Critical Thinking & Assessment Design

Linda Siefert, Director of Gen Ed Assessment
Cara Ciano, Director of University Studies
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Characteristics of Critical Thinking
- Analytical
- Creative
- Strategic
- Ethical
- Reflective
- Intuitive
- Historical
- Sociocultural

What are the characteristics of Critical Thinking?

Workshop Title

Thinking Critically
Abstract

Abstract:
The workshop will focus on developing Critical Thinking skills among students. Participants will engage in a hands-on activity that involves analyzing a real-world scenario. The activity will require students to identify assumptions, evaluate evidence, and propose solutions.

Date:
[Insert Date]
Location:
[Insert Location]
What are the characteristics of Critical Thinking?
Characteristics of Critical Thinking

- clearly articulated issue
- relevant evidence
- thorough analysis of sources
- examination of own and others' assumptions
- grasp of complexities
- creative evaluations
- careful syntheses
- logical and appropriately valued conclusions
# Critical Thinking VALUE Rubric

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

Evaluators are encouraged to assign a score to any work sample or submission of work that does not meet benchmark (full use) level performance.

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<td>Issue/problem to be considered critically is stated clearly and described comprehensively, delivering all relevant information necessary for full understanding.</td>
<td>Issue/problem to be considered critically is stated, described, and clarified so that understanding is not seriously impeded by omissions.</td>
<td>Issue/problem to be considered critically is stated but description leaves some terms undefined, ambiguities unexplored, boundaries undetermined, and/or backgrounds unknown.</td>
<td>Issue/problem to be considered critically is stated without clarification or description.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Evidence</strong></td>
<td>Information is taken from source(s) with enough interpretation/evaluation to develop a comprehensive analysis or synthesis. Viewpoints of experts are questioned thoroughly.</td>
<td>Information is taken from source(s) with enough interpretation/evaluation to develop a coherent analysis or synthesis. Viewpoints of experts are subject to questioning.</td>
<td>Information is taken from source(s) with some interpretation/evaluation, but not enough to develop a coherent analysis or synthesis. Viewpoints of experts are taken as mostly fact, with little questioning.</td>
<td>Information is taken from source(s) without any interpretation/evaluation. Viewpoints of experts are taken as fact, without questions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Influence of context and assumptions</strong></td>
<td>Thoroughly (systematically and methodically) analyzes own and other assumptions and carefully evaluates the relevance of context when presenting a position.</td>
<td>Identifies own and others’ assumptions and several relevant contexts when presenting a position.</td>
<td>Questions some assumptions. Identifies several relevant contexts when presenting a position. May be more aware of others’ assumptions than one’s own (or vice versa).</td>
<td>Shows an emerging awareness of present assumptions (sometimes labels intentions as assumptions). Begins to identify some contexts when presenting a position.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Student’s position (perspective, thesis/hypothesis)</strong></td>
<td>Specific position (perspective, thesis/hypothesis) is imaginative, taking into account the complexities of an issue. Limits of position (perspective, thesis/hypothesis) are acknowledged. Others’ points of view are synthesized within position (perspective, thesis/hypothesis).</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Conclusions and related outcomes (implications and consequences)</strong></td>
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<td>Conclusion is logically tied to a range of information, including opposing viewpoints. Related outcomes (consequences and implications) are identified clearly.</td>
<td>Conclusion is logically tied to information (because information is chosen to fit the stated conclusion), some related outcomes (consequences and implications) are identified clearly.</td>
<td>Conclusion is inconsistently tied to some of the information discussed; related outcomes (consequences and implications) are oversimplified.</td>
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# Where is Critical Thinking?

## Curriculum Map: University Studies Component Student Learning Outcomes and UNCW Learning Goals

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<td>MB2</td>
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<td><strong>Scientific Approaches to the Natural World</strong></td>
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<td>S1N1, S1N2, S1N3, S1N4</td>
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<td>S1N1, S1N2, S1N3, S1N4</td>
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**Codes within cells are the component student learning outcomes, which illustrate how the components are aligned to the UNCW Learning Goals.**

*January 2013*
Scaffolding CT: ENG 303

Analysis Essay
In your rhetorical analysis of a website or 'junk mail' item, provide clear answers to the following questions:

- Who is the likely target audience for this item? How does the item attempt to construct an image of this audience?
- What is the purpose of this item? That is, what does the author of this item want the reader/viewer to do?
- What specific rhetorical strategies does the author employ in order to sway the reader? Be as specific as you can about the author's use of language and word choice; their use of metaphors, of colors, photos, illustrations; their use of under-lining, boldfacing, highlighting or other such textual manipulations.
- How would you classify these strategies in terms of rhetorical appeals? Why do you think these sorts of appeals were chosen? Are these appeals appropriate or effective in the context of this item? Why or why not?
- Does this item try to set itself apart from other similar items? (i.e. this charity is more important that other charities; this product or service is unlike others, etc.)

