

Trip Report
Texas A&M Assessment Conference
February 22 – 24, 2009
College Station, Texas
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This was the ninth year for this conference and attendance has grown each year to over 500 people this time. It may be considered a regional conference as it draws heavily from Texas but it was one of the best conferences I have attended. The plenary session each day was outstanding and there were eleven concurrent sessions from which to choose. With so many sessions, it was easy to find topics of interest. There were networking opportunities starting with a reception on Sunday night. Monday night there were “communities of interest” where people signed up to dine at a selected restaurant each with a different topic of discussion. Transportation was provided to/from the restaurant. I highly recommend this conference to faculty, staff and administrators.

One of the plenary speakers, Mary J. Allen, provided a four page document that I feel will be useful in talking to people in a nonthreatening way. It provides material for a discussion without having to personalize it. The person you are trying to assist should not feel judged because none of the material is from his/her class or program. Below is a modification of Dr. Allen’s material changed to include FSU definitions and suggested use of the material presented.

Assessment: A process of collecting and reporting data to determine how well students are achieving intended learning outcomes and to inform changes in courses or programs to improve student (learning) success. At the course and program levels, assessment indicates how well each component meets its goals or outcomes. (Ferris State University [FSU], 2008)

Learning Outcomes: Statements of how and what knowledge, skills, and behaviors students are expected to demonstrate at the module, course, or program level. (FSU, 2008)

Ferris State University (FSU). (2008, Sept 8). Glossary from the Assessment Support Web site at <http://www.ferris.edu/htmls/administration/academicaffairs/assessment/glossary.htm>

Learning Outcomes

How would you assess each of the following outcomes?

1. Students can list major events in American history.
2. Students can describe major events and trends in American history.
3. Students can apply their knowledge of American history to examine contemporary American issues.

Potential Use: This could lead to a discussion of Bloom’s Taxonomy and levels of intellectual behavior that are important in learning.

Program Alignment Matrix (Curriculum Map)

| Gen Ed Class | Outcome 1 | Outcome 2 | Outcome 3 | Outcome 4 | Outcome 5 |
|--------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| 1 | I, D | | | | I |
| 2 | | I | | | |
| 3 | D | | I | | D |
| 4 | | | | | |
| 5 | | | D | | D |
| 6 | | | | | D |
| 7 | | | | | |
| Gen Ed Capstone | | | M | | D, M |
| Majors | M | | D, M | | D, M |

I = Introduced, D = Developed & Practiced with Feedback, M = Demonstrated at the Mastery Level Appropriate for Graduation

Potential Use: This map shows a scenario that needs to be improved. Without such a map how do we know some of our programs don't also look like this?

Sample Assessment Plan Outcome 3, dealing with quantitative reasoning, will be assessed every fourth year starting in 2010/11 by assessing the quality of students' interpretation of quantitative research findings in the Gen Ed capstone course (taken at the end of the GE program) and by embedding relevant questions in final exams in this course. An ad hoc faculty committee will develop and score the test items, and they will develop and apply a rubric to analyze the research interpretations.

Does this plan involve:

- Direct or indirect assessment?
- Authentic assessment?
- Formative or summative assessment?
- Triangulation?

Potential Use: Terminology can be clarified and discussed. It reinforces assessment does not mean measure everything every time. It demonstrates assessment may be done in a variety of ways.

Rubrics

There are two major types of scoring rubrics:

1. Holistic
2. Analytic rubrics

The rubric below is taken verbatim from Stevens, D. D., & Levi, A. J. (2005). *Introduction to Rubrics*. Sterling, VA: Stylus, pp. 122-123

Portland State University Studies Program **Holistic** Critical Thinking Rubric
Students will learn various modes of inquiry through interdisciplinary curricula—problem posing, investigating, conceptualizing—in order to become active, self-motivated, and empowered learners.

6 (Highest)—Consistently does all or almost all of the following:

- Accurately interprets evidence, statements, graphics, questions, etc.
- Identifies the salient arguments (reasons and claims) pro and con.
- Thoughtfully analyzes and evaluates major alternative points of view.
- Generates alternative explanations of phenomena or event.
- Justifies key results and procedures, explains assumptions and reasons.
- Fair-mindedly follows where evidence and reasons lead.
- Makes ethical judgments.

5—Does most the following:

- Accurately interprets evidence, statements, graphics, questions, etc.
- Thinks through issues by identifying relevant arguments (reasons and claims) pro and con.
- Offers analysis and evaluation of obvious alternative points of view
- Generates alternative explanations of phenomena or event.
- Justifies (by using) some results or procedures, explains reasons.
- Fair-mindedly follows where evidence and reasons lead.

