

Assessing Critical Thinking in Classes, Programs, & Experiences

ThinkFORWARD Goals

The QEP produces independent and effective critical thinkers by:

- Cultivating faculty who foster critical thinking
- Providing an environment where students have more engaged learning opportunities

ThinkFORWARD Student Learning Outcomes

The plan identifies six student learning outcomes that are distinct but related to developing higher-order, critical thinking skills. As critical thinkers, students will be able to:

- 1) Conceptualize complex issues or problems.
- 2) Gather pertinent facts or ideas to explore complex issues or problems.
- 3) Interpret data and appraise evidence.
- 4) Distinguish, compare, or contrast diverse points of view and/or alternative conclusions.
- 5) Articulate personal insights about complex issues or problems.
- 6) Communicate a reasonable and effective argument, response, or conclusion.

ThinkFORWARD Assessment in FACT Institute Informed Classes

Faculty who participate in FACT grants agree to assess critical thinking outcomes and share those formative and summative assessment results at an institute assessment meeting. As part of the FACT grants, faculty will determine which critical thinking student learning outcome(s) will be included in their course and plan an appropriate assessment for that outcome(s). With support from the QEP and IREP professionals, faculty may choose to use the AAC&U Critical Thinking VALUE rubric (Association of American Colleges and Universities, 2009), the Critical Thinking @ UM Checklist, embed selected-response items designed to test critical thinking in course exams, and/or develop pre- and post-test measures of critical thinking. Because the courses are typically taught twice during the grant period, faculty also have an opportunity to incorporate assessment findings from the first term into the course taught during the second term and reassess to determine the impact of those changes (Fulcher, Good, Coleman, and Smith, 2014).

ThinkFORWARD Assessment Guiding Assumptions

- Those closest to learning are in the best position to tailor assessment in ways that lead to actionable data.
- The primary purpose of assessment is to gather information that allow faculty and staff to determine if students have met outcome(s) and to make improvements to student learning environment

Steps to Planning & Implementing Assessment in FACT Institute Informed Classes

- Examine course student learning outcomes for overlap with the **ThinkFORWARD** critical thinking outcomes
- Pick 2-3 **ThinkFORWARD** critical thinking outcomes to teach and assess in the course
- Revise course learning outcomes as necessary to specifically include **ThinkFORWARD** CT outcomes
- Examine, revise, or devise learning activities that provide opportunities for students to acquire and practice those skills
- Design ways to assess student learning products to determine extent to which student can demonstrate the learning outcomes (direct)
- Consider designing ways to get student opinion learning activities and their change in learning (indirect)
- Consider a pre-learning activity assessment
- Implement learning activities
- Assess student learning post-learning activity both directly and indirectly
- Include a self-check about the learning activity implementation and impact on learning to help interpret assessment results (Implementation Fidelity)
- Summarize data in ways that allow you to see performance across all students from direct/indirect assessments and implementation fidelity (IREP can help)
- Use the results to improve the activity for future classes or activities
- Reassess learning after revised activities are included in future classes.

Assessment Toolbox

<https://irep.olemiss.edu/ct-assessment/>