

2008 General Education Summer Assessment Institute Summary Report

In July 2008, six faculty readers and a faculty coordinator convened to evaluate student artifacts collected from Capstone and Diversity classes throughout 2007-08. Readers were selected by the General Education Committee from a pool of faculty who had indicated interest in the project. Artifacts were evaluated based on rubrics developed by the Capstone and General Education Committees. Readers for the Institute included: **Sue Akins-Fields, Tim Allwine, Joan Herman, Klint Hull, Colleen Lemhouse, and Jerry Zimmerman.** Cheryl Ronish served as faculty coordinator. The event was facilitated by Wendy Hall. Readers put in twenty-two hours over four days. Refreshments including lunch were provided each day through an LCC Foundation Exceptional Faculty grant.

Members of the General Education Committee selected Critical Thinking and Multiculturalism for evaluation in 2008. A summary of findings is below. Please note that the rubrics were not designed for comparisons between individual criteria. Rather, the average scores will serve as indicators of attainment in each area, and will provide a baseline for comparison during the next round of evaluation. Artifacts were evaluated on a scale of 1 (limited) to 4 (exceptional).

CRITICAL THINKING

Eighty-four artifacts were evaluated based on the Critical Thinking rubric, including three evaluations conducted by the group as part of a norming process and 81 by individual faculty readers (randomly selected out of a total of 110 artifacts collected). Each artifact was evaluated by a minimum of two and a maximum of seven readers. Participants reported that the Critical Thinking rubric was clearly written, which resulted in an acceptable level of variance among readers (see “range of variation in scores—individual artifacts,” below). Minor revisions to the rubric were recommended.

Critical Thinking *Gather* information from a variety of sources, make judgments about the validity of the information, and draw inferences from the information.

Criteria #1) Students will integrate and synthesize a variety of informational sources including but not limited to print, electronic, and broadcast media; visual images and artifacts; observations; and experiments.

Average Score	Range of Scores (among all artifacts)
2.41	1.00 – 4.00

Range of variation in scores (individual artifacts)				
3 points	2 points	1 point	0 points	1 or 0 points
0 (0%)	10 (12%)	38 (45%)	36 (43%)	74 (88%)

Criteria #2) Students will question the validity of sources, assessing for depth, range, context, opposing views, currency, reproducibility, consistency, bias and originality.

Average Score	Range of Scores (among all artifacts)
1.91	1.00 – 4.00

Range of variation in scores (individual artifacts)				
3 points	2 points	1 point	0 points	1 or 0 points
0 (0%)	8 (10%)	38 (45%)	38 (45%)	76 (90%)

Criteria #3) Students will identify and consider the influence of context on the available sources.

Average Score	Range of Scores (among all artifacts)
2.02	1.00 – 3.50

Range of variation in scores (individual artifacts)				
3 points	2 points	1 point	0 points	1 or 0 points
1 (1%)	13 (15%)	36 (43%)	34 (40%)	77 (91%)

Criteria #4) Students will draw inferences and articulate assertions based upon their evaluation of those sources; including but not limited to the composition, analysis, and criticism of research papers; periodical and newspaper articles; art and music; seminars and lectures; mathematical and scientific theories, and investigation of experimental results.

Average Score	Range of Scores (among all artifacts)
2.24	1.00 – 3.50

Range of variation in scores (individual artifacts)				
3 points	2 points	1 point	0 points	1 or 0 points
1 (1%)	15 (18%)	26 (31%)	42 (50%)	68 (81%)

OBSERVATIONS/RECOMMENDATIONS: CRITICAL THINKING

- ▶ LCC students do not seem to be demonstrating critical thinking skills as well as the readers would have hoped. Outcomes #3 and #4 were more problematic in terms of interpretation and scoring.
- ▶ There appeared to be a lot of inconsistency in terms of citation/documentation requirements for the various classes, which made evaluation difficult.
- ▶ Readers questioned whether the emphasis was on sources or issues. Difficult to interpret and score both simultaneously. Also, questions arose over the validity of sources (there is a huge variation in quality of Internet sources, for example). We need to provide more instruction/information on the validity of sources.
- ▶ Readers reported that they were making inferences about what the students were thinking. Students need to be instructed to state their opinions/positions clearly. This is what synthesizing and integrating is all about.
- ▶ Need to speak to sources in the body of the paper, not just include in reference section.

