

## **Critical thinking in global challenges**

### **Week 5**

#### **'Developing your own arguments'**

Hello and welcome to Week 5 of Critical Thinking in Global Challenges.

Over the past month we have learned how to assess arguments expressed by others. This week you will learn how to formulate your own arguments to be able to present them effectively either orally during dialogue or debate or in writing in short articles or longer essays, for example.

The learning objective of this week is to be able to understand the key parameters to look at when developing your own arguments.

Informed by reading on one topic or by investigating a specific question, you might now want to express a specific point of view or argument. In a similar manner as we've seen when assessing the arguments of others, there are 5 key steps to follow to be able to develop your argument.

The first step is to formulate your point of view.

Formulate in your mind the outline of your argument and ask yourself: What point do I want to get across? How will I be able to convince my audience?

Then write down your argument.

Gather enough background information on the topic to 'set the scene'. Write down all the evidence supporting your point of view in a logical way. Conclude clearly in few sentences.

Next, you need to organise further the evidence supporting your viewpoint.

You need to assess the credibility and relevance of each chosen piece of evidence, as we've learnt to do in week 2. Be mindful of the strengths and weaknesses of the evidence you use in your argument.

You also need to record the source of each piece of evidence. This is particularly important when expressing your argument in writing in an essay for instance, as your essay should come with its own reference list - a list of sources of evidence used in your argument. This list will help other people to assess the quality of the evidence you use.

The next step is to examine the structure, clarity and logic of your argument.

As seen when assessing the arguments of others, you need to assess whether your argument is clear and logically sound. Pay attention also to the vocabulary used and to your tone of writing – it should be neutral, balanced and dispassionate. Remember that it is the evidence that should persuade your opponent or audience not an emotional or aggressive tone!

The next step is a very important one: You need to review and assess all arguments that contradict your viewpoint.

You need to assess counter arguments and contradicting evidence using the same technique as we've used seen in weeks 3& 4.

You also need to identify potential errors and limitations in the opposing arguments which would invalidate the arguments.

In parallel, by assessing the counter evidence and in the light of new evidence your argument might need to be modified or even completely revised. The revision of your argument is the last step in developing your own argument. You may need to repeat these steps, depending on the revision of your own argument, until it is sound.

As a way to put in practice what you have learnt this week, I encourage you all to research a topic of your choice based on the 4 Global challenges presented in the course, and write a short argument of no more than 150 words related to that topic. Post your argument in the discussion forum to be peer-assessed by the other students on the course. And in turn, you should make sure to assess the arguments posted by other students, using the 5 steps technique described in the course! Reading and assessing the arguments of the other students will also help you practise critical thinking on these issues.

Good luck and I hope you'll enjoy doing this exercise!