

How to Get Your SAC's Report to the Learning Assessment Council Done by May 15:

The question we are asking: How are our students achieving PCC's six core outcomes? Our goal is to deal with each of the six core outcomes one or two at a time over the next few years. Each SAC is asked to engage in at least one learning assessment activity per year, ideally including both indirect and direct evidence, and focused on the core outcome chosen by PCC's Learning Assessment Council.

This year's core outcome is [Critical Thinking and Problem Solving](#) : *Identify and investigate problems, evaluate information and its sources, and use appropriate methods of reasoning to develop creative and practical solutions to personal, professional and community issues.*

What will happen to the information when you send it to the Learning Assessment Council: At the end of each academic year, a committee of interested persons will take a comprehensive look at everything that has been submitted and make recommendations for changes or improvements based on the results. This process will be described and demonstrated by the college as part of our accreditation. This process will also be useful to your SAC because you can use the information as part of your Program/Discipline Review.

The following easy steps will help you get started. This process will be easier if two or three people from your SAC work on it together while soliciting feedback from your colleagues. For further guidance, examples and information, please refer to PCC's Learning Assessment website: www.pcc.edu/assessment

Part 1: Brainstorming for a Critical Thinking Assessment Plan

1. Define what Critical Thinking and Problem Solving look like in your own discipline:

2. Ask yourselves what you would really like to know about how your students are learning critical thinking. (The purpose of this is to make this plan meaningful to your SAC.)

3. Ask yourselves where you can find good *indirect* evidence of students' critical thinking skills (surveys, class evaluations, follow up alumni interviews, other). Brainstorm with creativity!

4. Ask yourselves where you can find *direct* evidence of students' critical thinking skills (i.e. key assignments, presentations, essays, labs, capstone projects, portfolios, exams, certifying national or state exams, other). It may be helpful to consult your CCOGs or collect instructors' syllabi as you are brainstorming for this. It is very likely you already have something in place that will suit this purpose.

Part 2: Firming up the Plan

5. Plan how to analyze your indirect evidence.

6. Plan how to analyze your direct evidence:

- i. If you plan to use student assignments for evidence of student learning, you need to go one step further to analyze the evidence in an appropriate manner.

- ii. One favored and effective method of doing this is to apply a rubric to a fair sampling of student work, if possible including work from several classes/instructors. Basic instructions for effectively planning to use a rubric:
 - iii. Determine which assignments and courses will provide the evidence. Get student permission to use their work (a permission slip can be found on the website www.pcc.edu/assessment).
 - iv. Find or make a rubric that analyzes what you are trying to find out. There are many good ready-made ones on the website www.pcc.edu/assessment under “Critical Thinking and Problem Solving Rubrics.”
 - v. (Instructions for the process continue below. . .)
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7. ***Please send your plan, as delineated in steps # 3 and 4, to sgray@pcc.edu for posting on the Learning Assessment Website.*** Congratulations! You have fulfilled the first request of the Learning Assessment Council: to design a Critical Thinking Skills Assessment Plan. *Now you and your colleagues can proceed to the next step:*

Part 3: Implementing the Plan

1. Collect, analyze, synthesize, and summarize what you have learned from your indirect evidence.

2. Collect, analyze, synthesize, and summarize your direct evidence.

- (iii.) Process if using a rubric, continued: After collecting the student work, remove student names and apply the rubric.
 - (iv.) Good practice would be to start with a “norming” exercise to make sure all colleagues are applying the rubric in the same way. Discuss. Repeat. This can be a great conversation starter. . .
 - (v.) Then have at least two instructors apply the rubric to each artifact. If there is disagreement, have a third colleague apply the rubric and/or discuss.
 - (vi.) Analyze, synthesize and summarize what you have learned.
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8. Note any changes/improvements that need to be made as a result of what you have learned.

9. Send the final report to sgray@pcc.edu for placement on the Learning Assessment Website.

10. In June, all reports will be reviewed in the aggregate for a broad understanding of student critical thinking skill development and opportunities for further improvement.