for all the expertise this international team provided.

## Who is this self-study programme for?

In most cases, your lecturer will advise you to complete the six units of the course. Your lecturer or a tutor may sometimes offer the students a lesson in the classroom after each unit with subject-specific activities to apply the skills you learned.

It's an advantage if you can complete the online course in your first year in higher education, as it will help you analyse and evaluate information from the beginning of your studies. But it's never too late, and we believe students can also benefit in later years.

The online course is designed for any students, regardless of the subject of their studies. Please note that when you approach the information we provide, we don't expect you to memorize the contents about the diverse topics we selected. The developers tried to include interesting topics which are relevant for anybody who wants to become a responsible citizen. Of course, you may find some topics more interesting or more familiar than others. Your aim should be to assess all information critically; this course will help you refine your critical thinking skills, not become a subject expert in the topics discussed.

We hope you will enjoy the course and we feel confident that everyone will take something away from it. Just how much you take away from it is up to you. The more you choose to engage with the self-study programme, the greater it will benefit you and advance your critical thinking skills.

# Your Moodle profile

Every Moodle user has a profile page. Set up your profile to make yourself visible to your fellow students and get familiar with the learning platform.

## Activity 1



### Practical activity

Follow these steps to set up your profile:

1. Click the drop-down menu next to your name in the top-right corner of the screen, select **Profile**, and then click **Edit Profile**.
2. Type a short bio in the **Description** field. Whenever you make a post in the discussion forum, your name will be automatically linked to your profile, so your fellow participants can see your profile, by clicking on your name.
3. Add a photo: Isn't it nice to put a face to a name? Your description and photo will only be visible to your course colleagues.
4. Manage privacy: You can set your email address to be visible to your course colleagues, to everyone on INASP Moodle, or to no one.
5. Check your email address.
6. Go back to the administration menu in the top right corner of the screen by clicking your name. Then click **Preferences**.
7. Customize your experience: Change your personal details (including your password), set your time zone, etc.



# Frequently asked questions

## How much time do I need per unit?

To get maximum benefit from the self-study programme, you should plan to spend about two hours per unit on reading, completing the activities, and reflecting.

## What sort of pace should I work at?

Work at your own pace, but complete each unit by the due date your lecturer gives you, if any. Each unit builds on the work of the previous one; so if you find yourself unable to complete a unit within the given period, try to catch up with the content and the activities before starting the activities of the next unit.

## What am I committing to when completing the self-study programme?

We encourage you to see the self-study programme not as a further duty thrown upon you; if you engage with it, we trust you will see it's quite fun.

Try to commit yourself to:

- Keep to the course schedule
- Complete the activities
- Reflect on your learning
- Respect the learning agreement

## What is the learning agreement?

The learning agreement is a set of guidelines that help all of us focus on the right things in the course without getting distracted, worried or confused. When you begin the course, we ask you to read the learning agreement statements and confirm that you agree. You can find the learning agreement in the course induction section.

## How do I use the learning platform?

If you are already familiar with our online learning platform Moodle, you will be able to skip through some sections and complete the activities in this course induction quickly.

If you are new to online learning, we recommend allowing about an hour to become fluent in using the platform. Read the instructions and complete the activities we provide. You want to be able to move comfortably within this online learning environment before you begin Unit 1.

## What if I have a technical issue?

If you ever have any doubts about technical or logistical matters, refer to:

- This set of frequently asked questions
- Moodle Tips
- Helpful fellow students or
- Your lecturer who is responsible for overseeing this self-study programme

Your lecturer, who is responsible for overseeing the self-study programme, will support you. But you can try first to solve your problem on your own by:

- Reading the course induction diligently before you start the course
- Looking into the course induction again when you encounter a difficulty with the learning platform
- Checking with your fellow students whether they have encountered the same difficulties or may even know a solution

We encourage you to be helpful to your fellow students whenever required, as this creates a supportive learning environment. 😊

### **How can I discuss things?**

We encourage you to be active in discussing what you have been learning with your fellow students. Your lecturer may provide some space for that in their lessons; but even if not, you will benefit from informal discussion with your fellow students. You can take any opportunity to start such discussions – through the online discussion forum, over lunch, during social meetings ... This allows you to share ideas and experiences and build on each other's work and knowledge.

