

In 2017-2018, the Learning Assessment Committee and the General Education-Critical Thinking Work Group assessed the general education outcome “use evidence to develop arguments, make decisions, and evaluate outcomes.” While the results of the [Spring 2018 Community College Survey of Student Engagement](#) (CCSSE) and [Harper Follow Up Survey](#) revealed a strong perception among students that they were engaging successfully in critical thinking in the classroom, [results of the assessment](#) showed a need for improving students’ capabilities in critical thinking: especially students with less than 15 and those with 45 or more earned credit hours, first-generation college students, and students eligible for Pell grants. The results also indicated that the majority of students showed significant room for improvement with respect to all three of the areas related to the outcome: developing arguments, making decisions, and evaluating outcomes.

After reviewing the assessment results and [feedback gathered in Fall 2018](#), the Work Group developed the following Improvement Plan. The plan focuses on faculty development and communication of effective learning activities and assignments, and attitudes about students and learning that positively impact students’ critical thinking.

The Learning Assessment Committee, General Education-Critical Thinking Work Group, and Outcomes Assessment Office will work jointly to implement this plan throughout the 2019-2020 academic year. These groups will partner with the Academy for Teaching Excellence for faculty development initiatives, as well as other campus stakeholders in an effort to improve students’ critical thinking.

- Continue to post actionable information regarding the teaching and learning of critical thinking regularly to Academy News. Two posts have already been published to this end: one in February 2019 (titled, “Critical Thinking Question Stems and Claim Starters”), and one April 2019 (titled, “Critical Thinking as Intellectual and Emotional Virtue”).
- Develop a Critical Thinking focus for the 2019-20 Learning Assessment Community of Practice, with particular emphasis on the scholarship of teaching and learning critical thinking as a skill and disposition.
- Explore the interest and feasibility of offering one or more General Education Courses (GECs) or less formal workshops in 2019-2010. GECs or faculty workshops might:
  - Explore and develop impactful faculty beliefs and perceptions about students and the teaching and learning of critical thinking. Research indicates a positive correlation between specific attitudes and dispositions among faculty and improved critical thinking among students.
  - Explore and infuse the principles of Universal Design for Learning into classes that identify or reinforce the General Education Critical Thinking outcome. These principles are informed by three concepts:

- Representation: A variety of methods are used to present course content (e.g. lecture, web, text, audio).
  - Engagement: A variety of teaching methods are used to capture the student's attention (discussions, reflections, individual projects, etc.).
  - Expression: The instructor allows students to demonstrate their knowledge in a variety of ways and is flexible for students who have barriers in expression (e.g. oral presentations for those with reading disabilities).
- Create a curated, "Best Practices Repository" for critical thinking learning activities and assignments, available to all Harper faculty and accessible through the webpage of the Academy for Teaching Excellence. The scholarship of teaching and learning critical thinking will inform the selection of artifacts included in the repository.
  - Collaborate with the Student Government Association to disseminate and solicit feedback regarding information relating to the assessment and learning of critical thinking.
  - Review assessment results with the General Education Learning Assessment Advisory Work Group. The General Education Learning Assessment Advisory Work Group is an advice-giving body assisting the College in meeting the needs of students and other stakeholders in a manner consistent with the college mission.

**Next Steps:** A follow-up General Education assessment of this outcome will be conducted in FY2021.

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