

# KU CORE / COURSE REVIEW FORM

## GOAL 1.1 / CRITICAL THINKING

*Upon reaching this goal, students will be able to analyze and evaluate assumptions, claims, evidence, arguments, and forms of expression; select and apply appropriate interpretive tools.*

The University Core Curriculum Committee (UCCC) is responsible for recertifying all KU Core courses. In order to achieve this goal, the UCCC asks all departments and programs that offer KU Core courses to complete and submit Course Review Forms for each course and goal/learning outcome. In the case of a course approved for more than one goal/learning outcome, departments and programs will make separate submissions for each KU Core goal/learning outcome.

**Review of courses approved for KU Core goal 1, learning outcomes 1 and 2, will take place in academic year 2015-16. KU Core Review Forms are due September 15, 2015.**

This Course Review Form has two parts:

- Part 1, "Recertification," is a self-report by your department or program. Once you confirm that the course listed below complies with the KU Core Goal and Learning Outcome for which it has been approved and you submit an assessment report that aligns assessment items to the learning outcomes, the UCCC will recertify the course.
- Part 2, "Assessment," is a self-report by your department or program that aligns assessment items to criteria for the learning outcome and includes a description of changes you plan to make in the future.

Please note:

*Recertification of your KU Core courses requires (1) that you **confirm compliance** in Part 1 and (2) that you **complete** Part 2. The **results** of your self-report in Part 2 will **not** affect a course's eligibility for recertification.*

Department/Program: \_First-Year Experience, First-Year Seminar  
Program\_\_\_\_\_

Contact person and email address (i.e., the responsible person completing this form on behalf of the department or program): \_\_\_Sarah Crawford-Parker,  
scrawpar@ku.edu\_\_\_\_\_

Course number and title: \_\_\_department prefix +  
177\_\_\_\_\_

Assessment period (i.e., the semesters you have offered this course since its acceptance into the KU Core or last recertification): \_\_\_\_\_Fall 2012 and Fall 2013, Fall 2014  
assessment in progress\_\_\_\_\_

### **PART 1 - RECERTIFICATION**

Please confirm (by entering your initials in the blanks) that each time your department or program offers this course it meets the requirements of Goal 1.1 and has done so since its acceptance into the KU Core or last recertification. All items must be initialed in order to receive recertification.

SCP\_\_\_ This course focuses substantially on critical thinking as stated in the learning outcome.

SCP\_ This course includes assignments, projects, and/or tests that require students to:

\_SCP\_\_ Form judgments about the assumptions or claims presented.

\_SCP\_\_ Analyze and synthesize information.

SCP\_\_\_ Make evidence-based arguments to support conclusions.

SCP\_\_\_ This course evaluates student performance in the tasks above, and uses this evaluation for at least 60% of the final grade.

### **PART 2 - ASSESSMENT**

1. What **evidence** does your department/program use to determine whether students are achieving the KU Core critical thinking goals in this course?

We assess capstone assignments using the AAC&U Value Rubric for critical thinking. In 2012, we assessed all capstone assignments for the 11 seminars offered. In 2013, we assessed approximately 40% of capstone assignments randomly selected from the 20 seminars offered. We share student learning results with program faculty and use these results for course and program improvement.

Students also complete a post-course survey in which they identify their top “learning moments” in the course. These responses typically correlate with rubric scores. For example, in 2012, students identified practicing critical reading and analysis as one of the most useful aspects of the course. In our assessment of student learning, students score particularly high on explanation of issues (96% at milestone 1, milestone 2, or capstone).

2. What **quantitative format** does your department/program use to summarize the degree to which students in this course achieve the KU Core critical thinking goals?

*For example, do your instructors use the UCCC’s suggested rubric for critical thinking? Have they created rubrics of their own for this course? If not, what evaluation metrics are they using that permit insight into the degree to which this course is achieving the Goal 1.1 learning outcome?*

We use the AAC&U Value Rubric for critical thinking, which scores students from benchmark (1) to capstone (4). We calculate student performance across the domains of the rubric and also determine an aggregate score for critical thinking.

The AAC&U Value Rubric for critical thinking evaluates the following dimensions: 1) explanation of issues 2) evaluation of evidence 3) context and assumptions 4) student’s position 5) conclusions

Key language to describe these dimensions include: critical language, questioning viewpoints of experts, understanding relevant information, analyzing assumptions, thesis, position, and informed evaluation.

3. Please **describe** your evaluation rubric(s) or metric(s) and assessment instrument(s) (e.g., description of assignment, test questions, final exam, final project, etc.) and how they align to the learning outcome.

As part of the First-Year Seminar proposal process, faculty describe an integrative assignment that they will use in the course for the assessment of critical thinking. Typically these assignments are completed in states with support and feedback provided to students at each stage, and they culminate in a final project that

reflects their learning throughout the semester, with an emphasis on critical thinking skills developed in the course.

