

CRITICAL THINKING

Upon graduation, our graduates will be required to identify and solve complex problems and effectively respond to situations they have not previously confronted. Acting responsibly in an ever-changing world of ill-defined problems requires critical thinking. At USAFA, critical thinking is defined as: *The process of self-aware, informed, and reflective reasoning for problem-solving and decision-making even in the absence of ideal conditions.* Cadets' critical thinking is developed in an intentional manner across the USAFA experience, promoting the use of appropriate critical thinking processes within a discipline or context..

USAFA GRADUATES WILL BE ABLE TO:¹

Self-aware Reasoning

Proficiency 1: Describe their own assumptions and contexts.

Proficiency 2: Explain how their own assumptions and contexts influence approaches to problem solving and decision making.

Informed Reasoning

Proficiency 3: Identify relevant information that is needed to solve a problem or make an effective decision.

Reflective Reasoning

Proficiency 4: Identify the assumptions and contexts that underlie an argument.

Proficiency 5: Evaluate the strength of an argument in support of an idea or interpretation.

Proficiency 6: Propose alternative interpretations of information or observations.

Problem-solving and Decision Making

Proficiency 7: Identify issue(s) in need of solving.

Proficiency 8: Intentionally apply an appropriate process to develop solutions to an issue..

Proficiency 9: Assess the merit of multiple options in order to identify the best solution.

Proficiency 10: Explain how changes to assumptions or contexts alter the recommended solution.

¹ These proficiencies were modelled after the American Association of Colleges and Universities Essential Learning Outcomes www.aacu.org/leap/essential-learning-outcomes, the Foundation for Critical Thinking: <http://www.criticalthinking.org//>, and Facione, PA (2015). *Critical Thinking: What it is and why it counts*. San Jose, CA: California Academic Press, <http://www.insightassessment.com/Resources/Critical-Thinking-What-It-Is-and-Why-It-Counts>