**CRITICAL THINKING VALUE RUBRIC**

*for more information, please contact value@aacu.org*

**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.

**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 http://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.*

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|  | **Capstone**4 | **Milestones** 3 2 | **Benchmark**1 |
| **Explanation of issues** | Issue/problem to be considered critically is stated clearly and described comprehensively, delivering all relevant information necessary for full understanding. | Issue/problem to be considered critically is stated, described and clarified so that understanding is not seriously impeded by omissions. | Issue/problem to be considered critically is stated but description leaves some terms undefined, ambiguities unexplored, boundaries undetermined, and/or backgrounds unknown. | Issue/problem to be considered critically is stated without clarification or description. |
| **Evidence***Selecting and using information to investigate a**point of view or conclusion* | Information is taken from source(s) with enough interpretation/evaluation, to develop a comprehensive analysis or synthesis.Viewpoints of experts are questioned thoroughly. | Information is taken from source(s) with enough interpretation/evaluation to develop a coherent analysis or synthesis.Viewpoints of experts are subject to questioning. | 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 questioning. | Information is taken from source(s) without any interpretation/evaluation.Viewpoints of experts are taken as fact, without question. |
| **Influence of context and assumptions** | Thoroughly (systematically and methodically) analyzes own and others' assumptions and carefully evaluates the relevance of contexts when presenting a position. | Identifies own and others' assumptions and several relevant contexts when presenting a position. | Questions some assumptions. Identifies several relevant contexts when presenting a position. May be more aware of others' assumptions than one's own (or vice versa). | Shows an emerging awareness of present assumptions (sometimes labels assertions as assumptions).Begins to identify some contexts when presenting a position |
| **Student's 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). | 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. |
| **Conclusions and related outcomes****(implications and consequences)** | 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 | Conclusion is logically tied to a range of information, including opposing viewpoints; related outcomes (consequences and implications) are identified clearly. | 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 inconsistently tied to some of the information discussed; related outcomes (consequences and implications) are oversimplified. |

**WRITTEN COMMUNICATION VALUE RUBRIC [retrieved September 29, 2009 from** <http://www.aacu.org/value/rubrics/index.cfm>**]**

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**Definition**

Written communication is the development and expression of ideas in writing. Written communication involves learning to work in many genres and styles. It can involve working with many different writing technologies, and mixing texts, data, and images. Written communication abilities develop through iterative experiences across the curriculum.

**Framing Language**

This writing rubric is designed for use in a wide variety of educational institutions. The most clear finding to emerge from decades of research on writing assessment is that the best writing assessments are locally determined and sensitive to local context and mission. Users of this rubric should, in the end, consider making adaptations and additions that clearly link the language of the rubric to individual campus contexts.

This rubric focuses assessment on how specific written work samples or collections of work respond to specific contexts. The central question guiding the rubric is "How well does writing respond to the needs of audience(s) for the work?" In focusing on this question the rubric does not attend to other aspects of writing that are equally important: issues of writing process, writing strategies, writers' fluency with different modes of textual production or publication, or writer's growing engagement with writing and disciplinarity through the process of writing.

Evaluators using this rubric must have information about the assignments or purposes for writing guiding writers' work. Also recommended is including reflective work samples of collections of work that address such questions as: What decisions did the writer make about audience, purpose, and genre as s/he compiled the work in the portfolio? How are those choices evident in the writing -- in the content, organization and structure, reasoning, evidence, mechanical and surface conventions, and citational systems used in the writing? This will enable evaluators to have a clear sense of how writers understand the assignments and take it into consideration as they evaluate.

The first section of this rubric addresses the context and purpose for writing. A work sample or collections of work can convey the context and purpose for the writing tasks it showcases by including the writing assignments associated with work samples. But writers may also convey the context and purpose for their writing within the texts. It is important for faculty and institutions to include directions for students about how they should represent their writing contexts and purposes.

Faculty interested in the research on writing assessment that has guided our work here can consult the National Council of Teachers of English/Council of Writing Program Administrators' White Paper on Writing Assessment

(2008; http://www.wpacouncil.org/whitepaper) and the Conference on College Composition and Communication's Writing Assessment: A Position Statement (2008; http://www.ncte.org/cccc/resources/positions/123784.htm)

**Glossary**

The definitions that follow were developed to clarify terms and concepts used in this rubric only.

