Critical Thinking Signature Assignment FAQ

If your questions are not listed, please e-mail me at tom.zane@slcc.edu so we can all benefit from additional FAQs.

1. Where can I find the critical thinking guidebook?
   - **Online version:** http://www.slcc.edu/assessment/critical-thinking-using-signature-assignments.aspx
   - **Print version:**
     http://www.slcc.edu/assessment/docs/CT_Appendices/Critical%20Thinking%20Signature%20Assignments%20Guidebook%20Rev%201-5.pdf
   - **Additional help is available.** Contact me at (x4420 or tom.zane@slcc.edu). I enjoy working with faculty on assessment-related issues.

2. How large should the critical thinking assignment be?
   - **It doesn’t have to be very large.** What matters more is whether the assignment will give you evidence of your students’ thinking. Can you see such things as interpretation, analysis, evaluation, inference, etc. in their work? If yes, you have your assignment!

3. Are we required to have students submit the completed assignments to the electronic e-portfolio?
   - **Yes.** For General Education courses. But for all others, we recommend that you have students put the assignment in the e-portfolio. Increasingly, students are starting to expect the use of e-portfolio beyond the General Education program.

4. How many students should we include in our “sample?” (Should we use it in one section of one course? Multiple Sections? Multiple Courses?)
   - **You decide based on the educational value a given sample affords.**
   - Scientific sampling rules suggest more is usually better. But what matters just as much boils down to these two questions:
     1. Will the feedback you give students (from the scored assignments) help them improve their learning? For example, is the assignment given early enough in the semester that the scores will inform their future efforts?
     2. Will the scores help you make educational decisions? For example, do you have data from enough students to convince you to make a change if the results suggest doing so?
5. Should we give the rubrics to students when we make the assignments?

- **Yes!** Educational research strongly supports three uses of scoring rubrics for improving learning. Two practices are expected of any rubric use.

1. **Give students the rubrics when you make the assignments.** Students tend to do better when they know how they will be judged. Take a few minutes to go over the rubric in class to help students understand it.

2. **After you score the assignments, return the completed rubrics.** This will allow students to use your feedback to improve their learning even further.

In addition, if you want try a “high impact practice” give this a test drive:

3. **Require students to use the scoring rubrics to self-assess or peer-assess.** When students do this they see their work in a whole new way. They move from completing the assignment to judging their effort based on the rubric criteria.

6. What do I do with the data when I’m done?

- **We will collect the data during summer 2014 using an online data entry tool.**

- Two things to remember.
  1. Before you hand the finished rubrics back to students, jot down your totals.
  2. Be ready to enter those totals into the online system.

I will provide an online data entry tool where you can enter the numbers. I will send out a full set of instructions once we build the online data collection system. In the meantime, here is a taste of a rubric grid with data from 100 students entered. As you can see my sample of students was strong on Evaluation and Inference and weak on Analysis and Metacognition.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Well Below Expectations 1</th>
<th>Below Expectations 2</th>
<th>Meets Expectations 3</th>
<th>Exceeds Expectations 4</th>
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<td>Your Criterion goes here</td>
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<td>47</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* If you used more than one criterion (row) for a section (such as Inference) then report one just one of them.
7. Can this data be used to compare faculty or programs or departments?

No!

The data from this study cannot and will not be used to compare faculty, programs, or departments. Doing so would be unethical and would break multiple data use rules. In short, most comparisons would be like trying to compare apples to oranges to BMWs. It just would not make any sense.

The primary user of the rubric scores is the student. Your feedback (scores) will tell your students how they are doing – e.g., “You did well with interpretation but struggled with your analysis.” Then, a summary of the data can tell you about your students as a whole – e.g., “my students were stronger at analysis than interpretation.” Similarly, we will aggregate the data across the campus to publish a college-wide strength/weakness report.