Institutional Learning Outcome Assessment Report

Learning Outcome Assessed: ILO #10, Critical Thinking

Assessment Semester: Spring 2019

Assessed By: SLAC (Student Learning and Assessment Committee)

- Spring 2019 members: Ryan Brown (Chair), Jacques Desjardins, Hannah Dworkin, Heather Mathews, Matthew Siegel, Rachel Vandagriff

Learning Outcome Definition

[Critical Thinking is:] The ability to evaluate situations, arguments, and ideas with an open mind, using clear, evidence-based reasoning to explore all sides of an issue and inform a considered opinion.

Means of Assessment

Rubric creation
- Three criteria: Explanation of Issues (A), Specificity (B), Generating Solutions (C)
- 1-4 scale (4 = highest), "0" for no evidence

Collecting examples
- 41 student sheets with Chamber Music class (ENS 402) comments; four comments/performance per sheet (164 separate comments, total); nine sheets reviewed (36 separate comments)
- 12 essays submitted from Ethics course (HMS 466); 10 essays reviewed
- Video recording of Woodwind Chamber Music class (ENS 403) sessions; not reviewed due to poor audio quality

Assessment rubric calibration
- Same artifact reviewed simultaneously by complete committee
- Attempts to reach scoring consensus
- Feedback on rubric, which was adjusted accordingly

Assessment process

- Met biweekly throughout semester
- 2-3 reviewers per artifact; discussion to reach consensus on rubric score

Collation and analysis of data

- Papers anonymized, ELL noted
- SLAC Chair/ALO analyzed results (below)

Summary of Evidence (1-4 scale (4 = highest), "0" for no evidence)

	Avg. Combined Score	*Avg. A (Issues)*	*Avg. B (Specificity)*	*Avg. C (Solutions)*
ChMus Comments—ALL (35)	**1.60**	1.86	1.31	1.63
ChMus Comments—ELL (16; 46%)	**1.11**	1.33	0.87	1.13
ChMus Comments—non-ELL (19; 54%)	**1.97**	2.25	1.65	2.00
UG Ethic Essays—ALL (10)	**2.43**	2.80	2.70	1.80
UG Ethic Essays—ELL (2; 20%)	**1.83**	2.50	2.00	1.00
UG Ethic Essays—non-ELL (8; 80%)	**2.58**	2.88	2.88	2.00

TOTAL COMBINED AVG.	**2.02**	2.33	2.01	1.71
TOTAL ELL	**1.47**	1.92	1.43	1.07
TOTAL NON-ELL	**2.28**	2.56	2.26	2.00

Two different artifacts were used for this review: Written comments following live, student performances in a Chamber Music (ChMus) class, and essays from an Ethics course on the topic of "The Gun Control Controversy." Since both artifacts rely on written communication to express critical thinking, it is not surprising that native English speakers performed better than ELL.

However, both groups were consistent in the criteria in which they excelled and struggled: In the Chamber Music comments, all students performed best at *identifying the problem/issue*, and struggled with being specific about the *factors affecting the problem/issue*. With the Ethics essays, all students were better, again, at *identifying the problem/issue*, but, in this case, struggled with *generating solutions*. This latter distinction appears in the combined average scores from both artifacts as well.

Criteria for Success (Benchmark)

Success at SFCM with Critical Thinking means a "3" average for all upper level undergraduates, including ELL. This means an average increase of .98. However, we recognize that written communication, used by both artifacts here, is not the only way to convey critical thinking skills. In future assessments, non-written artifacts should be used as well. (An attempt was made to use video from a Woodwind Chamber Music class for the oral comments made there, but the audio level was too low to be of use.)

Use of Results (Suggestions for Improvement & Planning)

While reviewing the Chamber Music comments, one question was repeatedly brought up by the committee: Are faculty in performance classes *teaching* students how to give critical feedback? For,

although they had indicated the *importance* of critical thinking in their courses, it was unclear whether they were setting up clear expectations and actually *teaching* the students how to meet them. Related to this were questions about whether the faculty were critiquing and offering feedback on student's comments of each other's performance ("critiquing the critique").

To answer this question, we devoted one SLAC meeting to speaking with performance faculty, including Jeff Anderle (woodwinds), Jennifer Culp (strings), Adam Luftman (brass), and Dimitri Murrath (chamber music). All of them explained that they are not explicitly *teaching* critical thinking and feedback, but are *modeling* the type of feedback they are looking for through their own comments. They also said that students are generally <u>not</u> receiving feedback on the comments they give their peers (written or oral). Because of limited class time, and a large number of students, they felt there was not time to spend on this form of teaching and assessment. Also, they felt that critical feedback is not the primary focus of their classes, and that using a rubric would feel stilted and unnatural. They also felt that the Critical Thinking rubric at that time, with five points of criteria based on the AAC&U VALUE rubric (Explanation of Issues, Evidence, Influence of Context and Assumptions, Student's Position, Conclusions and Related Outcomes), was unwieldy and included language more relevant to an academic course than a performance class.

Based on this feedback, the rubric was subsequently revised to the three-criteria format used for final assessment (Explanation of Issues, Specificity, and Generating Solutions). SLAC feels the current rubric can be applied to both academic and performance classes. We will be reconvening performance faculty in the fall to discuss revisions to jury forms as part of next semester's Music Rendition assessment. At that time, we will also be suggesting that they use the revised Critical Thinking rubric as a starting point for in-class assessment of students' critical feedback.