References:
Backwards Design

1. Identify desired outcomes - what you want students to know or be able to do.
2. Determine how students can demonstrate to you that they know or can do it - plan learning experiences - how they will gain skills.
3. Create meaningful tasks that support students in developing understandings of what quality academic performance looks like and provide feedback that engages students so they can act on that feedback.

References:
Scaffolding CT: ENG 303

Analysis Essay

In your rhetorical analysis of a website or ‘junk mail’ item, provide clear answers to the following questions:

- Who is the likely target audience for this item? How does the item attempt to construct an image of this audience?
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- Does this item try to set itself apart from other similar items? (i.e. this charity is more important that other charities; this product or service is unlike others, etc.)

Backwards Design

- Identify desired outcomes: what you want students to know or be able to do.
- Determine how students can demonstrate to you that they know or can do it: plan how you will assess that they met the outcomes.
- Create meaningful tasks:
  - that support students in developing understandings of what quality academic performance looks like
  - and provide feedback that engages students so they can act on that feedback.
- Plan learning experiences: how they will gain skills.

References:

Your turn...

Think of one of your course student learning outcomes that is aligned to critical thinking.

1. Determine the specific characteristics of critical thinking that you want your students to demonstrate.
2. Design an assessment through which students can demonstrate those characteristics.

Share your idea.
clearly articulated issue  relevant evidence
thorough analysis of sources
examination of own and others' assumptions
grasp of complexities
creative evaluations  careful syntheses
logical and appropriately valued conclusions
Your turn...

Think of one of your course student learning outcomes that is aligned to critical thinking.
1. Determine the specific characteristics of critical thinking that you want your students to demonstrate.
2. Design an assessment through which students can demonstrate those characteristics.
Share your idea.
Thinking Critically about Critical Thinking in 2015-2016

speakers and discussion forums
study groups
assignment and syllabus construction workshops
community engagement
Critical Thinking & Assessment Design

Linda Siefert, Director of Gen Ed Assessment
Cara Cilano, Director of University Studies

Characteristics of Critical Thinking
- Theorizing, evaluating, and synthesizing
- Examine evidence and assumptions
- Creative evaluation
- Careful synthesis
- Logical and appropriate
- Classify and use evidence

What are the characteristics of Critical Thinking?
Critical Thinking VALUE Rubric
for more information, please contact value@aaac.org

The VALUE rubrics were developed by teams of faculty experts representing colleges and universities across the United States through a process that examined many existing campus rubrics and related documents for each learning outcome and incorporated additional feedback from faculty. The rubrics articulate fundamental criteria for each learning outcome, with performance descriptors demonstrating progressively more sophisticated levels of attainment. The rubrics are intended for institutional-level use in evaluating and discussing student learning, not for grading. The core expectations articulated in all 15 of the VALUE rubrics can and should be translated into the language of individual campuses, disciplines, and even courses. The utility of the VALUE rubrics is to position learning at all undergraduate levels within a basic framework of expectations such that evidence of learning can be 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:

- **Ambiguity**: Information that may be interpreted in more than one way.
- **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.
- **Literal meaning**: Interpretation of information exactly as stated. For example, "she was green with envy" would be interpreted to mean that her skin was green.
- **Metaphor**: Information that is (intended to be) interpreted in a non-literal way. For example, "she was green with envy" is intended to convey an intensity of emotion, not a skin color.
**CRITICAL THINKING VALUE Rubric**

For more information, please contact value@aacu.org

**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.

*Evaluators are encouraged to assign a zero to any work sample or collection of work that does not meet benchmark (cell one) level performance.*

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Cluster-specific learning outcomes align to various UNCW Learning Goals.

Codes within cells are the component student learning outcomes, which illustrate how the components are aligned to the UNCW Learning Goals.

January 2013
APPENDIX B
COMMON LEARNING OUTCOMES FOR UNIVERSITY STUDIES COMPONENTS

Freshman Seminar
The student will:

- FS 1. Demonstrate the ability to identify, locate and use reference sources and materials necessary for success in a higher education experience. [Information Literacy]
- FS 2. Participate in discussion of real-life issues as informed, critical members of the group. [Inquiry]
- FS 3. Demonstrate ability to identify and apply academic strategies for analyzing, synthesizing, and critically evaluating information from all courses. [Critical Thinking]
- FS 4. Compose purposeful, reflective, written responses related to transitional issues. [Thoughtful Expression]

Lifespan Wellness
The student will:

