

Learning Assessment of Core Outcomes
Suggested Focus 2009-2010: Critical Thinking and Problem Solving

SAC Name: Economics

Contact Name, phone, and email:

Youssef Khodaparast
SY-SS215
(971) 722-4069
ykhodapa@pcc.edu

1. Please describe your plan of action for 2009-2010 Academic Year:

Students in EC202 (macroeconomics) classes will be given an article to review and critique in winter, 2010. Instructors will collect students' papers and apply Holistic Critical Thinking Rubric to a sample of students' works in order to mark and analyze results. Instructors will provide suggestions for improvement based on results.

The findings, lessons learned, and recommendations will be reported in May 2010.

2. When your project is completed, please describe the method(s) you used (for example, if you used a rubric, include the rubric and what courses student artifacts were collected from, including the number examined; if you interviewed students in a focus group, list the times, the number of students; etc.):

Three economics instructors participated in this project in the winter terms of 2010 and 2011. Students in the Principles of Macroeconomics (EC202) classes were assigned to review an article or analyze a numerical chart. A Holistic Critical Thinking Scoring Rubric was used to assess their work. A total of 31 students in three classes participated in this project. Fourteen students earned the score of 4 (strong), nine of them scored 3 (acceptable) while two students' papers were scored 2 (unacceptable). The remaining three students scored 1 (weak) on their efforts.

3. What did you learn?

The results showed that most students were able to summarize their understandings of the theories well. Students demonstrated their critical thinking abilities in a satisfactory way; with some showing their skills in drawing from outside perspective and differentiating between facts and opinions. Results further indicated that students were also good in addressing the validity of the assumptions in theories. However, about a third of students were weak in establishing strong links between a theory and its policy implications. A few were too eager to express their opinions and criticisms without providing adequate summaries.

4. What changes, if any, are you making or recommending as a result?

Our students' analytical skills must be improved in order to enhance their abilities to think critically and enabling them to solve problems. It is recommended that economics instructors assign more homework/projects in the area of data analysis that require students to explain and interpret charts and graphs in writing. Furthermore, it is recommended that in our next Critical Thinking Assessment, the project should have the assessment rubric more clearly defined for students.

5. Follow up in 2010-2011 based on any changes you have made:

Explanation: Each SAC is asked to do some learning assessment activity focused on the above outcome (or other, if appropriate). The idea is that each SAC does something in order to help the college understand how we individually or collectively are helping students to achieve this core outcome.

For Core Outcomes, see: <http://www.pcc.edu/resources/academic/core-outcomes/index.html>)

For further guidance, see: <http://www.pcc.edu/resources/academic/learning-assessment/>

(Dates: January 15, 2010: #1 completed; May 14, 2010: 2-4 completed)