

Division II Outcomes Assessment Team – Final Report

Division II Team Members:

Nancy-Lee Devane and Rebecca Clark, Co-Chairs, Lisa Delano-Botelho, Rebecca Benya-Soderbom

Other Support Individuals: Deb Anderson and Holly Pappas – helped with the Norming and Scoring Session

Updated Team Plan:

Goal and Objective: To measure Critical Thinking Skills from students in PSY 101, using the LEAP Critical Thinking Rubric.

Strategy and Timeline: To gather student artifacts from 30 students in PSY 101 course, Fall 2013 semester. To conduct norming and scoring sessions in Spring 2014, and complete final report by May 2014.

1. Team Work:

Developing and Defining Team Roles:

- Rebecca and Nancy-Lee agreed to serve as co-chairs, sharing the leadership responsibilities.
- Our team consisted of two Professors in Psychology, one Professor of History, and a Professor of Human Services. We decided to break our team into two sub-groups, with a Professor of Psychology in each sub-group to help clarify subject matter, but also to help prevent correcting errors in subject matter.

Strengths and Challenges:

- It was helpful that we didn't share the same discipline (see statement above).
- We attempted to operationally define, as a group, how we considered areas of the rubric, for example, the terms, "some", and "several".
- We worked well together, and did not require a third reader on any artifacts. When we disagreed, we would go back and read the work and reach a consensus.
- A weakness was that one sub-group had differences in operationally defining terminology of LEAP Rubric – for example, the terms of "some" and "several". But consensus was reached fairly quickly, after discussion.
- As a group, we "normed" well. And after our norming process, our team was more "in sync".

Recommendation to Future Teams About Team Work:

- Don't try to grade and "correct" artifacts (for example, grammatical errors).
- Discuss large differences in coding and be prepared to share examples from student artifacts of why each member is scoring as they are (provide evidence).

- Make sure sub-groups are heterogeneous – not from the same Academic Department.
- It's vital to have a norming process with unscored artifacts, with all team members prior to their actual coding process.
- Prior training is essential to a successful process.

2. Student Evidence:

- Artifacts, in the form of a research review assignment, were collected by a Professor of PSY 101 (Intro To Psychology), in Fall, 2013, and 25 artifacts of student work were randomly selected for critical thinking assessment.
- All aspects (criterion) of the LEAP Critical Thinking Rubric were assessed, except for the "Student's Position" criterion – instructor indicated that the assignment did not address that particular criterion.
- Some challenges related to student evidence included, errors in accuracy of information and grammar.
- Another challenge, particularly under the "Context and Assumptions" section of LEAP Rubric, was in deciding to score a "2" or "3" because the wording was very similar. For example, how do you interpret "some" versus "several" assumptions?
- A strength - we found it helpful to have a limited number of student artifacts to score.

3. Use of the LEAP Rubric (and Recommendations for use of Rubric):

- We used the Critical Thinking Rubric.
- It was helpful in bringing about a consensus regarding defining "critical thinking", however, the criterion levels were unclear (again, the use of the terms "some" versus "several", "thoroughly", "comprehensive").
- We would recommend more definitive terminology, to help discriminate between the scoring levels.
- Provide some concrete examples for the terminology used in rubric.
- Provide samples of scored artifacts by the "experts" – (the creators of the LEAP Rubrics).

4. Learning and Recommendations for (OAC):

- We learned that having shorter assignments can be an effective tool for assessing critical thinking.
- Provide Professional Development on how to create assignments that address critical thinking (according to the LEAP Rubric), including assignments of all lengths.
- Professional Development on helping students to understand the criteria used in measuring critical thinking skills.
- We believe it's important to emphasize that this process of Outcomes Assessment does NOT reflect negatively on the competency of instructors.

- Baseline scoring of the artifacts, for all criterion of Critical Thinking, was assessed at scores of "1" (Benchmark), and "2" (Milestones). Here is a breakdown of the final scoring average for each criteria assessed:

Explanation of Issues: 2

Evidence: 2

Context and Assumptions: 2

Student's Position: N/A

Conclusions and Outcomes: 1

We thought it was important, particularly in moving forward, to mention how our team actually rated/assessed critical thinking in the student work we evaluated. Regarding the baseline scores of 2 and 1, it's important to note that no one on our team was surprised that the scores were on the lower end of the spectrum (a scale of 0-4). These are students in an introductory course, and the assignment itself was not created using the critical thinking criterion used by our assessment team.

Submitted by: Nancy-Lee Devane and Rebecca Clark, Chairpersons, on behalf of Division II

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