### **What if I have a question about the online course content?**

If you have any questions relating to the academic content or learning, discuss things informally with your fellow students and/or in the classroom if your lecturer provides some space for that. You can also use the literature at the end of each unit and the optional activities to deepen your understanding of the course contents.

# How can I monitor my progress?

You can monitor your progress in several ways:

## 1. Unit checklist

For each unit, you will find a checklist on the main learning platform page.

The checklist helps you to track these major accomplishments when going through the self-study programme:

- Have I gone through all readings and activities of the unit?
- Have I made notes for the reflective activities in the unit (on the 'My notes and thoughts' space at the main page or elsewhere)?
- Have I prepared answers to the 'final reflection' questions in the unit?
- If applicable, have I participated in the classroom discussion for the unit? (If your lecturer is not able to provide space during the lesson, you could also have an informal discussion with some of your fellow students.)

When going through the programme, tick the items you have accomplished. We recommend that you look into the checklists at the end of each week. Celebrate what you have accomplished and plan what to do in the following week!

## 2. Checkboxes

When you go to the main learning platform page and scroll down through the unit headings, you will see checkboxes on the right-hand side of each unit that show your progress throughout the course. These checkboxes are progress indicators; they will initially be empty and ticked automatically once you have accessed all pages of the unit.

## 3. Course notebook

Another crucial element of managing your own learning is reflecting on it, and relating what you learn to your own context. You can do this by keeping a course notebook in which you write down your reflections and any ideas you have as you learn. You can keep your private course notebook in any way you prefer – a Word document, pen and paper, in the cloud, whatever suits you.

The course notebook provides evidence of your own learning. It is a type of self-assessment, and a good way of monitoring your own learning. In this course, we indicate good points for reflection with the Reflective icon.



And at the end of each unit (the 'What have I learned?' page), we encourage you to reflect on the whole unit and what you learned.

Now complete this activity!

## Activity 2






## **Practical activity**

Go to the 'checklist for course induction'. (Either click on the link 'Checklist for course induction' marked in blue or go back to the main learning platform page and find the checklist under the heading 'Course induction'. )


Tick all the tasks you have completed so far. As you progress through the course induction, you can update your progress by ticking tasks you've completed as you go.

# What does each unit consist of?

<p><b>Unit book</b></p>	<p>Denoted by , each unit contains a book with in-built reading and activities. As you progress through each unit, you will be supported by the following guidance.</p>
<p><b>Introduction and learning outcomes</b></p>	<p>The first page of each unit gives an overview of what will be covered in the unit and what you will have learned having gone through the unit and completed all the activities.</p>
<p><b>Time needed to complete activities</b></p>	<p>You get advice on how long it should take you to complete activities.</p> <p>Icons such as  show the approximate time you should allocate for an activity.</p>
<p><b>Key points</b></p>	<p>Key points (denoted by ) ask you to think things through critically and note down your thoughts.</p> <p>We recommend doing this by keeping a course notebook where you write down your reflections and any ideas you generate as you learn. You can keep your private course notebook in any way you prefer – a Word document, pen and paper, ...</p> <p>You and your fellow students also have the opportunity to share your thoughts by posting in the discussion forum.</p>
<p><b>Reflections at the end of the unit</b></p>	<p>At the end of each unit you will find the page 'What have I learned?'. Again, we recommend that you jot down your reflections in your course notebook. If you like, you can share your thoughts with your fellow students by using the discussion forum.</p>
<p><b>Relevant literature</b></p>	<p>At the end of each unit you will find the page 'References and further resources'. This page will list all the sources used in that unit and point you towards further reading on the unit topic.</p>
<p><b>Unit checklist</b></p>	<p>For each unit, you will find a checklist on the main learning platform page. The checklist helps you to track major accomplishments when going through the self-study programme. Please see further information about the checklist on the course induction page 'How can I monitor my progress?'. </p>

