

GEC Learning Outcomes (GLOs) Assessment Critical Thinking– Aggregate Results

Assessment Type: GEC

Year/Term: AY18

Course: WR 131

Learning Outcome: Critical Thinking

Assessment Method/Tool: Common Rubric-EPCC

Measurement Scale: 3-1

Sample Size: 14

	Proficient (# of students %)		Adequate (# of students %)		Developing (# of students %)	
Identifies and explains Issues	11	79%	2	14%	1	7%
Recognizes contexts and assumptions	7	50%	2	14%	5	36%
Acknowledges multiple perspectives or multiple approaches to problem solving.	10	72%	3	21%	1	7%
Effectively evaluates evidence to reach conclusions	3	21%	11	79%	0	0%
Median % (based on 14 student sample size)		61%		18%		7%

Benchmark:

85%

Institutional benchmark goal for median percentage of students to meet “Proficient” or “Adequate” levels in the GEC

Median % Achieving Benchmark:

79%

median percentage of students meeting “Adequate” or “Proficient” levels

Closing the Loop:

The median percentage of student samples scoring a “3” or “2” is 79%, below the GLO Threshold of 85% for institutional effectiveness. However, with an n of 14, we have to be careful with conclusions.

Since the students had an option of doing the fourth course assignment, I used the third assignment for this evaluation. It was a Personal Cultural Criticism that required students to identify at least two discourse communities for which they were then to demonstrate the similarities and differences. They used their own personal experiences to create the essay and were not required to resolve any differences between these two communities. They did need to either imply or explicitly provide meaning throughout the essay, which was considered the conclusion for this assessment.

Prior to this assignment, there were two other creative non-fiction pieces that served as a build-up. The first was a Memoir that taught students how to create scenes to express their stories by using the five senses and a cinematic approach to the scene. In the second assignment, they were to take these two steps as well as add in a broader social context. These two assignments built up to the third assignment which required these three techniques as well as two distinct different communities and storylines. I think the assignment sequence was effective, especially for identifying and explaining issues and for acknowledging multiple perspectives. The latter is built into the assignment and demonstrates an essential critical thinking aspect of creative storytelling.

Each draft received written instructor feedback as well as peer feedback. Some students did make changes to their essays, while others ignored the feedback. The scores reflect whether or not feedback was effectively integrated. For a 100-level course, I have found that students are inconsistent in the application of peer and professor feedback. The behavior was not a surprise.

My greatest challenge in looking to apply the Critical Thinking Rubric was that the course was creative writing. I had to carefully consider how to most effectively apply the rubric because for me it was not an easy fit. In the end, I was able to apply all four categories, although some interpretation was necessary since this course is a 100-level Creative, Non-Fiction Course.

For the category of “Identifying and explaining issues,” I looked for a clear indication of two distinct discourse communities that they were to compare within their essay. With the exception of one out of fourteen, each student discussed two discourse communities that had very distinct features. Since thirteen out of fourteen students did successfully supply this information, the overall score was 93%. It certainly helped that this requirement was built into the assignment design.

For the category of “Recognizing context and assumptions,” I looked for good scene development to demonstrate context for each discourse community. In this 100-level course, the students are new at scene development, let alone recognizing contexts and their own assumptions, so nine out of fourteen students were successful with this task. A 63% is not surprising for a 100-level course, but it does highlight an aspect in Critical Thinking that requires attention across the disciplines for general education purposes—in my experience, our lower division students cannot have enough practice with recognizing contexts and assumptions.

For the category of “Acknowledgement of multiple perspective or approaches to problem solving,” I looked for distinct features of two discourse communities that were compared throughout the essay. The students did well in this category with a 93%, reflecting the strength of the assignment sequence in preparing students for this criterion, while also dependent upon the transparency of the assignment itself—students were required to engage two distinct perspectives. In my opinion, that requirement itself constitutes an important critical or creative thinking exercise for all writers.

For the category of “Evaluating evidence or data to reach a sound conclusion,” I looked for some type of creative conclusion with either a comment on what the reader should understand after the comparison or an effective but understated final scene that implied the understanding that the reader should have at the end of the story. Students did reasonably well with this category, with 79% reaching benchmark, 6 points below the GEC threshold. As with most 100-level writing, students have a difficult time bringing things together, a challenge highlighted in creative writing where the writer needs a clear sense of an ending, which is then usually implied rather than stated explicitly—so it becomes an advanced literacy skill.

Action Plan:

While I think the assignment sequence and design were fine, I actually do not think that this course should have critical thinking as one of its General Education outcomes. To be more effective and reflect the content of the course, I think a creative thinking rubric would be more in line with course content. This is a matter I will bring to the attention of English/Writing Program faculty. However, EOU does not currently have a Creative Thinking Rubric, although AAC&U has [one](#). If a Creative Thinking Rubric is not going to be adopted by EOU for General Education, it is certainly worth discussing with the English/Writing faculty what exactly constitutes “Recognizing contexts and assumptions” and “Effectively evaluating evidence to reach conclusions” in creative writing, at least in WR 131.