There has been much talk in educational circles lately of the importance of critical thinking. Critical thinking is vital for success in the modern economy, and St Leonard's College is committed to ensuring that our students graduate with first class thinking skills by embedding the concept into the curriculum at all levels.

Critical thinking could be referred to as ‘independent thinking’ - thinking for yourself and resisting the temptation to accept a view simply because it is espoused by an authority figure or the majority. However independent thinking is not enough. In addition to intellectual independence, critical thinkers have an ability to reason with precision, an inclination to subject their existing views to scrutiny, and a willingness to seek out evidence that may undermine cherished opinions.

IN A WORLD OF RAPID TECHNOLOGICAL CHANGE, CRITICAL THINKING IS CRUCIAL FOR THE FUTURE CAREER PROSPECTS OF TODAY'S STUDENTS.

Our biggest problem these days is not a lack of information, but rather the sea of often conflicting claims to which we are exposed. How will our young people sort the wheat from the chaff if they don’t have the independent mindedness to effectively evaluate the claims of self-proclaimed experts, and the reasoning skills to separate the well-justified claims from the fallacious ones?

In a world of rapid technological change, critical thinking is also crucial for the future career prospects of today's students. Every day another newspaper headline warns of the impending replacement of this or that group of professionals by robots or computer algorithms. However, robots are only capable of applying solutions and approaches that have already been developed by their human programmers. Although the future may not hold an abundance of opportunities for individuals who are only capable of applying tried and true formulas, there will always be demand for those with a capacity to develop new perspectives and approaches. In short, there will always be demand for critical thinkers.

St Leonard's College is taking a proactive approach to critical thinking. At the Senior School level, this focus is best expressed by the College's commitment to the International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme, in particular its core Theory of Knowledge (TOK) component. TOK encourages students to scrutinise the bases of their beliefs and the claims to knowledge made within their studies, and to look at important issues from a range of cultural and disciplinary perspectives. This program will only achieve maximum effect if foundational skills in the analysis and evaluation of arguments and viewpoints have been established in Middle School. With this in mind, the year 7 and 8 Philosophy and Critical Thinking courses have been revised to place greater emphasis on transferable thinking skills. In addition new critical thinking courses are being added to the year 5 and 6 programs in 2016.

We believe that this whole school approach to critical thinking being developed at St Leonard's College will arm our students with the thinking skills required to face the rapidly changing economy of the 21st Century with confidence and enthusiasm.
Critical to Success
THINKING FOR THE 21ST CENTURY

MARK HODGES CRITICAL THINKING TEACHER