

Proposed Structure and Process for Assessing Critical Thinking in GE, 9/28/06

1. Structure and Process for assessing Critical Thinking (CT) in GE should build on those used in 05-06 for other broad domains of GE.
2. Assessment of CT will be a joint, collaborative effort of AURA and GEAC, with personnel from both committees involved in the process. Additional faculty will be recruited to design and implement CT assessment. I would suggest broader representation on the CT Task Force than we had last year for Writing, Oral Communication and Quantitative Reasoning. Obviously, participation of faculty from Philosophy is key, but other interested faculty should be involved.
3. In order to avoid this being a (sub)Area review, it is important that CT be examined in a variety of GE contexts and courses (Areas A, B, C, D and E, Upper Division Themes), as we did with Writing.
4. As with the 05-06 process, CT assessment should be outcomes based and use embedded assignments in existing courses whenever possible. Again, this implies considerable consultation with faculty.
5. One of our first steps should be the development of a working definition of CT and the development of SLOs in CT. There is actually a considerable literature on CT, though there is also controversy and debate within the field as to what constitutes CT, SLOs in CT and the design of assignments that highlight CT. All of these issues need to be worked out by the CT Task Force in Fall 06.
6. Once a working definition and SLOs have been created, we will need to create a means of measuring CT in student work, i.e. a rubric or other “instrument.” Both the SLO process and the “instrument” creation should have faculty participation.
7. Throughout the Fall semester, we need to begin contacting faculty who teach GE courses and enlist their participation in the project. Our goal will be to work with these faculty in identifying assignments in their courses that can serve as sites for CT assessment.
8. I assume that CT will be assessed in some sort of writing context. That is that students will be required to engage in CT and demonstrate this process through written work. How such an assignment is designed and communicated to students will be of utmost importance. This may involve existing assignments, or it may require the modification of existing assignments, for CT assessment purposes. It may even be possible to use some of the existing writing assignments used in the assessment of GE writing in 05-06. Alternatively, Task Force members may work with faculty to design assignments that can be embedded in courses that serve course goals as well as specific CT assessment goals. To be feasible, this task must be completed before the end of the semester.
9. As with the Writing assessment in 05-06, I would like the CT assessment to be broad and deep: I would like to collect a robust number of pieces of student work from upper and lower division courses for assessment purposes. This probably implies use of STEPS once again. I don't think we need as many pieces of student work as last year's Writing assessment (530). But 250-400 pieces of work would be desirable. We need to discuss with the STEPS team support for this effort as well as how we can modify the process to have “chat rooms” for assessors, especially if we use paired scoring again, to reduce inter-rater dissension.
10. Again, as with last year's process, calibration workshops will be needed. I would imagine that these will have to be somewhat more extended workshops to deal with definitional

issues of CT as well as calibration of readers. This implies more effort on the part of Task Force members and more of an up-front time commitment from assessors. Maybe two 90 minute workshops? Maybe twenty readers reading 25-30 pieces of work? (We could use the same sample of work to assess GE Writing!)

11. As with last year's effort, the Chairs of GEAC and AURA and Dean of Undergraduate Studies should oversee this effort. As Dean of Undergraduate Studies, I would be happy to do most of the hands-on, day-to-day management of the process.

Estimated Timeline for CT Assessment:

Review CT Assessment plan with Provost: September 06

Form CT Task Force: October 06

Discuss/define CT for assessment purposes: October-November 06

Discuss/define CT SLOs for assessment purposes: November 06

Inform campus of CT assessment and recruit faculty: October-November 06

Discuss/develop CT rubric: December 06

Work with faculty on CT assignments: December 06-January 07

Work with STEPS team to prepare site: February 07

Train faculty on STEPS upload procedure: February-March 07

Recruit faculty readers for assessing student work: March-April 07

Calibration workshop/STEPS training for readers: April 07 (2-3 sessions as needed)

Student work uploaded to STEPS: April-May 07

Assessment of student work using CT SLO rubric: May-June 07, completed by 6/15/07

Data analysis: June-July 07

Report write-up: July 07

Transmit results to Provost, campus: August-September 07