CRITICAL THINKING RUBRIC

This rubric was developed by an interdisciplinary team of faculty representing colleges at Stephen F. Austin State University (SFA) through a process that examined and modified the AACU Written Communication Value Rubric to meet the needs of SFA's core curriculum assessment. The rubric articulates fundamental criteria for each learning outcome, with performance descriptors demonstrating progressively more sophisticated levels of attainment. The rubric is intended for institutional-level use in evaluating and discussing student learning, not for grading. The SFA team agrees with the utility of the AACU VALUE rubric, which "is to position learning at all undergraduate levels within a basic framework of expectations such that evidence of learning can by shared nationally through a common dialog and understanding of student success."

Definition

Critical thinking is a habit of mind characterized by the comprehensive exploration of issues, ideas, artifacts, and events before accepting or formulating an opinion or conclusion.

Framing Language

This rubric is designed to be transdisciplinary, reflecting the recognition that success in all disciplines requires habits of inquiry and analysis that share common attributes. Further, research suggests that successful critical thinkers from all disciplines increasingly need to be able to apply those habits in various and changing situations encountered in all walks of life.

This rubric is designed for use with many different types of assignments and the suggestions here are not an exhaustive list of possibilities. Critical thinking can be demonstrated in assignments that require students to complete analyses of text, data, or issues. Assignments that cut across presentation mode might be especially useful in some fields. If insight into the process components of critical thinking (e.g., how information sources were evaluated regardless of whether they were included in the product) is important, assignments focused on student reflection might be especially illuminating.

Glossary

The definitions that follow were developed to clarify terms and concepts used in this rubric only.

- Assumptions: Ideas, conditions, or beliefs (often implicit or unstated) that are "taken for granted or accepted as true without proof." (quoted from www.dictionary.reference.com/browse/assumptions)
- Context: The historical, ethical, political, cultural, environmental, or circumstantial settings or conditions that influence and complicate the consideration of any issues, ideas, artifacts, and events.

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Critical Thinking Skills (THECB, Elements of the Core Curriculum): to include creative thinking, innovation, inquiry, and analysis, evaluation and synthesis of information

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	Capstone 4	Accomplished 3	Developing 2	Beginning 1	Unacceptable 0
Identification and explanation of issues	Issue/problem to be considered critically is stated clearly and described comprehensively, delivering all relevant information necessary for full understanding.	Issue/problem to be considered critically is stated, described, and clarified so that understanding is not seriously impeded by omissions.	Issue/problem to be considered critically is stated but description leaves some terms undefined, ambiguities unexplored, boundaries undetermined, and/or backgrounds unknown.	Issue/problem to be considered critically is stated without clarification or description.	Issue/problem to be considered critically is not stated.
Collection of information	Information* taken from source(s) is sufficient to develop a comprehensive analysis and synthesis.	Information taken from source(s) is sufficient to develop a coherent analysis and synthesis.	Information taken from source(s) is insufficient to develop coherent analysis and synthesis.	Information taken from source(s) is insufficient to develop any analysis and synthesis.	No source information is provided.
Recognition of context and assumptions	Thoroughly (systematically and methodically) analyzes own and others' assumptions and carefully evaluates the relevance of contexts before presenting a point of view**.	Identifies own and others' assumptions and several relevant contexts before presenting a point of view**.	Questions some assumptions. May be more aware of others' assumptions than one's own (or vice versa). Identifies several relevant contexts before presenting a point of view.	Shows an emerging awareness of present assumptions (sometimes labels assertions as assumptions). Begins to identify some contexts before presenting a point of view.	Shows no awareness of present assumptions. Does not identify contexts before presenting a point of view.
Evaluation and Synthesis of information	The evaluation of information is thorough, taking into account the complexities of an issue, while acknowledging limits and synthesizing other points of view.	The evaluation of information is sufficient, taking into account some complexities of an issue, while acknowledging some limits and synthesizing other points of view.	The evaluation of information is incomplete, not taking into account the complexities of an issue.	The evaluation of information is simplistic, obvious, or has limited relevance.	No evaluation of information is provided.
Conclusions and related outcomes	Conclusions and related outcomes (consequences and implications) are logical and reflect student's informed evaluation and ability to place evidence and perspectives discussed in priority order.	Conclusion is logically tied to a range of information, including opposing viewpoints; related outcomes (consequences and implications) are identified clearly.	Conclusion is logically tied to information (because information is chosen to fit the desired conclusion); some related outcomes (consequences and implications) are identified clearly.	Conclusion is inconsistently tied to some of the information discussed; related outcomes (consequences and implications) are oversimplified.	No conclusion is provided.

*Information includes observations, experts' sources, or empirical data.
**Point of view includes hypothesis, thesis, conditions, or perspectives.

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