# Activity types and icons

This course offers a wide range of activities, which can be completed either individually or in collaboration with your fellow students. Many of these activities are represented by icons, listed in the table below. The icons were designed by University of Leeds and shared under Creative Commons license CC BY. This table provides an overview:

• Energizer	Energizers are short activities, meant as warm-up to get you started. That's the only activity that does not ask for thorough thinking; just do spontaneously what comes to your mind and you will have fun.
• Exploration (also called detective activity)	This exploratory activity asks you to search for information or answers. This might involve watching videos, browsing through external webpages or interpreting an infographic. Most of the time you are provided with guiding questions to support your learning journey.
• Note down your thoughts	You can record your learning in a Word document, a physical notebook, or share your thoughts with your fellow students by using the 'Share your thoughts' forum. You will be encouraged to do this when reaching key points in your learning journey.
• Practical activity	This activity focuses on applying your learning to real life tasks you encounter as a student. This involves purposeful reading, which you will learn more about in Unit 2.
• Q&A activity	This activity asks you either to answer a question or to find a question which leads to a given answer. Sometimes the questions will be provided in quiz format. But don't worry; you can repeat the quiz and you won't get marked. All activities are meant for your own learning; you can practise your questioning and critical thinking skills with this type of activity.
• Reading activity	This activity asks you to read a text while giving you guiding questions.
• Reflective activity	<p>This activity asks you to think things through critically, relate what you have learned to your own context, and make plans for how you can use this new knowledge in practice.</p> <p>This activity often comes at key points of your learning journey; so we encourage you to record your reflections in a Word document, a physical notebook, or share your thoughts with your fellow students in the online forum. Key points are denoted by</p> 
• Optional activity	The completion of this activity is not essential to your understanding of the course. However, we highly recommend you complete them when you have time. This will deepen your understanding and help you to apply your learning. And you will very likely have fun when completing such an activity! Please note that your lecturer may not be able to provide space for discussions about optional activities.

Now complete this activity.

## Activity 3



### Reflective activity

Think through what your expectations for this self-study online course are. What would you like to learn? Which skills do you want to gain? What experience do you want to have? Do you expect to face any challenges? Do you have any concerns and if so what could you do to resolve them?



Note down your thoughts and share at least one expectation or concern in the 'Share your thoughts' forum. You will find the forum on the course main page (your 'dashboard'). Click on 'Share your thoughts' (marked in blue) to see all discussions. You will see the discussion 'My expectations for this online course' at the top. Now post a reply to this discussion by clicking on 'My expectations ...' and then 'reply' on the next page.

You can also start a new discussion in the forum by clicking on the 'Add a new discussion topic' button on the main page of the forum. Then you can add a new topic: Give it a title in the subject field and enter your thoughts into the message entry field. You will see that you can even attach a file – wouldn't it be nice to share a selfie with your fellow students?

Don't forget to click the 'Post to forum' button so that your fellow students can see your post.

## **Read. Watch. Listen.**

People have diverse learning preferences. Some enjoy learning by reading, others prefer watching videos, listening to speeches, or carrying out their own experiments. The course developers have incorporated different methods of engagement, so that the course does not get boring, and can appeal to all learner types. You will hopefully enjoy the course whatever your learning preferences are. You will see that optional activities sometimes cover themes that had already been studied but in an alternative way. So you could watch a video clip about a topic you have read before. Experiment and find out how you learn best!



## Videos

You can watch videos by clicking in the middle of the picture. Clicking on the dotted square in the right-hand bottom corner of the video will open it in full screen. To exit full screen mode, click again on the right bottom corner. Alternatively, click on 'YouTube' to watch the videos there.

Tips:

- If you have low bandwidth internet access and encounter problems with watching a video, you can choose a lower quality in settings by clicking on the gear-wheel symbol at the bottom of the video frame.
- At the bottom of the video frame, you will also find the speaker symbol for changing the sound volume. But please note that you may also need to check your device's sound control, as it can overrule the video sound settings.
- Click on the 'CC' symbol at the bottom of the video frame, if you like to read the transcript while listening. Some people who have hearing disabilities or whose first language is not English find this useful to understand better what is said. But please note that the transcripts are mostly auto-generated and therefore some spoken words may have been written down incorrect.

