

Critical Thinking And Academic Success

Critical Thinking

*“Give a man a fish, and you feed him for a day.
Teach a man to fish, and you feed him for a lifetime.”*

As part of its regular re-accreditation process, NSCC has embarked on a five-year Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) designed to enhance students’ critical thinking skills campuswide. Specifically, the goal of our QEP is this:

To enhance critical thinking skills in student learning campuswide so that NSCC students are better able to make confident, sound decisions in the classroom, about their education, and throughout their lives.

The plan we have developed addresses the four components of student learning: *Knowledge, Skills, Behaviors, and Values*.¹ By enhancing our students’ critical thinking skills across campus, we intend to help students:

- understand what critical thinking means (Knowledge)
- develop and apply better critical thinking skills (Skills)
- take responsibility for their own thinking and decisions (Behaviors)
- make sound decisions that demonstrate good thinking (Values)

¹ “Student learning may include changes in students’ knowledge, skills, behaviors, and/or values that may be attributable to the collegiate experience” (SACS, *Handbook for Reaffirmation of Accreditation* 22).

¹ Moore, Brooke, and Richard Parker. *Critical Thinking*. 6th ed. Mountain View: Mayfield, 2001.

What Is Critical Thinking?

Critical Thinking has a thousand different definitions, but for the purposes of this plan, we have chosen to focus on one: “careful and deliberate determination of whether to accept, reject, or suspend judgment.” Inherent in this definition is an emphasis on thoughtful, fully aware, intentional judgment or decision.

To succeed in education and in the workplace or profession, a critical thinker must embody many traits, including:

- Careful and deliberate thought
- Curiosity
- Desire to seek the truth
- Clear and logical communication
- Ability to recognize complexities and work within them
- Fairmindedness
- Intellectual empathy
- Integrity
- Intellectual courage

But one trait is key to the others:

- Ability to develop reasonable conclusions using analysis, evaluation, inference, and deduction

Therefore, in our QEP, we are emphasizing the following characteristics of critical thinking:

Analysis

To dissect questions, problems, arguments, and issues

Evaluation

To determine the strength or weakness of a position or argument

To determine the validity of a work, an idea, or evidence

Inference

To develop conclusions based on analysis, evaluation, and evidence

Deduction

To use generalizations in order to develop conclusions for a specific situation

These are the basic components of sound thinking; they are elements that apply to every course offered at NSCC. They are the characteristics we seek to enhance in all NSCC students across campus.

