Critical Thinking: The Must-Teach Skill for the Future

The Future of Work Is Changing

70% **of the skills used in most jobs will change due to AI.**[1]

— World Economic Forum

The vast majority of students already use generative AI for homework and find it more helpful than traditional tutors.

As AI advances:[2]

Technical Skills	Uniquely Human Capacities
↓ Basic coding	↑ Critical thinking
↓ Data entry	↑ Ethical judgment
↓ Routine analysis	↑ Intuition & storytelling
↓ Administrative tasks	↑ Collaboration & leadership
↓ Single-purpose software	↑ Authentic & ethical AI use

Job-Proof Skills = Human Skills

The United Nations defines future-proof skills as:

> *"Conceptual and strategic thinking, problem-solving, empathy, optimism, ethics, emotional intelligence and judgment... attributes that machines will not be able to replicate."*

By 2030, two-thirds of all jobs will be soft skill–intensive.[3]

Employers Are Clear

Employers Rank Analytical (Critical) Thinking as the #1 Skill They're Seeking[4]

→ 7/10 companies consider it essential

TOP 3 CAREER READINESS COMPETENCIES[5]

- Career & Self-Development
- Communication
- Critical Thinking

Graduates must demonstrate the ability to:

- Use reasoning and judgment
- Analyze multiple sources
- Recognize bias
- Communicate clearly to diverse stakeholders

Instruction & Practice Are Essential for Students to Develop Strong Critical Thinking Skills

54% of faculty say they explicitly teach critical thinking yet students report that critical thinking is primarily being taught implicitly.[6]

47% of students lack proficiency in critical thinking at graduation, only a small improvement over the 57% that enter higher education without proficiency.[7]

For critical thinking skills to be improved, colleges and universities must:

- ✓ Teach critical thinking explicitly across courses
- ✓ Provide structured practice during classes
- ✓ Encourage application throughout coursework
- ✓ Measure students' skills to establish a baseline and identify growth areas

CAE's Critical Thinking Skills Program is a proven approach to building and measuring workforce skills. Our simple, scalable model is designed for seamless integration, provides comprehensive faculty support, and prepares students for success in college, the workforce, and civic life. **Reach out** to learn more.

[1] 2025: the year companies prepare to disrupt how work gets done

[2] Future-Proof Students' (and Our) Careers by Building Uniquely Human Capacities

[3] Future-Proof Skills Can Help Balance Individual and Societal Progress

[4] The Future of Jobs Report 2025

[5] What is career readiness?

[6] Professors say they teach critical thinking. But is that what students are learning?

[7] Van Damme, D., & Zahner, D. (Eds.). (2022). Does higher education teach students to think critically? OECD Publishing. https://doi.org/10.1787/cc9fa6aa-en