• Content Development: The ways in which the text explores and represents its topic in relation to its audience and purpose.

• Context of and purpose for writing: The context of writing is the situation surrounding a text: who is reading it? who is writing it? Under what circumstances will the text be shared or circulated? What social or political factors might affect how the text is composed or interpreted? The purpose for writing is the writer's intended effect on an audience. Writers might want to persuade or inform; they might want to report or summarize information; they might want to work through complexity or confusion; they might want to argue with other writers, or connect with other writers; they might want to convey urgency or amuse; they might write for themselves or for an assignment or to remember.

• Disciplinary conventions: Formal and informal rules that constitute what is seen generally as appropriate within different academic fields, e.g. introductory strategies, use of passive voice or first person point of view, expectations for thesis or hypothesis, expectations for kinds of evidence and support that are appropriate to the task at hand, use of primary and secondary sources to provide evidence and support arguments and to document critical perspectives on the topic. Writers will incorporate sources according to disciplinary and genre conventions, according to the writer's purpose for the text. Through increasingly sophisticated use of sources, writers develop an ability to differentiate between their own ideas and the ideas of others, credit and build upon work already accomplished in the field or issue they are addressing, and provide meaningful examples to readers.

• Evidence: Source material that is used to extend, in purposeful ways, writers' ideas in a text.

• Genre conventions: Formal and informal rules for particular kinds of texts and/or media that guide formatting, organization, and stylistic choices, e.g. lab reports, academic papers, poetry, webpages, or personal essays.

• Sources: Texts (written, oral, behavioral, visual, or other) that writers draw on as they work for a variety of purposes -- to extend, argue with, develop, define, or shape their ideas, for example.

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|  | **Capstone**4 | **Milestones** 3 2 | **Benchmark**1 |
| **Context of and purpose for writing***Includes considerations of audience, purpose, and the circumstances surrounding the writing task(s).* | Demonstrates a thorough understanding of context, audience, and purpose that is responsive to the assigned task(s) and focuses all elements of the work. | Demonstrates adequate consideration of context, audience, and purpose and a clear focus on the assigned task(s) (e.g., the task aligns with audience, purpose, and context). | Demonstrates awareness of context, audience, purpose, and to the assigned tasks(s) (e.g., begins to show awareness of audience's perceptions and assumptions). | Demonstrates minimal attention to context, audience, purpose, and to the assigned tasks(s) (e.g., expectation of instructor or self as audience). |
| **Content Development** | Uses appropriate, relevant, and compelling content to illustrate mastery of the subject, conveying the writer's understanding, and shaping the whole work. | Uses appropriate, relevant, and compelling content to explore ideas within the context of the discipline and shape the whole work | Uses appropriate and relevant content to develop and explore ideas through most of the work. | Uses appropriate and relevant content to develop simple ideas in some parts of the work. |
| **Genre and disciplinary conventions***Formal and informal rules inherent in the expectations for writing in particular forms and/or academic fields (please see glossary).* | Demonstrates detailed attention to and successful execution of a wide range of conventions particular to a specific discipline and/or writing task (s) including organization, content, presentation, formatting, and stylistic choices | Demonstrates consistent use of important conventions particular to a specific discipline and/or writing task(s), including organization, content, presentation, and stylistic choices | Follows expectations appropriate to a specific discipline and/or writing task(s) for basic organization, content, and presentation | Attempts to use a consistent system for basic organization and presentation |
| **Sources and evidence** | Demonstrates skillful use of high quality, credible, relevant sources to develop ideas that are appropriate for the discipline and genre of the writing | Demonstrates consistent use of credible, relevant sources to support ideas that are situated within the discipline and genre of the writing. | Demonstrates an attempt to use credible and/or relevant sources to support ideas that are appropriate for the discipline and genre of the writing. | Demonstrates an attempt to use sources to support ideas in the writing. |
| **Control of syntax and mechanics** | Uses graceful language that skillfully communicates meaning to readers with clarity and fluency, and is virtually error-free. | Uses straightforward language that generally conveys meaning to readers. The language in the portfolio has few errors. | Uses language that generally conveys meaning to readers with clarity, although writing may include some errors. | Uses language that sometimes impedes meaning because of errors in usage |