

Texas A&M University Core Curriculum Critical Thinking Rubric

Definition

The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board states that the Texas Core Curriculum objective of Critical Thinking Skills is “to include creative thinking, innovation, inquiry, and analysis, evaluation and synthesis of information” (19 Tex. Admin. Code §4.28(2021)). Further, the Association of American Colleges & Universities’ Critical Thinking VALUE Rubric defines critical thinking as “a habit of the 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 to be applied to student-produced work (artifacts), from a range of disciplines and a variety of genres. 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. 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 desired, assignments focused on student reflection might be especially illuminating. Ideally, the artifact assessed with this rubric will be produced by an individual student; however, this rubric may also be applied to group projects.

Glossary

The following definitions clarify terms and concepts used in this rubric only.

Analysis: Detailed and careful examination in order to understand, explain, or critique. This process often involves breaking the subject matter into parts to better understand the whole. This rubric assesses the products of analysis rather than the process itself.

Issue/Problem: The issue or problem can take a variety of forms including social problems, mathematical calculations, textual analyses, laboratory experiments, personal experiences, historic events or figures, political issues, observations, philosophic debates, piece or body of art, current events, etc.

Conclusion: A synthesis of key findings drawn from research, evidence, and/or analysis.

Evidence: Source material that is used to extend, in purposeful ways, the student’s ideas. Examples of evidence present in artifacts are mathematical calculations, assignment details provided by the instructor, independent research, primary or secondary texts, laboratory experiments, etc.

Information: Pre-existing knowledge, viewpoints, research, lecture material, problem provided by instructor, laboratory experiments, interviews, etc.

Innovative Thinking: Novelty of idea, claim, question, form, etc. Scorers only apply this rubric category when it is demonstrated in the artifact; otherwise, no score (as opposed to zero) is recorded.

Outside Sources: Any information beyond what the instructor provides within the assignment prompt or description.

Sources: Information (written, oral, behavioral, visual, observational, experimental, or other) that students draw on as they work for a variety of purposes—to extend, argue with, develop, define, or shape their ideas, for example.

Synthesis: The combination of separate things (information, ideas, formulas, sources, evidence, etc.) to produce a new, coherent whole.



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	Advanced 8	7	Competent 6	5	Developing 4	3	Beginner 2	1	Not Present 0
Explanation of Issue/Problem	<i>Issue/problem</i> to be considered critically is stated clearly and described comprehensively, delivering all relevant <i>information</i> necessary for full understanding.	<i>Issue/problem</i> to be considered critically is stated, described, and clarified, so understanding is not seriously impeded by omissions.		<i>Issue/problem</i> to be considered critically is stated, but description/setup leaves some terms undefined, ambiguities unexplored, boundaries undetermined, and/or backgrounds unknown.		<i>Issue/problem</i> to be considered critically is stated without description, or setup is unclear.		No explanation or setup of <i>issue/problem</i> .	
Evidence	<i>Information</i> is taken from <i>source(s)</i> with enough interpretation or evaluation to develop a comprehensive <i>analysis</i> or <i>synthesis</i> . If used, <i>outside sources'</i> connections to and appropriateness for the topic are thoroughly explained.	<i>Information</i> is taken from <i>source(s)</i> with enough interpretation or evaluation to develop a coherent <i>analysis</i> or <i>synthesis</i> . If used, <i>outside sources</i> clearly relate to and are appropriate for the topic.		<i>Information</i> is taken from <i>source(s)</i> with some interpretation or evaluation but not enough to develop a coherent <i>analysis</i> or <i>synthesis</i> . If used, <i>outside sources</i> may not appear clearly related to or appropriate for the topic.		<i>Information</i> is taken from <i>source(s)</i> without any interpretation or evaluation. If used, <i>outside sources</i> may be unrelated to or inappropriate for the topic.		No <i>evidence</i> provided.	
Analysis	Organizes and synthesizes <i>evidence</i> to reveal insightful patterns, differences, similarities, and/or solutions related to the <i>issue/problem</i> .	Organizes <i>evidence</i> to reveal important patterns, differences, similarities, and/or solutions related to the <i>issue/problem</i> .		Organizes <i>evidence</i> , but the organization is not effective in revealing important patterns, differences, similarities, and/or solutions.		Lists <i>evidence</i> , but it is not organized and/or is unrelated to the <i>issue/problem</i> .		No <i>analysis</i> provided.	
Conclusion	States a <i>conclusion</i> that is a logical extrapolation and reflects an informed evaluation and ability to place <i>evidence</i> and perspectives discussed in priority order.	States a <i>conclusion</i> focused solely on the issue/problem. The <i>conclusion</i> arises specifically from and responds specifically to the <i>issue/problem</i> .		States a simplistic or obvious <i>conclusion</i> and/or a <i>conclusion</i> that, because it is so general, also applies beyond the scope of the <i>issue/problem</i> .		States an ambiguous, illogical, inconsistent, or unsupportable <i>conclusion</i> .		No <i>conclusion</i> provided.	
Innovative Thinking (This category is only applied when present.)	Extends a novel idea, question, format, or product to create new knowledge or knowledge that crosses boundaries.	Creates a novel idea, question, format, or product.		Experiments with creating a novel idea, question, format, or product.		Reformulates a collection of available ideas.		If no <i>innovative thinking</i> is present, no score is recorded.	

Italicized words appear in the glossary.