NSCC Critical Thinking Rubric

	1 Emerging	2	3 Developing	4	5	6 Integrating
<p>Analysis: To dissect arguments and points of view</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> Does not identify or express confusion about problems, arguments, or points of view <input type="checkbox"/> Does not apply basic concepts involved <input type="checkbox"/> Does not recognize biases or multiple points of view <input type="checkbox"/> Does not acknowledge uncertainties	<input type="checkbox"/> Does not evaluate based on logic and context <input type="checkbox"/> Does not assess quality of evidence or distinguish between facts, opinions, and assumptions <input type="checkbox"/> Does not identify the weak and strong points of a problem, argument, or point of view <input type="checkbox"/> Does not recognize counterpoints or counterarguments	<input type="checkbox"/> Partially identifies problems, arguments, or points of view <input type="checkbox"/> Partially applies basic concepts involved <input type="checkbox"/> Partially recognizes biases or multiple points of view <input type="checkbox"/> Partially acknowledges uncertainties	<input type="checkbox"/> Partially evaluates based on logic and context <input type="checkbox"/> Partially assesses quality of evidence and distinguishes between facts, opinions, and assumptions <input type="checkbox"/> Partially identifies the weak and strong parts of a problem, argument, or point of view <input type="checkbox"/> Partially recognizes counterpoints or counterarguments	<input type="checkbox"/> Accurately and thoroughly identifies all problems, arguments, and points of view <input type="checkbox"/> Accurately and thoroughly applies basic concepts involved <input type="checkbox"/> Fully recognizes biases and multiple points of view <input type="checkbox"/> Acknowledges uncertainties	<input type="checkbox"/> Evaluates based on logic and context <input type="checkbox"/> Thoroughly assesses quality of evidence and distinguishes between facts, opinions, and assumptions <input type="checkbox"/> Thoroughly identifies the weak and strong parts of a problem, argument, or point of view <input type="checkbox"/> Fully recognizes counterpoints or counterarguments
<p>Evaluation: To decide on the strength of an argument and the validity of a given statement</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> Does not identify or express confusion about problems, arguments, or points of view <input type="checkbox"/> Does not apply basic concepts involved <input type="checkbox"/> Does not recognize biases or multiple points of view <input type="checkbox"/> Does not acknowledge uncertainties	<input type="checkbox"/> Does not evaluate based on logic and context <input type="checkbox"/> Does not assess quality of evidence or distinguish between facts, opinions, and assumptions <input type="checkbox"/> Does not identify the weak and strong points of a problem, argument, or point of view <input type="checkbox"/> Does not recognize counterpoints or counterarguments	<input type="checkbox"/> Partially identifies problems, arguments, or points of view <input type="checkbox"/> Partially applies basic concepts involved <input type="checkbox"/> Partially recognizes biases or multiple points of view <input type="checkbox"/> Partially acknowledges uncertainties	<input type="checkbox"/> Partially evaluates based on logic and context <input type="checkbox"/> Partially assesses quality of evidence and distinguishes between facts, opinions, and assumptions <input type="checkbox"/> Partially identifies the weak and strong parts of a problem, argument, or point of view <input type="checkbox"/> Partially recognizes counterpoints or counterarguments	<input type="checkbox"/> Accurately and thoroughly identifies all problems, arguments, and points of view <input type="checkbox"/> Accurately and thoroughly applies basic concepts involved <input type="checkbox"/> Fully recognizes biases and multiple points of view <input type="checkbox"/> Acknowledges uncertainties	<input type="checkbox"/> Evaluates based on logic and context <input type="checkbox"/> Thoroughly assesses quality of evidence and distinguishes between facts, opinions, and assumptions <input type="checkbox"/> Thoroughly identifies the weak and strong parts of a problem, argument, or point of view <input type="checkbox"/> Fully recognizes counterpoints or counterarguments
<p>Inference: To hypothesize and develop conclusions based upon facts, reasons, observations, and evidence</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> Recognizes only one "correct" answer instead of a variety of possible conclusions or outcomes <input type="checkbox"/> Does not develop a reasonable hypothesis or conclusion <input type="checkbox"/> Does not draw a hypothesis or conclusion based on evidence and reasoning	<input type="checkbox"/> Recognizes some possible conclusions or outcomes <input type="checkbox"/> Develops a hypothesis or conclusion that cannot be fully supported <input type="checkbox"/> Draws a hypothesis or conclusion based on partial evidence or incomplete reasoning	<input type="checkbox"/> Recognizes some possible conclusions or outcomes <input type="checkbox"/> Develops a hypothesis or conclusion that cannot be fully supported <input type="checkbox"/> Draws a hypothesis or conclusion based on partial evidence or incomplete reasoning	<input type="checkbox"/> Recognizes some possible conclusions or outcomes <input type="checkbox"/> Develops a hypothesis or conclusion that cannot be fully supported <input type="checkbox"/> Draws a hypothesis or conclusion based on partial evidence or incomplete reasoning	<input type="checkbox"/> Recognizes multiple conclusions or outcomes <input type="checkbox"/> Develops a reasonable hypothesis or conclusion that can be fully supported <input type="checkbox"/> Draws a hypothesis or conclusion fully based on evidence and reasoning	<input type="checkbox"/> Recognizes multiple conclusions or outcomes <input type="checkbox"/> Develops a reasonable hypothesis or conclusion that can be fully supported <input type="checkbox"/> Draws a hypothesis or conclusion fully based on evidence and reasoning
<p>Deduction: To use generalizations in order to draw conclusions in a specific situation</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> Does not draw conclusions that can be supported by evidence and reasoning <input type="checkbox"/> Does not identify the appropriate general premises <input type="checkbox"/> Does not apply basic concepts involved	<input type="checkbox"/> Draws conclusions that can be partially supported by evidence and reasoning <input type="checkbox"/> Identifies some general premises <input type="checkbox"/> Partially applies basic concepts involved	<input type="checkbox"/> Draws conclusions that can be partially supported by evidence and reasoning <input type="checkbox"/> Identifies some general premises <input type="checkbox"/> Partially applies basic concepts involved	<input type="checkbox"/> Draws conclusions that can be partially supported by evidence and reasoning <input type="checkbox"/> Identifies some general premises <input type="checkbox"/> Partially applies basic concepts involved	<input type="checkbox"/> Accurately develops conclusions based on evidence and reasoning <input type="checkbox"/> Identifies applicable general premises <input type="checkbox"/> Accurately and thoroughly applies basic concepts involved	<input type="checkbox"/> Accurately develops conclusions based on evidence and reasoning <input type="checkbox"/> Identifies applicable general premises <input type="checkbox"/> Accurately and thoroughly applies basic concepts involved

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