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|  | **IGNITE BI-WEEKLY NEWSLETTER**  **January 12, 2018** |

**Reminder: Midpoint Check-In Due This Month!**

Now that you are halfway done your work placement, it’s time to have your midpoint check-in with your supervisor. You will complete the first half of the form your own, and the second half at an in-person meeting with your supervisor. The form is available on mySuccess. Instructions for uploading your forms to mySuccess are available under “Work Study”.

**Welcome back Ignite students! I hope you all enjoyed your holiday break.**

**This week’s newsletter theme is Critical Thinking and Problem Solving.**

For those students starting in the Winter term, your Initial Check-In is also due this month. Further instructions can be found on mySuccess.

Students who fail to submit their Check-In forms may jeopardize their ability to participate in the Ignite program in the future.

**Developing Your Skills: Critical Thinking and Problem Solving**

What is critical thinking? It’s a term used widely in University, but it’s often difficult to find a definition. Your professors are helping you to develop your critical thinking skills in the classroom every day through lectures, readings, midterms, and papers.

**Did you know…**

**Mentions of critical thinking in job postings have doubled since 2009 on Indeed.ca**

**In a study conducted by Pearson, only 28% of employers rated 4-year graduates as having “Excellent” critical thinking skills**

Critical thinking can be defined as the ability to practice sound judgement, strategic and creative thinking when making decisions and evaluating solutions to problems. You are a strong critical thinker and problem solver when you are resourceful in obtaining information, assess the situation to understand the actual problem, and use your own knowledge, the facts, and data to determine possible solutions.

Critical thinking and problem solving go hand-in-hand. In the workplace, you are often left to problem solve on your own (or sometimes as a team). Being resourceful and coming up with a potential solution before you ask your employer for help is a great example of using problem solving in the workplace. If you aren’t sure of an answer, just Google it! Google is a great first step to use when you’re trying to problem solve.

**Critical Thinking & Problem Solving Skills In Action**

As a young professional, your first reaction might be to bring a problem to your manager right away without first exploring possible solutions yourself. Being a creative thinker who is confident, persistent and proactive will enable you become a strong and resourceful problem solver.

If you selected Critical Thinking & Problem Solving as the competency you’d like to develop at your Initial Check-In, or if you’re looking to improve your critical thinking and problem solving skills, consider using the RED method when faced with a problem:



**“R**ecognize Assumptions. This is the ability to separate fact from opinion. It is deceptively easy to listen to a comment or presentation and assume the information presented is true even though no evidence was given to back it up. Perhaps the speaker is particularly credible or trustworthy, or the information makes sense or matches our own view. We just don’t question it. Noticing and questioning assumptions helps to reveal information gaps or unfounded logic. Taking it a step further, when we examine assumptions through the eyes of different people (e.g., the viewpoint of different stakeholders), the end result is a richer perspective on a topic.

**E**valuate Arguments. It is difficult to suspend judgment and systematically walk through various arguments and information with the impartiality of a Sherlock Holmes. The art of evaluating arguments entails analyzing information objectively and accurately, questioning the quality of supporting evidence, and understanding how emotion influences the situation. Common barriers include confirmation bias, which is the tendency to seek out and agree with information that is consistent with you own point of view, or allowing emotions – yours or others – to get in the way of objective evaluation. People may quickly come to a conclusion simply to avoid conflict. Being able to remain objective and sort through the validity of different positions helps people draw more accurate conclusions.

**D**raw Conclusions. People who possess this skill are able to bring diverse information together to arrive at conclusions that logically follow from the available evidence, and they do not inappropriately generalize beyond the evidence. Furthermore, they will change their position when the evidence warrants doing so. They are often characterized as having “good judgment” because they typically arrive at a quality decision. Each of these critical thinking skills fits together in a process that is both fluid and sequential. When presented with information, people typically alternate between recognizing assumptions and evaluating arguments. Critical thinking is sequential in that recognizing faulty assumptions or weak arguments improves the likelihood of reaching an appropriate conclusion.”

Source: [Pearson Education](https://www.pearsoned.com/the-status-of-critical-thinking-in-the-workplace/)

**Want to Learn More?**

Check out the following additional resources:

**4 Step Guide to Solving Any Problem At Work** *“Next time you run up against an obstacle, rather than panicking, try taking the following steps to tackle it…”* [Read more](https://www.themuse.com/advice/your-4step-guide-to-solving-any-problem-at-workfaster)

**7 Steps: Critical Thinking in the Workplace** *“The ability to seek a deep, rigorous understanding of our challenges – call it critical thinking – tends to escape us when we need it most. Here are some ways that we can breathe purpose and intent back into our problem solving…”* [Read more](https://talentculture.com/7-steps-critical-thinking-in-the-workplace/)

**How to Think Critically** “*Developing your critical thinking skills will help you become a valued member of any team—at work, at school, or anywhere that solid decision-making skills are needed. Here are some ways to improve your critical thinking skills…*” [Read more](https://www.ziprecruiter.com/blog/why-critical-thinking-skills-are-important-in-the-workplace/)