

Critical Thinking

Student Affairs Learning Domains Appendix B: Critical Thinking

From *National Assessment of College Student Learning: Identifying College Graduates' Essential Skills in Writing, Speech and Listening, and Critical Thinking* (May 1995). National Center for Education Statistics, p. 124

Interpretation – relates to understanding and expressing the meaning and significance of a variety of communications such as oral arguments and written document.

- Make comparisons by noting similarities and differences among information items
- Detect the use misleading language such as language that exaggerates or downplays the importance of something or neutralizes a controversial topic
- Detect the use of strong emotional language or imagery which is used to trigger a response in an audience
- Recognize confusing, vague language that requires clarification to increase comprehension
- Ask relevant and penetrating questions to clarify facts, concepts and relationships

Analysis – relates to the ability to identify the explicit and implicit features of a communication, such as an oral presentation or written document, especially in argument that put forth a conclusion. An argument is any form of thinking in which reasons are offered in support of a conclusion.

- Identify the background information provide to explain the reason which support a conclusion
- Identify the unstated assumptions of an argument
- Examine a communication and determine whether it expresses a reason(s) in support or in opposition to some conclusion, opinion or point of view
- Assess bias, narrowness, and contradictions when they occur in a person's point of view
- Assess to degree to which the language, terminology, and concepts employed in an argument are used in a clear, consistent manner
- Judge the consistency of supporting reasons, include their relevancy to a conclusion and adequacy to support a conclusion

Inference – is the ability to reason from what we know to form new knowledge, draw conclusions, solve problems, explain, decide, and or predict

- List alternatives and consider their pros and cons, including their plausibility and practicality, when making decisions and solving problems
- Project alternative hypotheses regarding an event and develop a variety of plans to achieve some goal
- Recognize the need to isolate and control variables in order to make strong causal claims when testing hypotheses
- Seek various independent sources of evidence, rather than a single source, to provide support for a conclusion
- Develop and use criteria for making judgments that are reliable, intellectually strong, and relevant to the situation at hand

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- Reason well with divergent points of view, especially with those with which one disagrees, in formulating an opinion on issue or problem
- Present supporting reasons and evidence for their conclusion(s) which address the concerns of the audience
- Present an argument succinctly in such a way to convey the crucial point of an issue
- Cite relevant evidence and experiences to support one's position

Reflection – pertains to skills considered necessary to monitor one's own comprehension and correct one's process of thinking.

- Make revisions in arguments and findings when self-examination reveals inadequacies
- Apply the skills of their own analysis and evaluation to their own arguments to confirm or correct their reasoning and results

Dispositions – are different from skills. They are attitudes, behavioral tendencies or traits or mind concerning how college students are inclined to use their thinking skills.

- Be curious and inquire about how and things work
- Be flexible and creative in seeking solutions
- Exhibit honesty in facing up to one's prejudices, biases, or tendencies to consider a problem solely from one's own viewpoint
- Willing to persevere and persist at a complex task
- Be organized, orderly and focused in inquiry or thinking
- Arrive at a reasonable decision in situations where there is more than one plausible solution
- Find ways to collaborate with others to reach a consensus on a problem or issue
- Apply insights from cultures other than one's own
- Be open-minded; strive to understand and consider divergent points of view
- Be fair minded; seek truth and be impartial, even if the findings of an inquiry don't support one's preconceived point of view