SLO S4: THINK CRITICALLY ABOUT CONCEPTS IN MULTIPLE DISCIPLINES

Overall Summary
Semester: Fall 2013

During the Fall 2013, the School of General Studies implemented the assessment of Critical Thinking in a pilot stage. The tool adopted to assess student learning outcomes is the Critical Thinking Rubric created by the Association of American Colleges and Universities, AAC&U.

The rubric for Critical Thinking measures five criteria: Explanation of Issues, Evidence to support positions, Influence of context and assumptions, Student’s position, Conclusions and related outcomes. The rubric scoring defines a score level of 1 for a Benchmark level, 2 and 3 for Milestone level, and 4 for Capstone level. It also calls for a score of zero when the work submitted does not meet the basic Benchmark criteria.

The pilot process defined as criteria of assessment the critical analysis of information received and presented in an academic environment by the students at three levels in their undergraduate career: Basic, Intermediate and Advanced.

Of the total 719 students assessed, 259 were at the Basic level, 374 at the Intermediate level and 86 at the Advanced level.
• At the Basic level a sample of 259 students from 19 sections of College Composition (ENG 1030/1031/1032) courses was assessed presenting the following results:

![Basic Level Graph](image1)

• At the Intermediate level a sample of 374 students from 17 sections of Research and Technology (GE 202*) courses was assessed presenting the following results:

![Intermediate Level Graph](image2)

• At the Advanced level a sample of 86 students from 6 sections of Capstone courses:

![Advanced Level Graph](image3)
During the implementation of this pilot assessment of Critical Thinking a number of documented meetings within departments of each level of assessment took place. Faculty participated to standardize the criteria (calibration of rubric) to better guide the process from Basic (1 Benchmark), to Intermediate (2 &3 Milestone) to Advanced (4 Capstone) levels.

At this first point of assessment the data showed that at the Basic level the scores are in the expected range for students at the freshman level in which the majority of scores were in the 1 – 2 range, where students showed strength in explaining the issues at hand but were weak when presenting opposing points of view. At the Intermediate level the scores reflected the expected range. Student strengths continued to be the explanation of issues, but were still weak in acknowledging their assumptions and questioning the positions of authoritative figures in their field. At the Advanced level the scores do need further consideration. They were not as expected for the range of 4 Capstone level. The weakness remains in identifying assumptions that would lead to bias in their work, but all three steps that lead from explanation of an issue to drawing conclusions could be improved.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

As this is the first time that we have used the AAC&U rubric to assess Critical Thinking there is no comparative data. However during the discussions analyzing the results at all three levels it was agreed that action needs to be taken to overlap the standardization of criteria (calibration of rubric) between faculty members in the three levels of assessment so that we know we are looking at ‘normed’ data longitudinally in the future.

The gap between intermediate achievement and advanced again suggests that we should review progress at the junior level – to assess whether we need to be doing more at that level, and how much the high number of transfer students at Kean University is changing what we need to teach at the junior level. We also agreed to try and differentiate between these two categories for our next capstone assessment.