- W1. Describe the synergy among the multiple dimensions of wellness. [Foundational Knowledge, Critical Thinking]
- W2. Develop a wellness plan to meet their personal needs across the lifespan. [Foundational Knowledge]
- W3. Describe the relationship between the effects of personal choice and the principles of wellness. [Foundational Knowledge]
- W4. Practice the basic components and principles of safe and effective physical activity and other health-related behaviors. [Foundational Knowledge]

Composition
The student will:

- CMP 1. Focus on a purpose and respond to the needs of different audiences in different kinds of rhetorical situations. [Critical Thinking; Thoughtful Expression]
- CMP 2. Use writing and reading for inquiry, learning, thinking, collaborating and communication [Inquiry; Critical Thinking; Thoughtful Expression; Teamwork]
- CMP 3. Employ a writing process that includes finding, evaluating, analyzing, and synthesizing appropriate primary and secondary sources, and successfully integrating personal knowledge with source material. [Inquiry; Information Literacy; Critical Thinking; Thoughtful Expression]
- CMP 4. Enact writing as an open process that includes generating, revising, peer response, editing, and encouraging writers to use invention, feedback and re-thinking to revise their work. [Critical Thinking; Thoughtful Expression]
Foreign Language
The student will:
- SL 1. Demonstrate basic proficiency in speaking and listening in interactions such as simple conversations in a language in addition to English. [Foundational Knowledge, Critical Thinking, Second Language]
- SL 2. Comprehend text and demonstrate basic proficiency in writing in a language in addition to English. [Foundational Knowledge, Critical Thinking, Second Language]
- SL 3. Demonstrate knowledge of the historical, political, and social realities of the countries and cultures that speak (or spoke) the language being studied. [Inquiry, Critical Thinking, Second Language, Global Citizenship]
- SL 4. Demonstrate the ability to examine other societies in a comparative context and to understand one’s own society in the context of other societies, particularly those societies that speak the language being studied. [Foundational Knowledge, Inquiry, Critical Thinking, Diversity, Global Citizenship]

Mathematics and Statistics
The student will:
- MS 1. Employ multiple computational strategies in college-level mathematics or statistics. [Foundational Knowledge, Inquiry, Critical Thinking]
- MS 2. Demonstrate critical thinking by using mathematical or statistical models to solve problems in the real world. [Foundational Knowledge, Inquiry, Information Literacy, Critical Thinking]
- MS 3. Effectively communicate mathematical or statistical solutions using oral, written and/or graphic forms. [Critical Thinking, Thoughtful Expression]

Aesthetic, Interpretive, and Literary Perspectives
The student will:
- AIL 1. Demonstrate the ability to critically analyze, appreciate, and make cogent subjective judgments regarding artistic and literary works, using the appropriate conventions and language of the discipline. [Foundational Knowledge, Inquiry, Information Literacy, Critical Thinking, Thoughtful Expression]
- AIL 2. Demonstrate an understanding and appreciation of the significance of major literary and artistic work and movements within their larger socio/historical contexts. [Critical Thinking, Diversity]
- AIL 3. Demonstrate basic knowledge of the importance of artistic expression to free and open-minded inquiry in human society. [Critical Thinking, Diversity]
Historical and Philosophical Approaches
The student will:

- HPA 1. Describe and explain various historical, philosophical, or religious facts, themes, and issues of global human experience of the past and/or present. [Foundational Knowledge, Inquiry]
- HPA 2. Analyze and interpret evidence on historical, philosophical or religious events or positions critically and systematically, including causal relationships. [Information Literacy, Critical Thinking]
- HPA 3. Demonstrate an understanding of the historical, philosophical, or religious construction of differences and similarities among groups and regions. [Diversity, Inquiry]
- HPA 4. Draw on global historical, philosophical, or religious perspectives to evaluate contemporary problems/issues. [Global Citizenship, Critical Thinking, Inquiry]

Scientific Approaches to the Natural World
The student will:

- SAN 1. Demonstrate an understanding of basic scientific principles, theories, and laws as well as an awareness of the changing nature of science. [Foundational Knowledge, Inquiry, Critical Thinking]
- SAN 2. Analyze, interpret, and evaluate scientific hypotheses and theories using rigorous methods (including statistical and mathematical techniques). [Foundational Knowledge, Inquiry, Information Literacy, Critical Thinking]
- SAN 3. Demonstrate the ability to write and speak critically about the essential questions addressed by the natural sciences, using the conventions and language of one of those disciplines. [Critical Thinking, Thoughtful Expression]

Understanding Human Institutions and Behaviors
The student will:

- HIB 1. Describe and explain major terms, concepts, methods, and principles in at least one of the social and behavioral sciences. [Foundational Knowledge]
- HIB 2. Evaluate the quality of social scientific information, including differentiating empirical evidence from speculation and the probable from the improbable. [Information Literacy, Critical Thinking]
- HIB 3. Demonstrate the ability to integrate scientific principles and evidence to resolve conflicting claims in the social and behavioral sciences. [Critical Thinking]
- HIB 4. Articulate how the social and behavioral sciences can provide explanations of social issues and inform public policy. [Critical Thinking, Global Citizenship]
Living in Our Diverse Nation
The student will:

