

Washington State University Critical Thinking Project
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Fostering critical thinking skills in undergraduates across a university's curriculum presents formidable difficulties. Making valid, reliable, and fine-grained assessments of students' progress in achieving these higher order intellectual skills involves another set of obstacles. Finally, providing faculty with the tools necessary to refocus their own teaching to encourage these abilities in students represents yet another formidable problem. These, however, are precisely the problems Washington State University is addressing through one concerted strategy. Washington State University has received a three-year, \$380,000 grant from the U. S. Department of Education FIPSE Comprehensive Program to integrate assessment with instruction in order to increase coherence and promote higher order thinking in a four-year General Education curriculum at a large, Research-I, public university, and to work with our two- and four-year counterparts in the State of Washington. As a result of a Washington State HEC Board funded pilot study, we have substantial evidence that we can significantly improve student learning, reform teaching, and measure the critical thinking gains of students at Washington State University. This project represents a collaboration among WSU's Campus Writing Programs, General Education Program, and Center for Teaching, Learning, and Technology, and it builds upon WSU's nationally recognized leadership in assessment in writing and learning with technology.

When WSU began a General Education reform in the late-1980s, we proposed to achieve these desired goals through General Education curriculum and writing-across-the-curriculum initiatives. While Washington State University has fully integrated writing into all aspects of its undergraduate curriculum, particularly General Education,

<i>Scant</i>	<i>Substantially Developed</i>
<p>Merely repeats information provided, taking it as truth, or denies evidence with out adequate justification.</p> <p>Confuses associations and correlations with cause and effect.</p> <p>Does not distinguish between fact, opinion, and value judgments.</p>	<p>Examines the evidence and source of evidence; questions its accuracy, precision, relevance, and completeness.</p> <p>Observes cause and effect and addresses existing or potential consequences.</p>

- 6) Identifies and considers the influence of the **context*** on the issue.

<i>Scant</i>	<i>Substantially Developed</i>
<p>Discusses the problem only in egocentric or sociocentric terms. Does not present the problem as having connections to other contexts i.e. cultural, political, etc.</p>	<p>Analyzes the issue with a clear sense of scope and context, including an assessment of the audience of the analysis. Considers other pertinent contexts.</p>

- 7) Identifies and assesses **conclusions, implications, and consequences.**

<i>Scant</i>	<i>Substantially Developed</i>
<p>Fails to identify conclusions, implications, and consequences of the issue or the key relationships between the other elements of the problem,</p>	<p>Identifies and discusses conclusions, implications, and consequences considering context, assumptions, data and evidence objectively.</p>

***Contexts for Consideration**

Cultural/Social

Group, national, ethnic behavior/attitude

Educational

Schooling, formal training

Technological

Applied science, engineering

Political

Organizational or governmental

Scientific

Conceptual, basic science, scientific method

Economic

Trade, business concerns, costs

Ethical

Values

Personal Experience

Personal observation, informal character