Assessment Avenue

BRONX COMMUNITY COLLEGE CUNY

Office of Institutional Effectiveness

Spring 2025

Critical Thinking Assessment

Dr. Raymond Galinski, Dean, Office of Institutional Effectiveness

Critical thinking is defined as the ability to evaluate evidence and arguments critically and analytically. It is one of seven competencies identified by the Academic Assessment Council as being an important component of BCC's General Education (Pathways) curriculum.

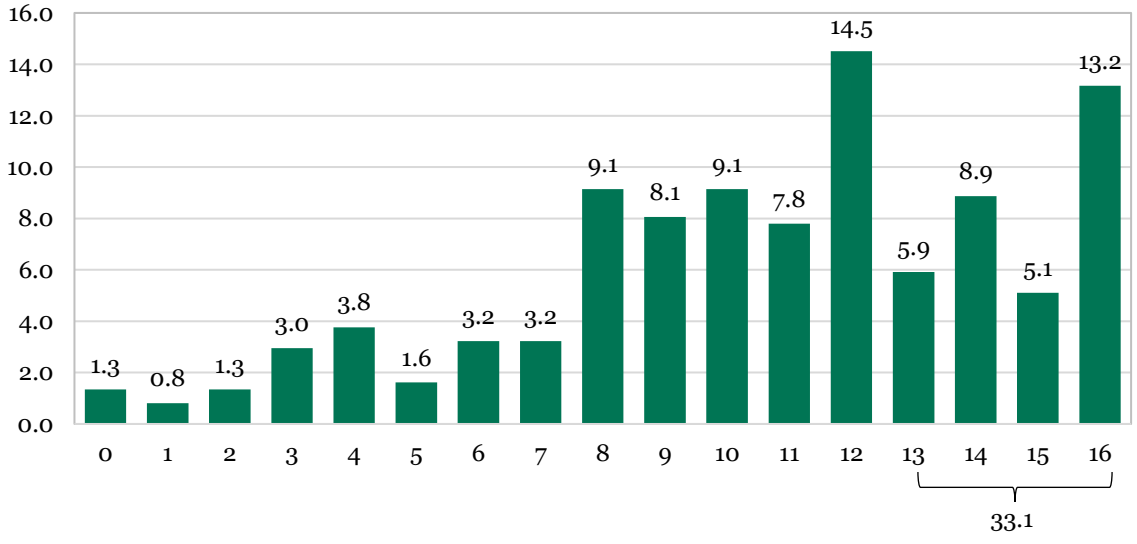
In fall 2024, courses from the Departments of Art and Music, Communications Arts and Sciences, and Social Sciences were selected to participate in a college-wide assessment of critical thinking. Faculty from selected classes were notified about the project during the first half of the semester and instructed to select a *significant* assignment of their choosing containing a critical thinking component that could be scored using the College's rubric designed for this purpose. The Office of Institutional Effectiveness (OIE) provided faculty with a list of randomly selected students and instructed them to submit one artifact from each student before the conclusion of the fall term. Artifacts gathered by OIE were anonymized to protect faculty and student identities in preparation for scoring by a jury of eight faculty raters during the spring 2025 semester. A total of 175 unique artifacts were reviewed using the rubric: 28 from Art and Music, 66 from Communications, and 81 from Social Sciences. Each artifact was scored by at least two raters.

Results

The mean score across all four dimensions of the rubric was 10.6 (SD=3.9) - out of a maximum possible score of 16 - indicating a performance level approaching "Competent" (Level 3). Figure 1 displays the distribution of scores. The bars represent the percentage of students who achieved the score indicated by the number on the x-axis. One third of students scored near the top of the scale, earning scores between 13 and 16. Performance was nearly the same as last semester's average for BCC's Information Literacy competency (*M*=10.7).

Figure 1.

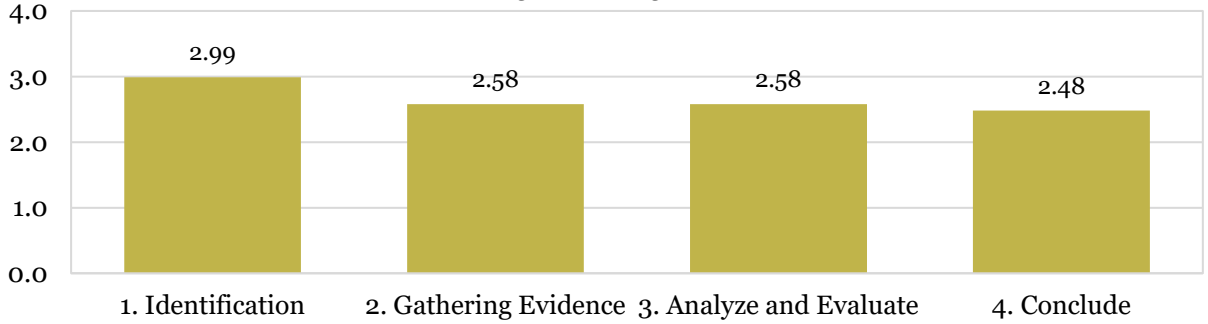
Distribution of Total Scores for Critical Thinking