- ▶ Readers didn't see much in the way of students taking or describing the opposing viewpoint. Research and writing seemed fairly one-sided in most cases.
- ▶ Writing that is just reporting on a topic and doesn't involve much actual critical thinking could still score fairly well on this rubric.
- ▶ Critical thinking skills need to be taught across the curriculum.
- ▶ Faculty need professional development opportunities every year to help improve their teaching skills related to the specific general education outcomes, for example, how to teach critical thinking skills in your discipline.
- ▶ We need to do more modeling for students about what good skills (in this case critical thinking skills) look like.
- ▶ Although some faculty feel that they don't have to teach the "basics," like critical thinking, it's obvious that it's needed. Need to explain the steps/process to students.

MULTICULTURALISM

One hundred and twenty-three artifacts were evaluated based on the Multiculturalism rubric, including four evaluations conducted by the group as part of a norming process and 119 by individual faculty readers. Each artifact was evaluated by a minimum of two and a maximum of seven readers. Many of the artifacts only addressed one of the outcomes, so were evaluated on that basis only. Although an acceptable level of variation occurred (see "range of variation in scores—individual artifacts," below), major revisions to the rubric were recommended to improve readability.

Multiculturalism *Develop* an understanding of the world as a community through the study of diverse groups in society.

Criteria #1) Students will examine how people define themselves and others as members of various social, ethnic, and cultural groups.

Average Score	Range of Scores (among all artifacts)
1.43	1.00 – 3.00

Range of variation in scores (individual artifacts)				
3 points	2 points	1 point	0 points	1 or 0 points
1 (2%)	6 (10%)	21 (35%)	32 (53%)	53 (88%)

Criteria #2) Students will analyze global issues from multiple perspectives and make connections between the local and global community.

Average Score	Range of Scores (among all artifacts)
1.15	1.00 – 2.25

Range of variation in scores (individual artifacts)				
3 points	2 points	1 point	0 points	1 or 0 points
0 (0%)	5 (6%)	15 (18%)	64 (76%)	79 (94%)

Criteria #3) Students will demonstrate knowledge of multiple perspectives and interpretations of cultures and histories.

Average Score	Range of Scores (among all artifacts)
1.04	1.00 – 1.50

Range of variation in scores (individual artifacts)				
3 points	2 points	1 point	0 points	1 or 0 points
0 (0%)	0 (0%)	4 (11%)	31 (89%)	35 (100%)

Criteria #4) Students will recognize how forms of artistic expression reflect the culture and values of the artists.

Average Score	Range of Scores (among all artifacts)
1.27	1.00 – 3.86

Range of variation in scores (individual artifacts)				
3 points	2 points	1 point	0 points	1 or 0 points
0 (11%)	3 (6%)	10 (20%)	37 (74%)	47 (94%)

OBSERVATIONS/RECOMMENDATIONS: MULTICULTURALISM

- ▶ In general, the quality of the artifacts was unacceptable.
- ▶ Faculty should share the rubrics with students.
- ▶ This outcome is very different from the others in terms of the lack of a pre-defined set of rules (such as with grammar or citation of sources) to follow. It's more difficult and more emotional.
- ▶ We may need to clarify what we mean when we say “global.”
- ▶ In general, easier to critique artifact when only one indicator is being evaluated.
- ▶ We have major work to do in this area. Faculty need to work on developing curriculum and assignments that go beyond what appears to be a very superficial level. Faculty should be using the rubric all the time to make sure they are incorporating the outcomes into their courses. Course and departmental assessments should be tied to the Gen Ed outcomes whenever possible.
- ▶ We need to examine the curriculum to determine where students really have an opportunity to develop these skills. Consider adding a global studies faculty position. Consider offering international business courses. Consider more learning community models around global/diversity themes.
- ▶ Institute participants will facilitate a professional development opportunity in the fall around a diversity-themed film to model good seminar and assignment development techniques. Many more action plans are needed if we hope to see improvements in this area.