

## B1 Reading: developing critical approaches (Unit 1.2B)

### 1 Critical reading

**Read critically the two articles on universities.**

A

*Despite their dominance of global league tables (e.g. Shanghai Rankings Consultancy) American universities currently face significant criticism. The American Enterprise Institute (AEI) and the Goldwater Institute have recently published negative reports on US universities, while a highly critical book (Hacker and Dreifus) was published in 2010. The critics focus on the rising costs of American higher education, which have increased at a much faster rate than inflation, resulting in a situation where even middle-class families are finding the expense unaffordable, especially during a recession.*

*Another target of criticism is the focus on research at the expense of teaching. Students rarely meet the 'star' professors, being taught instead by badly-paid graduate students. It is claimed that in one year nearly half of Harvard's history professors were on sabbatical leave. As a consequence, students work less; according to AEI they currently study for 14 hours per week, whereas 50 years ago the figure was 24 hours per week. Despite this the proportion of students gaining a first or 2.1 degree has increased significantly: a situation described by the critics as 'grade inflation'.*

B

*There is little doubt that a university degree is the key to a better future for any student. Despite the costs involved in terms of fees, it has been calculated that the average UK university graduate will earn £400,000 (\$600,000) more over his or her lifetime compared to a non-graduate. Possession of a degree should also assist a graduate to find a satisfying job more quickly and give greater prospects for promotion inside the chosen career. A degree from a British university is recognised all over the world as proof of a high quality education.*

*A university course will not only provide students with up-to-date knowledge in their subject area, but also provide practice with the essential skills required by many employers today, such as the ability to communicate effectively using ICT, or the skills of team working and problem solving. In addition, living away from home in an international atmosphere gives the opportunity to make new friends from all over the world, and build networks of contacts that may be invaluable in a future career.*

*A university course is a unique opportunity for many young people to develop individually by acquiring independence, free from parental control. They will learn to look after themselves in a secure environment, and gain useful life skills such as cooking and budgeting. Most graduates look back at their degree courses as a valuable experience at a critical period of their lives.*

### 2 Practice

**List any statements from the articles that you find unreliable, and add comments to explain your doubts in the table below. Then decide which article you find more reliable overall.**

	Statement	Comment
A		
B		