Average Scores by Dimension

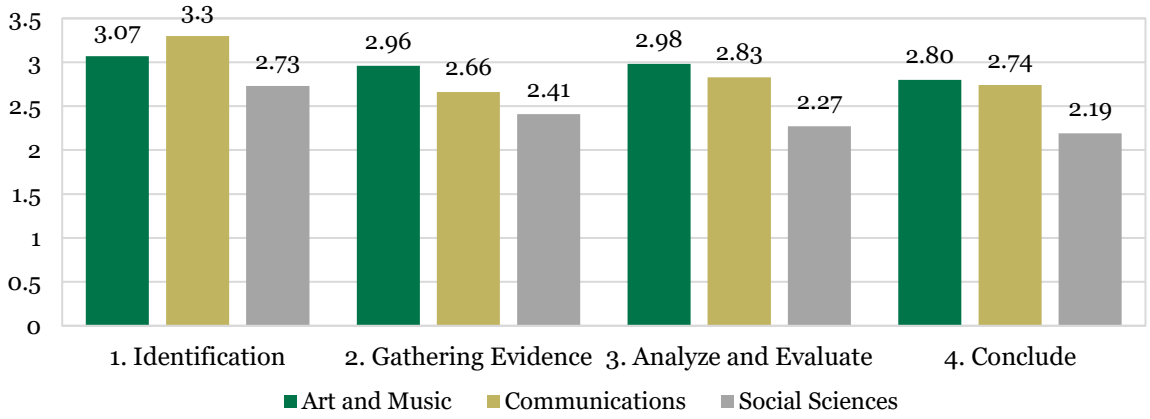
Figure 2 displays the average scores for each criterion on the rubric. Students scored highest on the first criterion, 'Identification' (2.99), defined as *Recognizes the central problem or question to be considered*. The remaining three criteria 'Gathering Evidence' (2.58), 'Analyze and Evaluate' (2.58) and 'Conclude' (2.48), were approximately one-half point lower, on average.

Figure 2
Average Score by Criteria



Students enrolled in Communications sections scored highest on Criterion 1: Identification. Art and Music students outperformed the other departments on the remaining three criteria: Gathering Evidence, Analyze and Evaluate, and Conclude. Performance in Social Sciences courses was noticeably weaker across all four dimensions.

Figure 3
Average Score by Citeria and Discipline



Discussion and Next Steps

Following the suggestion of raters of previous assessments, this year's artifact review was followed by a recap session attended by the faculty who participated in the process. This meeting was designed to give the raters an opportunity to provide additional insights into the documents they reviewed and to comment on the overall assessment process so that it can be improved moving forward.

Similar to the written communication and information literacy assessments of the past, several raters indicated that assignment prompts could be better constructed to elicit the types of responses necessary to assess critical thinking. Moreover, at least one rater felt that some assignments did not educe high-order thinking skills needed for critical thinking, i.e., the assignments were focused on identification and recall and less on analysis and evaluation.

Another theme mentioned throughout the session - and in the open-ended comments in the assessment form - was artificial intelligence (AI). Several raters indicated that many of the reviewed papers were written (or heavily assisted) by AI technology, which made it difficult to assess the validity of students' work. Just one

assignment provided guidance to students on the ethical use of AI. All of the raters felt that valid assessments in the age of AI is an area of concern and should be addressed by BCC in the coming year.

Other comments focused on the rubric and the process itself. Multiple raters indicated that there appeared to be overlap between dimensions on the rubric. For example, criteria 1 and 2 felt too similar to some raters. In addition, one rater felt that the rubric was too focused on traditional, "ideal" writing assignments and may be difficult to apply in other domains. This individual suggested revisiting the rubric in the fall with the Academic Assessment Council.

Finally, incorporating "signature assignments" into the assessment process was also discussed. Signature assignments are assignments selected by departments for their quality and rigor, and are assessed with standardized rubrics with the same qualities. Signature assignments allow for a common understanding between faculty within a department that the courses selected for assessment address the student learning outcomes directly and that student submissions contain clear evidence that the competency was addressed. Some departments use (or have used) these types of assignments within their departments. For a copy of the complete report, please contact the Office of Institutional Effectiveness.

Exploring AI in Higher Education: Highlights from the 2025 Assessment Network of New York (ANNY) Annual Conference

Handan Hizmetli, Associate Director, Office of Institutional Effectiveness

The 13th Annual Assessment Network of New York (ANNY) Conference, held April 28–29, 2025, in Poughkeepsie, NY, focused on the theme "Human + Machine," reflecting the evolving relationship between artificial intelligence (AI) and education. Presentations highlighted the need to balance AI tools with human insight to better support student learning outcomes.

