HPU Critical Thinking Assessment Report

Overview of the Assessment Project

In Fall 2018, HPU launched its third, campus-wide initiative designed to assess critical thinking in general education and undergraduate capstone courses. This assessment project is the third in a series of annual assessments of institutional learning outcomes: written communication, oral communication, critical thinking, information literacy, and quantitative reasoning.

Method

During the academic year 2018 – 2019, a total of six General Education course sections and twenty undergraduate capstone course sections participated in this critical thinking assessment project.

The committee then sent out instructions to participating instructors to identify an assessment within their course that fulfilled all requirements of the critical thinking common rubric. A total of 442 artifacts of authentic student work were collected, and these artifacts were archived in the Critical Thinking Assessment Project in Aqua.

In Fall 2019, each college convened an assessment committee to score these artifacts. These college-level committees normed their evaluations to a common rubric adapted from the American Association of Colleges and Universities (AAC&U) Written Communication Rubric. The college-level evaluators successfully scored 100% of the 440 scorable artifacts submitted for this project: 172 general education artifacts, 246 undergraduate capstone artifacts, and 22 graduate capstone artifacts.

In Summer 2020, HPU presented its assessment findings at the university assessment day in hopes of engaging deans, department and program chairs, and members of the academic assessment and program review shared governance committee in a thoughtful discussion of the implication of these results for continuous, quality improvements to the curriculum. The committee presented these assessment results as the percentage of students who performed at a1 11.04 T/F1 stk1(s)5(n)13(g.)]TETQq0.00000912 0 612 792 reW*nB/F

Assessment Findings

General Education Critical Thinking Assessment Findings

The committee set the following target for the general education population participating in this project: 85% of students enrolled in general education courses will achieve an initial, emerging, developed, or highly developed score for each criterion.
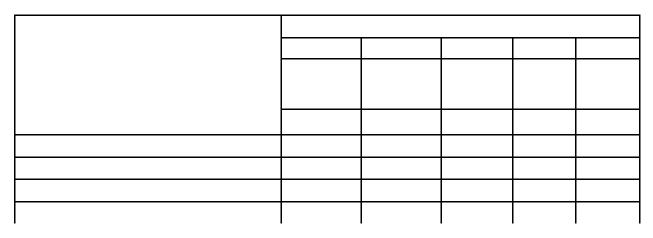
An analysis of these findings revealed the following:
> Problem/Question Summary (89%)
> Student's Own Perspectives and Positions (91%)
> Other Perspectives and Positions (82%)
> Evidence from Sources (72%)
> Contextual Analysis (86%)
> Conclusions, Implications, and Consequences (84%)

These results approached the target in all areas, except for Evidence from Sources and Conclusions, Implications, and Consequences, suggesting that General Education instructors should place additional focus in these areas.

The general education critical thinking assessment results are depicted in Table 1 below. To increase the sample size for future critical thinking assessment projects, the committee recommends that instructors collect artifacts from all general education critical thinking courses during both the Fall and Spring semesters. It also recommends comparing the results of online and face to face delivery modalities.

Table 1. General Education Critical Thinking Assessment Results by Criterion

Discussion

In closing the loop on this assessment project, as depicted in Figure 1 below, the committee posed several questions:

> How accurately do we think these findings reflect the actual level of competence of our students?
> Were there certain artifacts that were not appropriate for the kind of assessment conducted?
> Were there other problems with the process?
> How shall we use these findings?
> Are we satisfied with the results?
> If not, what are we going to do about it?

In response to these questions, the committee formulated several recommendations.

1. General education critical thinking course instructors should increase their focus in the areas of Evidence from Sources and Conclusions, Implications, and Consequences.

2.

Future program-level analyses may yield yielded varying results:

> In some cases, the program will agree that the artifact used for this assessment project was suitable and the results met expectations for critical thinking. Therefore, no further action would be needed.

> In other cases, the program may find that the artifact was not suitable for assessment with the established rubric, thus the results may not reflect an accurate representation of the students' critical thinking abilities. In these cases, the programs may wish to repeat this assessment with a more suitable artifact to determine how well their students met expectations for critical thinking.

> Finally, in a few cases, the program may feel that the artifact was suitable for this assessment project, but the results were unexpectedly low. In these cases, the programs would want to develop an action plan for improvement of critical thinking within their program curriculum.