4—Does most the following:

- Describes events, people, and places with some supporting details from the source.
- Make connections to sources, either personal or analytic.
- Demonstrates a basic ability to analyze, interpret, and formulate inferences.
- States or briefly includes more than one perspective in discussing literature, experiences, and points of view of others.
- Takes some risks by occasionally questioning sources or by stating interpretations and predictions.
- Demonstrates little evidence of rethinking or refinement of one's own perspective.

3—Does most or many of the following:

- Respond by retelling or graphically showing events or facts.
- Makes personal connections or identifies connections within or between sources in a limited way. Is beginning to use appropriate evidence to back ideas.

Discusses literature, experiences, and points of view of others in terms of own experience.
Responds to sources at factual or literal level.
Includes little or no evidence of refinement of initial response or shift in dualistic thinking.
Demonstrates difficulty with organization and thinking is uneven.

2—Does many or most the following:

Misinterprets evidence, statements, graphics, questions, etc.
Fails to identify strong, relevant counter arguments.
Draws unwarranted or fallacious conclusions.
Justifies few results or procedures, seldom explains reasons.
Regardless of the evidence or reasons, maintains or defends views based on self-interest or preconceptions.

1 (lowest)—Consistently does all or almost all of the following:

Offers biased interpretations of evidence, statements, graphics, questions, information, or the points of view of others.
Fails to identify or hastily dismisses strong, relevant counterarguments.
Ignores or superficially evaluates obvious alternative points of view. Argues using fallacious or irrelevant reasons and unwarranted claims.
Does not justify results or procedures, nor explain reasons.
Exhibits close-mindedness or hostility to reason.

X—No basis for scoring. (Use only for missing or malfunctioning portfolios.)

Northeastern Illinois University General Education Critical Thinking Rubric

Downloaded 3/2/05 from <http://www.neiu.edu/~neassess/gened.htm#rubric>

General Education Critical Thinking Rubric (*Short Version*)

Northeastern Illinois University

| Quality Criteria | No/Limited Proficiency | Some Proficiency | Proficiency | High Proficiency |
|---|---|--|--|--|
| 1. Identifies & Explains Issues | Fails to identify, summarize, or explain the main problem or question. Represents the issues inaccurately or inappropriately. | Identifies main issues but does not summarize or explain them clearly or sufficiently | Successfully identifies and summarizes the main issues, but does not explain why/how they are problems or create questions | Clearly identifies and summarizes main issues and successfully explains why/how they are problems or questions; and identifies embedded or implicit issues, addressing their relationships to each other. |
| 2. Recognizes Stakeholders and Contexts (i.e., cultural/social, educational, technological, political, scientific, economic, ethical, personal experience) | Fails accurately to identify and explain any empirical or theoretical contexts for the issues. Presents problems as having no connections to other conditions or contexts. | Shows some general understanding of the influences of empirical and theoretical contexts on stakeholders, but does not identify any specific ones relevant to situation at hand. | Correctly identifies all the empirical and most of the theoretical contexts relevant to all the main stakeholders in the situation. | Not only correctly identifies all the empirical and theoretical contexts relevant to all the main stakeholders, but also finds minor stakeholders and contexts and shows the tension or conflicts of interests among them. |
| 3. Frames Personal Responses and Acknowledges Other Perspectives | Fails to formulate and clearly express own point of view, (or) fails to anticipate objections to his/her point of view, (or) fails to consider other perspectives and position. | Formulates a vague and indecisive point of view, or anticipates minor but not major objections to his/her point of view, or considers weak but not strong alternative positions. | Formulates a clear and precise personal point of view concerning the issue, and seriously discusses its weaknesses as well as its strengths. | Not only formulates a clear and precise personal point of view, but also acknowledges objections and rival positions and provides convincing replies to these. |
| 4. Evaluates Assumptions | Fails to identify and evaluate any of the important assumptions behind the claims and | Identifies some of the most important assumptions, but does not evaluate | Identifies and evaluates all the important assumptions, but not the ones | Not only identifies and evaluates all the important assumptions, but also some of the |

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|------------------------------|--|--|--|---|
| | recommendations made. | them for plausibility or clarity. | deeper in the background – the more abstract ones. | more hidden, more abstract ones. |
| 5. Evaluates Evidence | Fails to identify data and information that counts as evidence for truth-claims and fails to evaluate its credibility. | Successfully identifies data and information that counts as evidence but fails to thoroughly evaluate its credibility. | Identifies all important evidence and rigorously evaluates it. | Not only identifies and rigorously evaluates all important evidence offered, but also provides new data or information for consideration. |