Recent examples include:

GEOL 177 Students write a paper taking the position of an energy consulting firm planning out a strategy and rationale to divest from fossil fuel use.

LING 177 Students write response papers to parent questions asking whether they should raise their children as bilinguals. Responses must provide an accessible explanation of research and offer arguments supported by scientific evidence.

PSYC 177 Students write a paper in which they identify a significant traumatic public event and prepare a report or response plan for the community affected by this event. The plan must be supported by evidence in the scientific literature and address what the children affected by this event could be expected to remember about it in the short and long-term, the implications for well-being, and suggest and intervention plan.

JOUR 177 Students develop a project based on the use of visual communication by a specific candidate or campaign issue during the 2012 election. Students place the visual communication strategies in historical context and identify key differences with the opposing candidate or issue perspective and draw relevant conclusions.

- Please provide a **quantitative summary** of student achievement in this course in the assessment period. This may take the form of a distribution of scores over several dimensions of the learning outcome or a single comprehensive assessment of the learning outcome. Please normalize your scoring to a scale from zero to four, where 0 = "Outcome Not Achieved" and 4 = "Exemplary Achievement." Feel free to add more rows to the table below, or to use fewer rows. Please include in your assessment only those students who completed the course. (If there are deficiencies in your data collection, please explain how you plan to remedy them going forward.)

#### 2012 Critical thinking results

Dimension	% of "Exemplary Achievement" (4)	% of "Good Achievement"(3)	% of "Satisfactory Achievement" (2)	% of "Basic Achievement " (1)	% of "Outcome Not Achieved" (0)
Dimension 1: Explanation of issues	2	37	57	3	0

Dimension 2: Evaluation of evidence	1	16	65	18	0
Dimension 3: Context and assumptions	0	5	66	29	0
Dimension 4: Student's position	2	25	49	24	0
Dimension 5: Conclusions	1	17	54	25	3
Overall assessment of learning outcome	1	21	58	20	

### 2013 Critical thinking results

Dimension	% of "Exemplary Achievement" (4)	% of "Good Achievement"(3)	% of "Satisfactory Achievement" (2)	% of "Basic Achievement " (1)	% of "Outcome Not Achieved" (0)
Dimension 1: Explanation of issues	8	34	44	14	
Dimension 2: Evaluation of evidence	3	20	47	24	6
Dimension 3: Contexts and assumptions	4	21	44	29	2
Dimension 4: Student's position	4	26	40	27	2
Dimension 5: Conclusions	2	31	49	16	2
Overall assessment of the learning outcome	4	27	46	22	

Taking into account your weighting of the various dimensions above, what percentage of the students achieved at least basic overall competency in this learning outcome, however you define that?

2012 80% of students at or above basic competence level for critical thinking (milestone 1 or higher—satisfactory achievement or higher on above data chart)

2013 77% of students at or above basic competence level for critical thinking.

5. Please provide a **descriptive summary** of student achievement in meeting the Goal 1.1 learning outcome.

Performance rates are reflective of fall semester achievement for first-time, full-time freshman students. Faculty in the 2012 cohort participated in a year-long process to create the FYS program and design the initial FYS courses. We are committed to maintaining a high level of student achievement for the critical thinking learning outcome and continue to require FYS faculty to participate in course design workshops and development and assessment-related activities. The close correspondence between 2012 and 2013 student learning results suggest that we maintaining a high level of quality with our program expansion, but there is still room for improvement (see #6).

6. The intent of this assessment is to promote **improvement** in meeting KU Core goals for greater numbers of students. What changes are suggested by the data and results you report above that would improve the achievement of this learning outcome? (*Please limit your response to 500 words.*)

Student learning results are shared with First-Year Seminar faculty on an annual basis. After compiling the 2012 and 2013 results, we targeted the critical thinking dimension “influence of context and assumptions” as an area for targeted improvement. 2013 and 2014 course design workshops and information literacy workshops delivered by the KU Libraries specifically addressed ways to improve student learning in this area. Below are two examples of how faculty have designed their course learning activities to better address this skill with their students:

“Following the first library session we discussed in class not only where and how to find materials, but how to evaluate which materials were valuable for particular uses: books tend to take longer to produce and might not contain current information on women’s education conditions in contemporary Islamic social contexts, while ephemera, which are more current, need to be judged for their authenticity.”

Humanities faculty member

“The library did help this (evaluating contexts and assumptions) as it helped students to understand how to place information resources in context. I also had them write on every writing assignment why they thought the information was credible. Finally, because this is a science class, we always had to discuss assumptions. So, often when we discussed problems I would ask students what assumptions went into getting this answer. This became relevant when talking about scientific paradigm shifts as people were forced to throw the old assumptions out the window.”

Natural sciences faculty member

In addition to focusing our existing training sessions to target specific areas for improvement, we have also added a new workshop for First-Year Seminar faculty focused on ways to scaffold the research process to address different dimensions evaluated by the critical thinking rubric. We are launching this new workshop in spring 2015.