

## DEVELOPMENT OF CRITICAL THINKING RUBRIC

~ Adapted for George Mason University from the AAC&U Critical Thinking VALUE Rubric

**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. The capacity to combine or synthesize existing ideas, images, or expertise in original ways; thinking innovatively; and intellectual risk taking – all components of creative thinking – is part of the development of critical thinking.

**NOTE:** *When used as an assessment tool, evaluators will be asked to note any work sample or collection of work that does not meet novice level performance. Not all elements will be applicable to all teaching situations.*

|  | <b>Novice</b>   | <b>Milestone: Emerging</b>   | <b>Milestone: Showing Strength</b>   | <b>Expert/ Advanced</b>   |
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| <p><b>Intellectual autonomy:</b></p> <p><i>Developing the Critical Thinker</i></p> <p><b>This criterion is best thought of as a precondition for the development of specific critical thinking competencies as articulated in the reminder of this rubric.</b></p> | <p>Typically a dualistic view of the world (black/white, right/ wrong) and is dependent on authority. There is reluctance to examine counter-argument. Student has unrealistic view of self as well as unfocused concern with work organization, study skills, and intellectual habits of mind.</p> | <p>Students begin to recognize multiple perspectives and demonstrate courage as they begin to take risks with ideas. There is a developing determination to succeed and perseverance. Developing self-knowledge, e.g., the acceptance one might be wrong, seeking out knowledge, learning skepticism. Early awareness of study skills and organization weaknesses.</p> | <p>There is developing confidence in reasoning and argument where the student approaches knowledge questions analytically. Qualities include fair-mindedness and an opening up to others' view points and arguments. Shows empathy with the situations of others (fellow-students, writers, artists). Developing definition of self as student through self-discipline (e.g.; punctual, taking pride in one's work, no procrastination).</p> | <p>Intellectual integrity is evidenced (e.g., search for counter-arguments, search for evidence); student grasps the contextual character of knowledge and that knowledge is constructed. Student demonstrates intellectual humility through realizing the evolving and temporary character of knowledge. There is realistic self-appraisal of one's strengths and limitations.</p> |
| <p><b>1. Explanation of issues</b></p>   | <p>Issue/problem to be considered critically is stated without clarification or description.</p>  | <p>Issue/problem to be considered critically is stated but description leaves some terms undefined, ambiguities unexplored, boundaries undetermined, and/or backgrounds unstated.</p>  | <p>Issue/problem to be considered critically is stated, described, and clarified so that understanding is not seriously impeded by omissions.</p>  | <p>Issue/problem to be considered critically is stated clearly and described comprehensively, delivering all relevant information necessary for full understanding.</p>   |
| <p><b>2. Evidence</b></p> <p><i>Selecting and using information to investigate a point of view or conclusion</i></p>   | <p>Information is taken from source(s) without any interpretation/ evaluation. Viewpoints of experts are taken as fact, without question.</p>   | <p>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 exploration.</p>  | <p>Information is taken from source(s) with enough interpretation/ evaluation to develop a coherent analysis or synthesis. Viewpoints of experts are explored.</p>   | <p>Information is taken from source(s) with enough interpretation/ evaluation to develop a comprehensive analysis or synthesis. Viewpoints of experts are explored in depth.</p>  |

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| <b>3. Influence of context and assumptions</b>   | Shows an emerging awareness of present assumptions (sometimes labels assertions as assumptions). Begins to identify some contexts when presenting a position. | Identifies several relevant contexts when presenting a position. May be more aware of others' assumptions than one's own (or vice versa).  | Identifies and examines own and others' assumptions and several relevant contexts when presenting a position.   | Systematically and methodically analyzes own and others' assumptions and carefully evaluates the relevance of contexts when presenting a position.   |
| <b>4. Student's position (perspective, thesis/ hypothesis)</b>   | Specific position (perspective, thesis/ hypothesis) is stated, but is simplistic and obvious.   | Specific position (perspective, thesis/ hypothesis) acknowledges different sides of an issue.  | Specific position (perspective, thesis/ hypothesis) takes into account the complexities of an issue. Others' points of view are acknowledged within position (perspective, thesis/ hypothesis). | 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). |
| <b>5. Conclusions and related outcomes (implications and consequences)</b>   | Conclusion is inconsistently tied to some of the information discussed; related outcomes (consequences and implications) are oversimplified.                  | Conclusion is logically tied to information (because information is chosen to fit the desired conclusion); some related outcomes (consequences and implications) are identified clearly. | Conclusion is logically tied to a range of information, including opposing viewpoints; related outcomes (consequences and implications) are identified clearly.                                 | Conclusions and related outcomes (consequences and implications) are logical and reflect student's informed evaluation and ability to place evidence and perspectives discussed in priority order.   |
| <b>6. Taking risks</b><br><i>May include personal risk or risk of failure in successfully completing assignment.</i> | Stays strictly within the guidelines of the assignment.   | Considers new directions or approaches without going beyond the guidelines of the assignment.  | Incorporates new directions or approaches to the assignment in the final product.   | Actively seeks out and follows through on untested and potentially risky directions or approaches to the assignment in the final product.  |
| <b>7. Innovative thinking</b><br><i>Novelty or uniqueness (of idea, claim, question, form, etc.)</i>                 | Reformulates a collection of available ideas.   | Experiments with creating a novel or unique idea, question, format, or product.  | Creates a novel or unique idea, question, format, or product.   | Extends a novel or unique idea, question, format, or product to create new knowledge or knowledge that crosses boundaries.   |
| <b>8. Connecting, synthesizing, transforming</b>   | Recognizes existing connections among ideas or solutions.   | Connects ideas or solutions in novel ways.   | Synthesizes ideas or solutions into a coherent whole.   | Transforms ideas or solutions into entirely new forms.   |