

## Critical Thinking versus Problem Solving: A Quick Guide

### Critical Thinking Framing Language

This rubric is designed to be transdisciplinary, reflecting the recognition that success in all disciplines requires habits of inquiry and analysis that share common attributes. Further, research suggests that successful critical thinkers from all disciplines increasingly need to be able to apply those habits in various and changing situations encountered in all walks of life. This rubric is designed for use with many different types of assignments and the suggestions here are not an exhaustive list of possibilities. **Critical thinking can be demonstrated in assignments that require students to complete analyses of text, data, or issues.** Assignments that cut across presentation mode might be especially useful in some fields. If insight into the process components of critical thinking (e.g., how information sources were evaluated regardless of whether they were included in the product) is important, assignments focused on student reflection might be especially illuminating.

Student Affairs Examples Includes:

- Data from papers and thesis within co-curricular courses
- Reflections from Study Abroad experiences
- Immersion discussion and reflection upon communities
- Political and election events and programs with student participation

### Problem Solving Framing Language

Problem-solving covers a wide range of activities that may vary significantly across disciplines. Activities that encompass problem-solving by students may involve problems that range from well-defined to ambiguous in a simulated or laboratory context, or in real-world settings. This rubric distills the common elements of most problem-solving contexts and is designed to function across all disciplines. It is broad-based enough to allow for individual differences among learners, yet is concise and descriptive in its scope to determine how well students have maximized their respective abilities to practice thinking through problems in order to reach solutions. **This rubric is designed to measure the quality of a process, rather than the quality of an end-product.** As a result, work samples or collections of work will need to include some evidence of the individual's thinking about a problem-solving task (e.g., reflections on the process from problem to proposed solution; steps in a problem-based learning assignment; record of think-aloud protocol while solving a problem). The final product of an assignment that required problem resolution is insufficient without insight into the student's problem-solving process. Because the focus is on institutional level assessment, scoring team projects, such as those developed in capstone courses, may be appropriate as well.

Student Affairs Examples includes:

- Peer leader (RA/PM/HM/IPA) to develop strategy to resolve issue/concern
  - Ex. Connect student to other areas of campus and provide emotional support
- Student employee given open ended task within office setting and completing task at specific level of competence