- LDN 1. Describe and explain various themes and issues relevant to the study of human diversity. [Foundational Knowledge, Diversity]
- LDN 2. Analyze and interpret evidence of the influence of human diversity on the history and present culture of the United States. [Information Literacy, Critical Thinking]
- LDN 3. Demonstrate an understanding of social and cultural influences that shape perspectives of various social groups, while considering the consequences of advantage and disadvantage. [Foundational Knowledge, Inquiry, Diversity]
- LDN 4. Evaluate claims, arguments, and theories related to the ways in which diversity has shaped and continues to shape identity and experience in the U. S. [Information Literacy, Critical Thinking, Diversity]

Living in a Global Society
The student will:

- GS 1. Demonstrate knowledge of global issues, processes, trends, and systems. [Foundational Knowledge]
- GS 2. Use knowledge, diverse cultural frames of reference, and alternate perspectives to think critically and solve problems. [Foundational Knowledge, Inquiry, Critical Thinking, Diversity, Global Citizenship]
- GS 3. Accept cultural differences and tolerate cultural ambiguity. [Global Citizenship]

Writing Intensive
The student will:

- WI 1. Locate appropriate sources of information to support written arguments. [Foundational Knowledge]
- WI 2. Evaluate and use evidence to generalize, explain, and interpret content. [Information Literacy; Critical Thinking]
- WI 3. Demonstrate an understanding of the ethical use and citation of the ideas of others used as supporting material in written work. [Inquiry; Information Literacy; Thoughtful Expression]
- WI 4. Demonstrate the ability to write critically, using the conventions of the discipline covered in the course. [Critical Thinking; Thoughtful Expression]
- WI 5. Analyze and evaluate the claims, arguments, and theories presented course materials using appropriate methods (such as logical analysis and the identification of fallacies). [Foundational Knowledge; Information Literacy; Critical Thinking; Thoughtful Expression]
Information Literacy
The student will:
- IL 1. Be able to determine the nature and extent of information needed to solve a problem. [Inquiry; Information Literacy; Critical Thinking]
- IL 2. Access information effectively and efficiently from a variety of sources. [Information Literacy; Critical Thinking]
- IL 3. Evaluate information critically and incorporate appropriate information into his or her knowledge base. [Inquiry; Information Literacy; Critical Thinking]
- IL 4. Individually, or as a member of a group, use information effectively to accomplish a specific purpose. [Information Literacy; Critical Thinking; Thoughtful Expression]
- IL 5. Understand many of the economic, legal, and social issues surrounding the use of information and access and use information ethically and legally. [Information Literacy; Critical Thinking]

Quantitative and Logical Reasoning
The student will:
(Either for Quantitative Reasoning)
- QRE 1. Create, solve and interpret basic mathematical models. [Foundational Knowledge, Inquiry, Information Literacy, Critical Thinking]
- QRE 2. Make sound arguments based on mathematical reasoning and/or careful analysis of data. [Foundational Knowledge, Inquiry, Information Literacy, Critical Thinking]
- QRE 3. Effectively communicate the substance and meaning of mathematical problems and solutions. [Critical Thinking, Thoughtful Expression]
(Or for Logic)
- LOG 1. Identify and analyze the elements of arguments. [Inquiry, Critical Thinking]
- LOG 2. Evaluate the consistency, validity and sufficiency of arguments. [Inquiry, Critical Thinking]
- LOG 3. Exhibit critical thinking by developing and expressing sound arguments from given premises to related conclusions. [Inquiry, Critical Thinking, Thoughtful Expression]

Capstone
The student will:
- CAP 1. Integrate key facets of their education over the course of their university experience.
Requirements for Essay #4: Analysis Essay

In your rhetorical analysis of a web site or “junk mail” item, you should provide clear answers to the following questions:

- Who is the likely target audience for this item? How does the item attempt to construct an image of this audience?
- What is the purpose of this item? That is, what does the author want the reader/viewer of this item to do?
- What specific rhetorical strategies does the author of the piece employ in order to sway the reader/viewer? Be as specific as you can about the significance of the authors’ language and word choice; their use of metaphors; their use of colors, photos, and illustrations; and their use of underlining, boldfacing, highlighting, or other such textual manipulations.
- How would you classify these strategies in terms of rhetorical appeals? Why do you think these sorts of appeals were chosen? Are these appeals appropriate or effective in the context of this item? Why or why not?
- Does this item try to set itself apart from other items like it? (i.e., this charity is more important than other charities; this product or service is unlike others, etc.)

Required length: 4-5 pages.