What is divergent thinking?

As a crucial aspect of critical thinking, divergent thinking is the ability to think of as many solutions as possible to an open-ended problem (ambiguity, distortion, deception, asymmetry). Based on cognitive psychology and neuroscience research, CASL developed lectures and hands-on exercises to advance the divergent thinking skills of Intelligence Community (IC) analysts.

Why is this course needed?

Intelligence Community Directive (ICD) 203 mandates that analysts consider alternative hypotheses to justify their conclusions and, thus, have good divergent thinking skills. Additionally, analysts can use divergent thinking techniques to avoid groupthink, analytic tunnel vision, or analytic biases.

The IC is currently lacking evidence-based course materials for improving divergent thinking. CASL’s course materials help fill this gap.

Customizable materials

The scope and format of the course can be developed according to specific customer needs, including various delivery methods:

» Classroom or online
» Teacher mediated or self study
» Small or large group
» Classified or unclassified

For more information

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How is this course structured?

Lecture (2.5 hours)

» Divergent thinking and why it is important
» Factors that determine divergent thinking
  » Brain factors
    » Left vs. right brain
    » Brain state and control
  » Cognitive strategies
    » Conceptual combination
    » Reframing

Hands-on exercises (1.5 hours)

» Easy-to-adopt cognitive strategies with demonstrated efficacy
  » Conceptual combination (30–45 minutes)
  » Reframing (30 minutes)
» Analyst-relevant questions rated by USG analysts
  » CASL divergent thinking test
  » Modeled after Torrance Test for Creative Thinking (TTCT)