THINKING RUBRIC

Clarke’s Compass dares students to think for themselves. It challenges students to develop their thinking as they integrate knowledge from varied perspectives in creative ways. It promotes the common good by challenging students to read, discuss, and listen with a healthy skepticism and ear for new learning. Clarke’s Compass also challenges students to understand their own cognitive processes. Such skills prepare students as life-long learners meeting change with adaptability and intelligence and contributing to the common good.

The rubric, designed to assess thinking, is broad enough to be used throughout the undergraduate level yet detailed enough to be useful when assessing artifacts for Compass. Its primary intent is to assess thinking and not the quality of writing or speaking skills. The identified descriptors are important but not exhaustive. These descriptors are briefly described below.

**PURPOSE**

The purpose of an artifact is what the artifact intends to accomplish. Some artifacts intend to solve a problem, others to make an argument, and yet others to critique an established view. Central to purpose is clarity – to what extent does the artifact convey the purpose of the artifact?

* It is possible that the purpose is not evident at all – the audience is left wondering what the artifact was attempting to establish or where the investigation is going. This is characteristic of artifacts that ramble on without any clear direction.
* It is possible that the purpose is rarely evident – the artifact is going in too many directions and needs to be narrowed or the artifact has a general direction but lacks a focus.
* It is possible that the purpose is frequently evident throughout the artifact – the audience knows the direction of the artifact and the author’s intention.
* It is possible that the purpose is appropriate to the task – it provides the reader with consistently evident direction for understanding the artifact.

**INFORMATION**

Every artifact should provide information that supports the artifact’s purpose. There are many ways that information can be assessed.

* Accurate information has a factual basis. Did the artifact get the facts right? Is there good reason to think that the claims put forward in the artifact are true?
* Credibility has to do with the sources of information – how the sources are selected, whether they are sufficient to the task. They need to be well-accepted within the field of investigation.
* Documentation gives credibility to the information by citing where the information was obtained, how recently it was obtained, whether the information has been reviewed by other scholars, and whether the information is biased.
* The information provided must be relevant to the task at hand. Information that is superfluous may actually detract from what the artifact is trying to do.
* The amount of information provided must be adequate to the task.
* For some assignments, assumptions may be necessary to establish a setting and should be recognized.

**REASONING**

Reasoning is at the heart of the artifact. Based on the given information, is it reasonable to draw this conclusion? Reasoning is about making an inference given the information that was provided and establishing a logical conclusion.

* Good reasoning moves the audience from the information to the conclusion. In other words, given the information, one is led to make the inferences that are listed in the artifact.
* Good reasoning is well-organized. Presenting information in a logical way strengthens the reasoning.
* Good reasoning often considers alternative perspectives – asks questions as to whether the same information can lead to a different conclusion. This includes looking at other possible interpretations of the information and reflecting on whether the chosen methodology is adequate to the task.
* Good reasoning often questions biases and assumptions about the information, whether the biases and assumptions are valid, and whether they are clearly acknowledged.

**INNOVATION**

Ideation is the process of generating ideas. Some kinds of ideation can be innovative. Innovative thinking can make its point in a novel way, using an original methodology, asking questions that have not been posed before, or using thought processes that have been overlooked. Innovative thinking does not compromise reasoning but broadens the investigative horizon. This type of thinking involves more than trivial inquiries.

* Innovative thinking exhibits independent, personal, or insightful thought. This is the work of the author’s own ideas and is not directly attributable to the discipline’s literature. Innovative thinking often shows the author’s interest and excitement in the work that was done.
* Innovative thinking exhibits sophistication. This often includes making connections with other disciplines in new and interesting ways.
* Innovative thinking raises questions that become the basis for future thought and reflection.