Complete this activity, if you want to practise how to watch a video. At the same time, you will hear more about INASP, the organization that developed this course, and its mission.

### Activity 4



#### Optional activity

This short video, which INASP was invited to submit for a competition about effective collaboration for development, tells how long-term collaboration with over 50 publishers and library consortia in over 20 countries is making a difference to research and to development.

#### INASP collaborating for research access



## Hide-reveal text

While going through the course, we will encourage you to reflect on your reading or to accomplish tasks. Once you have done that, you can often find our comments on the reading or a sample answer. The comments or sample answers are hidden first so that you can think things through without being influenced by our comments. You can reveal the hidden text by clicking on 'Reveal'. But don't do this too early; you will spoil the fun of coming up with your own ideas and finding solutions on your own! And you will have a better learning experience which will help you to apply your learning.

Now try this kind of activity!

### Activity 5



#### Q&A activity

Answer this question:

**What is orange and sounds like a parrot?**



Parrot (photo by MaxPixel)

Once you have come up with your answer, you can find our answer by clicking on reveal.

Reveal

Hide

**A carrot!**

# Online communication

Communication and discussion are crucial for learning. We encourage you therefore to share your thoughts with your fellow students. We have provided the forum tool 'Share your thoughts' in this course if you want to do this online. Remember that you learn not only from the online course content and activities but also from each other. The students on this self-study online course come from different backgrounds and bring a range of different experiences, perspectives and ideas; so everyone will have something to contribute.

## **Discussion forum**

To make the most of the course, try to be active on the discussion forum. Do not hesitate to ask any questions that come to you as you go through each activity; one of your fellow students may know an answer. Respond to questions or posts made by your course colleagues - we're all taking this learning journey together.

## **Announcement forum**

The Announcements forum appears at the top of the course homepage, and is a special forum where the course moderator makes announcements. You are subscribed to this forum by default, as we would like everyone to be notified whenever a post is made here. You can unsubscribe from the Announcements forum by visiting this forum and clicking on **Unsubscribe from this forum**. We however suggest that you remain subscribed to the Announcements forum because the posts made here are important.

# Netiquette

While most participants in online courses implicitly know how to interact on the discussion forum, we occasionally come across inappropriate posts. Here's a quick list of things you should and should not do:

You should:

1. Make sure your posts are relevant – stick to the topic of the units
2. Check what you have written before posting it, especially when writing comments to posts from others and expressing a disagreement. Is the way in which you express disagreement too harsh?
3. Use emoticons now and then to let the reader know how you feel. We can't see each other's facial expressions in an online course, so emoticons fill this gap to some extent. The basic smiley 😊 is arguably the most popular emoticon, but emoticons can also be useful to convey other feelings. You can make an emoticon just by typing the relevant characters in your text editor. No special formatting is needed! For example, if you type a colon : followed by the symbol ) you won't immediately see a smiley but when you save your post you'll see it has appeared on the page like this: 😊 . You can see a smiley emoticon in the toolbar of the text editor within Moodle when you write something, and when you click this smiley you can see a full list of emoticons. Click on any emoticon to insert it.

You should NOT:

1. Display any kind of bias towards course participants based on their gender, ethnicity, nationality, or anything else
2. Write in a harsh or insulting manner to anyone in the course
3. Discuss things unrelated to the topic of the course
4. Advertise anything without providing context. This includes posting calls for papers from journals and conferences. You can, however, provide a link to anything online if it is relevant to an ongoing discussion in the course.
5. Provide links to websites that may have illegal content, such as pirated software, scanned books, and copyrighted journal articles that are not meant to be shared openly. Uploading any such content directly on the forums is also forbidden.

If you are in doubt, check with your lecturer.

## References and further resources

1. Brookfield, S.D. (2012). 'Teaching for Critical Thinking', San Francisco: Jossey-Bass A Wiley Imprint, p. 2