

# CRITICAL THINKING VALUE RUBRIC

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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. The core expectations articulated in all 15 of the VALUE rubrics can and should be translated into the language of individual campuses, disciplines, and even courses. The utility of the VALUE rubrics is to position learning at all undergraduate levels within a basic framework of expectations such that evidence of learning can be shared nationally through a common dialog and understanding of student success.

## Definition

Critical thinking involves the comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis, evaluation, and/or creation 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 for use with many different types of assignments and 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. Assignments that cut across presentation mode 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.*

- **Ambiguity:** Information that may be interpreted in more than one way.
- **Assumptions:** Ideas, conditions, or beliefs (often implicit or unstated) that are "taken for granted or accepted as true without proof." (quoted from [www.dictionary.reference.com/browse/assumptions](http://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.
- **Literal meaning:** Interpretation of information exactly as stated. For example, "she was green with envy" would be interpreted to mean that her skin was green.
- **Metaphor:** Information that is (intended to be) interpreted in a non-literal way. For example, "she was green with envy" is intended to convey an intensity of emotion, not a skin color.

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Evaluators are encouraged to assign a zero to any work sample or collection of work that does not meet benchmark (cell one) level performance. Evaluators may indicate «not applicable» when a performance descriptor is not relevant to the entire sample.

		Levels of Competence				
		4 (Capstone)	3 (Milestone)	2 (Milestone)	1 (Benchmark)	0
Performance Descriptors	<b>Explanation of issue/problem</b>	Issue/problem to be considered critically is presented clearly and described comprehensively, delivering abundant, relevant information necessary for deeper understanding.	Issue/problem to be considered critically is presented, described, and clarified adequately for understanding.	Issue/problem to be considered critically is presented but description leaves some terms undefined, ambiguities unexplored, boundaries undetermined, and/or backgrounds unknown.	Issue/problem to be considered critically is presented without clarification or description.	Student did not meet cell one level performance.
	<b>Influence of context and assumptions</b>	Thoroughly (systematically and methodically) critiques own and others' assumptions and carefully evaluates the relevance of contexts when presenting a position.	Questions others' assumptions and synthesizes several relevant contexts when presenting a position.	Identifies several relevant contexts when presenting a position. May be more influenced by others' assumptions than one's own (or vice versa).	Shows an emerging awareness of assumptions (sometimes labels assertions as assumptions). Relies on one guiding context when presenting a position.	Student did not meet cell one level performance.
	<b>Student's position (perspective, thesis/hypothesis)</b>	Specific position (perspective, thesis/hypothesis) is imaginative and takes into account the complexities of an issue. Others' points of view are elaborated in detail within position (perspective, thesis/hypothesis). Limits and ambiguity of position (perspective, thesis/hypothesis) are acknowledged.	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) acknowledges different sides of an issue.	Specific position (perspective, thesis/hypothesis) is stated, but is simplistic and obvious.	Student did not meet cell one level performance.
	<b>Conclusions and solutions (implications and consequences)</b>	Conclusions or solutions involve comprehension, knowledge, application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation of a range of concepts, evidence and viewpoints; and/or involve creation of new knowledge or perspective(s). Implications and consequences are elaborated and may seem unexpected or original.	Conclusions or solutions involve comprehension, knowledge, application, analysis, and synthesis of a range of concepts, evidence, and viewpoints; and/or involve evaluation. Implications and consequences are mentioned.	Conclusions or solutions involve comprehension, knowledge, and application of concepts, evidence, and viewpoints. Implications and consequences are ignored.	Conclusions or solutions are limited to basic knowledge and comprehension. Implications and consequences are ignored.	Student did not meet cell one level performance.

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\* This rubric has been modified by faculty at The University of Tulsa for use in the institutional assessment project.