Thinking Critically and Creatively
Appalachian State University, November 2019
Modified version of Critical Thinking and Creative Thinking VALUE Rubrics (AAC&U)

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. This rubric has been adapted for assessing Appalachian's General Education learning goal of Thinking Critically and Creatively. For more information about the VALUE rubrics, see https://www.aacu.org/value/rubrics.

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.

Creative thinking is both the capacity to combine or synthesize existing ideas, images, or expertise in original ways and the experience of thinking, reacting, and working in an imaginative way characterized by a high degree of innovation, divergent thinking, and risk taking.

Rationale

The goal of Appalachian's general education program is to instill and nurture in its students the knowledge, skills, and values of a liberal education, including the skills of effective critical thinking, listening, and communicating. A successful liberal, broad-based education prepares students for lifelong learning, reflective living, public engagement, and vocational success.

Critical and creative thinkers ("CCT") possess a combination of essential characteristics: skills, knowledge, and dispositions. Critical and creative thinkers are intellectually humble and curious. They use an inquiry-based, systematic, and logical process to promote greater understanding and further learning, considering intra- and inter-disciplinary sources as appropriate. They are open minded and willing to consider alternative and unconventional methods, sources, and conclusions, as part of an evidence-based and rational process. The critical and creative thinker is able to apply knowledge innovatively toward useful and meaningful goals.

These characteristics are subject to some limitations and caveats. They are not exhaustive, and they may apply in various ways and to varying degrees, depending on the discipline and/or particular assignments. Some are more aspirational in nature (e.g., intellectual humility and curiosity) and may be difficult to measure even though they are worth nurturing.

Critical/Analytical Thinking: question-based, systematic, and logical in process; evidence-based with substantiated findings and conclusions; intra- and inter-disciplinary in scope; extension of knowledge toward appropriate applications

Creativity/Innovation: open-mindedness; appropriate risk-taking and use of unconventional methods; willingness to experiment and make novel applications

Values/Dispositions: is intellectually humble: knowing that one's knowledge is limited; is curious and desires to learn.

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 and creative thinking can be demonstrated in assignments that require students to complete analyses of text, data, or issues. Assignments that cut across presentation modes 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." (https://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.

Source: a place from which information is obtained. Sources could include but are not limited to oral and written forms, print and audio-visual media, research findings, internet sources, historic documents and correspondence, data repositories, and established scientific principles. Communicators draw on this information as they work for a variety of purposes – to extend, argue with, develop, define, or shape their ideas, for example.

Credible Source: coming from one who is reliable given the context of the work.

Expert Source: coming from one with special skills or knowledge representing mastery of a particular subject.

Position: perspective, thesis, hypothesis, or proposed problem solution.

CRITICAL AND CREATIVE THINKING VALUE RUBRIC

Student Learning Outcome	4 Capstone	3 Milestone (Higher)	2 Milestone (Lower)	1 Benchmark	0 No Evidence	N/A Not Applicable
Explanation Students will clearly explain the issue/problem.	Issue/problem to be considered critically is stated clearly and described comprehensively, delivering 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.	No evidence	N/A
Evidence Students will selectively use information to investigate a point of view or conclusion.	Information is taken from expert source(s) with enough interpretation/ evaluation to develop a comprehensive analysis or synthesis. Source materials are thoroughly assessed in the context of the breadth of knowledge in the field.	Information is taken from credible source(s) with enough interpretation/ evaluation to develop a coherent analysis or synthesis. Source materials are somewhat assessed in the context of the breadth of knowledge in the field.	Information is taken from credible source(s) with some interpretation/ evaluation, but not enough to develop a coherent analysis or synthesis. Source materials are considered with little assessment in the context of the breadth of knowledge in the field.	Information is taken from source(s) without any interpretation/evaluation. Source materials are considered without assessment in the context of the breadth of knowledge in the field.	No evidence	N/A
Context Students will evaluate the influence of context and assumptions when presenting a position.	Thoroughly (systematically and methodically) analyzes own and others' assumptions, and carefully evaluates the relevance of contexts when presenting a position.	Identifies own and others' assumptions and relevant contexts influencing position.	Questions some assumptions. Identifies relevant contexts influencing a position. May be more aware of others' assumptions than one's own (or vice versa).	Shows an emerging awareness of present assumptions (sometimes labels assertions as assumptions). Begins to identify some contexts when presenting a position.	No evidence	N/A
Perspective Students will express a position that takes into account the complexities of an issue and acknowledges other viewpoints.	Specific position is imaginative or innovative, taking into account the complexities of an issue. Limits of position are acknowledged. Others' points of view are synthesized within position.	Specific position takes into account the complexities of an issue. Others' points of view are acknowledged within position.	Specific position acknowledges different sides of an issue.	Specific position is stated, but is simplistic and obvious.	No evidence	N/A
Conclusions Students will express a logical conclusion.	Conclusions and related outcomes 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 are identified clearly.	Conclusion is logically tied to information (information is chosen to fit the desired conclusion); some related outcomes are identified clearly.	Conclusion is inconsistently tied to some of the information discussed; related outcomes are oversimplified.	No evidence	N/A
Taking Risks Students will take risks. (*i.e., includes personal risk, going beyond the original parameters of the assignment, introducing new materials and forms, tackling controversial topics, advocating unpopular ideas or solutions.*)	Actively seeks out and follows through on taking risks that add value to or illuminate the goals of the assignment.	Takes untested and potentially risky approaches that clearly relate to the goals of the assignment.	Reveals risk taking by using personal experience, the introduction of new forms, or expression of an unpopular opinion.	Considers new ideas, directions, forms, or approaches that might require risk taking.	No evidence	N/A