Expanding AI Literacy: Beyond Technical Proficiency

In their keynote address, Dr. Roderick and Dr. Fulmer of Husson University introduced a framework for assessing AI literacy that goes beyond technical skills. Grounded in human–AI collaboration and adapted from Bloom's Taxonomy, their model identifies three key dimensions of learning: cognitive skills, ethical awareness, and creativity. The goal is to ensure students not only understand how to use AI effectively, but also how to apply it thoughtfully and responsibly. They argued that AI literacy should be seen as a multidimensional skill set. Students need to critically engage with AI tools, be aware of ethical concerns like bias and misinformation, and use AI to enhance—not replace—their creativity and problem-solving.

Integrating AI in Curriculum and Assessment

Formed in 2024, the Marist+AI Faculty Steering Committee presented their progress in guiding the responsible use of AI in academic settings. Representing all six academic schools, the committee has developed college-wide resources that help faculty incorporate AI into teaching, learning, and operations without compromising academic values.

Their guidelines for teaching and learning with generative AI include recommended syllabus statements, strategies for student engagement, and clear expectations for citation and disclosure. Instructors are encouraged to allow AI use in a structured, transparent way. This includes teaching students how to distinguish between AI-assisted and AI-generated work and requiring them to document and reflect on their AI use. These practices aim to support both learning outcomes and academic integrity. They also shared Marist's Ethics Statement of Artificial Intelligence.

Transparency and communication are central to the committee's philosophy. Faculty are urged to clearly state when and how AI tools may be used, and students are required to cite any AI-generated content they include in their work. These steps not only uphold academic honesty but also foster a deeper understanding of AI's role in research and writing. Panelists suggested spending several hours exploring the major AI models to gain a better understanding of the functionality and limitations as each model has slightly different emphases.

Student Outcomes and Lessons Learned

A case study from Marist College provided insight into how students are responding to structured AI integration. In courses that included AI components, students reported increased confidence using AI for academic and professional tasks. Final projects required them to blend AI-assisted research with their own analysis, and to submit a script showing how they used AI in their process.

Reflections from these projects revealed two key developments: stronger ethical awareness and a boost in creative thinking. Students began to think more critically about the implications of AI in their fields and how it might be used constructively. Faculty noted that the most effective results came when instruction included not just *what* AI tools to use, but also *how*, *when*, and *why* to use them.

In sum, the conference highlighted the opportunities and challenges AI brings to higher education. As institutions explore AI's potential, the message is clear: AI can enhance teaching, learning, and assessment—but only when implemented thoughtfully. By focusing on literacy, transparency, and ethical engagement, educators can help students use AI not as a shortcut, but as a tool for deeper learning and innovation.

Middle States Self-Study Process: Update

Dr. Raymond Galinski, Dean, Office of Institutional Effectiveness

Over the spring semester, the College continued planning for re-accreditation with the Middle States Commission on Higher Education (MSCHE). In February, the College's Self-Study Design (SSD) was submitted to the Commission for review. The SSD serves as a blueprint for our Self-Study process over the course of next two years.

On April 3, BCC's new MSCHE Vice President Liaison, Dr. Kristy Bishop, visited the campus and met with key stakeholder groups including the President's Cabinet and the Self-Study Steering Committee. She also hosted an open forum for students, faculty, and staff in the Roscoe Brown Playhouse where attendees were provided with the opportunity to ask questions about the Middle States process. In her remarks, Dr. Bishop indicated that BCC's SSD was among the best she has ever read. She suggested a few minor revisions which were sent to the Commission in May.

The College also finished filling the rosters of participants serving on the seven Self-Study Working Groups. In addition to demonstrating compliance with the standards, each group is charged with assessing strengths and weaknesses, recommending areas for improvement and innovation, and producing a draft report of their findings. An eighth group, Evidence and Compliance, was also formed. This body is responsible for gathering and organizing documents that will be used to demonstrate compliance with MSCHE's Standards for Accreditation, Requirements of Affiliation, policies and procedures, and applicable federal regulatory requirements.

On May 9, a Working Group Self-Study Kick-Off meeting was held for members of the Working Groups. At this event, attended by over 50 people, key aspects of the SSD were shared. A new Teams site for communication and organizing documents was also introduced. Participants were given time in breakout sessions to get to know one another, review the standards, and to develop a meeting calendar for the fall semester.

In the coming months, work on the Self-Study will proceed at a rapid pace. This summer, a new MSCHE website will be launched containing important pieces of information, including timelines, updates, and other important information. The Evidence and Compliance Working Group will also be meeting through the summer months to gather as much evidence (documents, policies, minutes, etc.) as possible before the start of the fall semester. Beginning in September, and throughout the 2025-26 academic year, the Steering Committee and Working Groups will be meeting regularly.

To contribute to a future edition, contact OIE@bcc.cuny.edu.

Happy Summer!