

SCHEV Assessment 2016-17 Results for Critical Thinking

Executive Summary

In May 2017, faculty assessed 50 written artifacts to determine the extent to which students were achieving the specified critical thinking outcomes. The outcome that received the highest ratings was *explain an issue/problem*. The lowest rated outcome was *construct a conclusion logically related to a range of information and implications*. Faculty raters recommended that faculty be encouraged to design assignments that ask students to demonstrate the critical thinking outcomes and the definition of critical thinking should be reviewed.

A description of the methodology, results and recommendations can be found in the full report below. Other information, such as the rubric, can be found on the Office of Institutional Effectiveness & Assessment's website: <https://tinyurl.com/geneduc>

Critical Thinking Assessment Report

The State Council of Higher Education for Virginia (SCHEV) requires institutions to assess six specified competencies. All the competencies, except for Critical Thinking (CT) are embedded in and explicitly part of Old Dominion University's General Education program. After consulting with faculty, the General Education Assessment Committee (GEAC) used the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U) outcomes to define CT:

Students will be able to

- a. explain an issue/problem
- b. select and use information to develop a coherent analysis and synthesis
- c. identify the influence of context, own and others' assumptions
- d. state a position (thesis/hypothesis)
- e. construct a conclusion logically related to a range of information and implications

Methodology

A rubric developed and tested by AAC&U was used to assess CT. In fall 2016 and spring 2017, faculty teaching W courses were asked if students demonstrate the CT outcomes in an assignment. Every faculty was able to identify an artifact or series of artifacts that aligned with the CT outcomes. The artifacts faculty identified were the same artifacts used to assess W courses. A two-day assessment summit was convened in May 2017, where four faculty read and rated a representative random sample of student artifacts from the courses. During the morning of the first day, a calibration session was conducted. Faculty first thoroughly reviewed and discussed the rubric and then independently applied the rubric to three sample artifacts. Raters shared their ratings and discussed any differences that arose after each "round" of rating. This discussion helped faculty come to a common understanding of what the student learning outcomes (SLO) meant and what to look for when rating the artifacts using the rubric's scale: exceeds standard, meets standard, approaches standard, needs attention. Once individual ratings on a shared artifact did not differ by more than one point, raters were given a set of 25 artifacts to rate. The artifacts were read twice by faculty and scored using the rubric. If faculty ratings

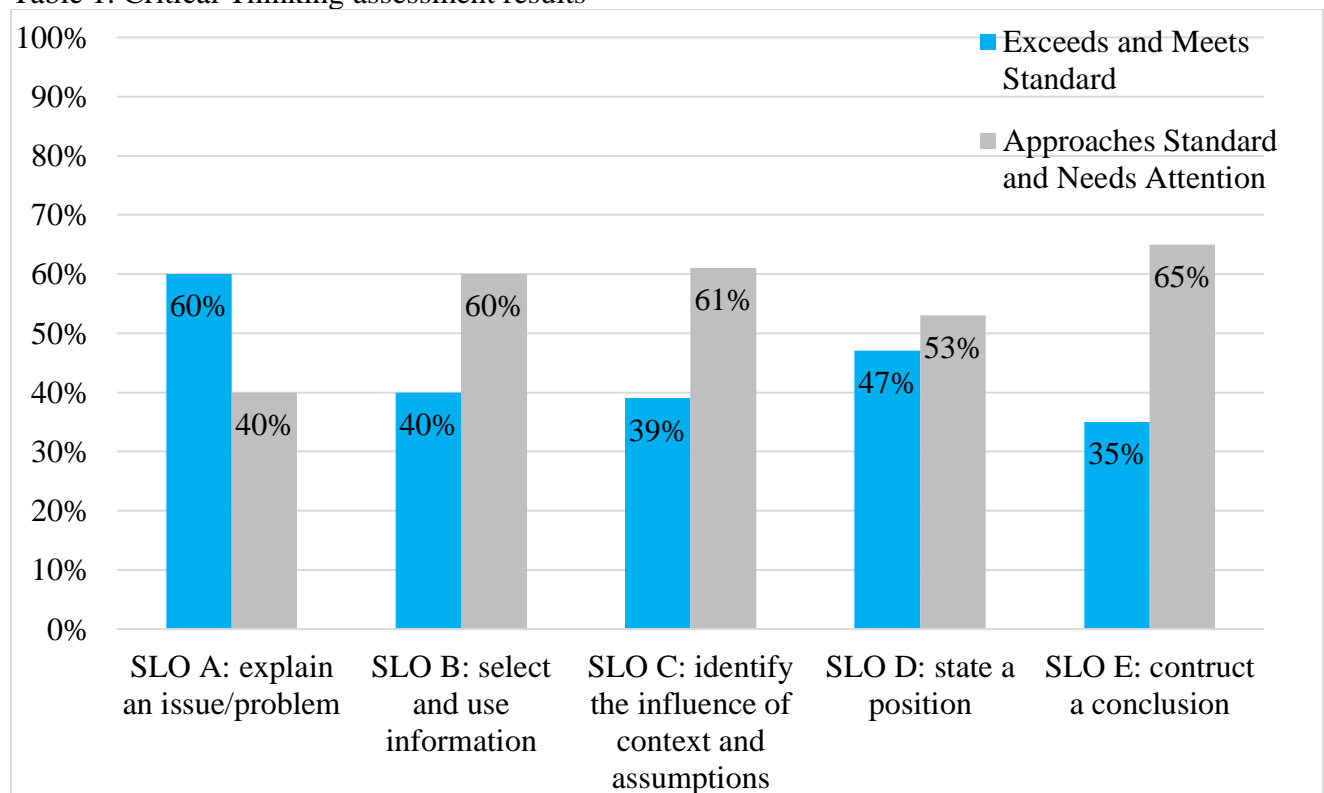
differed by more than 1 point on the majority of the outcomes, the artifact was sent to a third reader.

Six of the 50 artifacts reviewed required a third read due to discrepancies in ratings. A full description of the methodology, including inter-rater reliability data and the rubric can be found on the Office of Institutional Effectiveness & Assessment's website: <https://tinyurl.com/geneduc>

Results

An overview of the findings by SLO is presented in Table 1. The CT outcome that received the highest ratings was *explain an issue/problem* (60% exceeds and meets). The lowest rated outcome was *construct a conclusion logically related to a range of information and implications* (35% exceeds and meets).

Table 1. Critical Thinking assessment results



Faculty Rater Discussion and Recommendations

Discussion

At the end of the second day, faculty were asked to reflect upon the strengths and weaknesses of students. Faculty noted that students were able *explain an issue/problem* (SLO A) well. Additionally, faculty thought that there was little critical analysis of the literature (SLO C: *influence of context and assumptions*) and students expressed their own opinions (SLO D: *state a position*) but did not explore, or compare and contrast, multiple sides of an issue, one rater

remarked “they could reiterate or cherry-pick a quote but lacked context.” Few students drew conclusions (SLO E), especially the papers that were proposals for research that would follow.

Recommendations

Faculty raters identified the following recommendations to improve Critical Thinking:

- GEAC should share weaknesses and concerns with faculty and offer faculty development.
- Faculty should focus on SLO C: *influence of context and assumptions* and make assignments that ask students to compare and contrast so they do not take evidence at face value.
- GEAC should review the definition of critical thinking.

Plan to Improve Learning

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Faculty Senate Recommendations

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