

## Critical Inquiry

The process of understanding, exploring, and addressing a problem or question. Critical Inquiry involves clearly articulating a problem or question within its proper context, devising an appropriate methodological plan to investigate it, synthesizing evidence from high-quality sources, and arriving at informed conclusions that account for relevant contexts, limitations, and implications.

Specific Skill or Knowledge Area	Student Learning Outcomes				0
	4	3	2	1	
Identification of the Problem	The specific problem/question to be considered is fully articulated in context; all background principles and relevant information necessary for significant understanding are present.	Clearly states the problem/question; background principles and relevant information are given for the most part, some omissions are noticeable.	States a problem/question but may be vague; limited background principles and information are present; some details may be irrelevant, major omissions are noticeable.	States a problem/question but background principles and relevant information are not addressed.	Assign a zero for a performance that does not meet a score of one (1).
Methodology	Successfully explains and implements a complex, multilevel, disciplinarily appropriate approach for solving the problem/addressing the question.	Identifies and uses an appropriate, effective method to address the problem/question.	Identifies and uses a reliable method to address the problem/question, with some noticeable errors or omissions.	Uses a coherent method to address a problem/issue; lacks methodological awareness.	
Analysis	Synthesizes information and evidence from relevant quality sources to support reasonable conclusions or insights in relation to the stated issue/problem/question.	Synthesizes information and evidence from relevant sources. Evidence and/or argumentation mostly supports conclusions or insights but may be of lower quality.	Synthesizes some evidence but relevance or quality is inconsistent; evidence may not fit the issue well or analysis might be flawed.	Uses minimal or inappropriate evidence; may have significant errors or omissions.	
Conclusion/Outcome	Conclusions and outcomes reflect a well-informed evaluation of significant relevant evidence or factors, and demonstrate nuanced consideration of relevant contexts, limitations, and implications.	Conclusions and outcomes reflect informed evaluation of relevant evidence or factors and demonstrate some consideration of relevant contexts.	Conclusions show limited evaluation or consideration of contexts, limitations, or implications.	Conclusions show minimal evaluation and/or little recognition of contexts, limitations, or implications.	

The purpose of a general education is to equip students with foundational skills—such as critical thinking—necessary to pursue advanced academic work and address real-world challenges. The UCA Core is designed to ensure that every student at UCA develops the essential intellectual foundation necessary for professional adaptability, informed citizenship, and lifelong learning. The UCA Core is not exhaustive of, nor does it replace, specialized learning acquired in the several disciplines throughout UCA.

This rubric defines skills and knowledge areas for Critical Inquiry. It is designed to assess evidence of learning and development across four student learning outcomes: Identification of the Problem; Methodology; Analysis; and Conclusion/Outcome.

- **Identification of the Problem:** The ability to fully articulate a problem or question within its context.
- **Methodology:** The capacity to recognize and implement appropriate strategic approaches to address a problem or question.
- **Analysis:** The ability to synthesize information and evidence from relevant, high-quality sources related to a stated problem or question.
- **Conclusion/Outcome:** The formulation of conclusions or insights that reflect an informed and well-supported evaluation of relevant evidence, demonstrating a clear consideration of relevant contexts, limitations, and implications.

### Assignment Design Principles

To map successfully to the rubric, an assignment should be an open-ended project, such as a research paper, case study analysis, research experiment, or capstone project. It should include the following structural requirements:

- **Require a clear problem space:** Do not give students a simple "yes/no" question. Instead, provide a broad thematic area and require them to identify and narrow down a specific problem within it.
- **Mandate a methodology section:** For this rubric, you must require them to explicitly state *how* they are answering the question (e.g., "I will compare three historical case studies using X framework.>").
- **Specify source quality:** Explicitly require peer-reviewed, scholarly, or highly credible primary/secondary sources.
- **Demand a reflection on limitations:** Ensure the prompt explicitly asks students to discuss the limitations of their own conclusions and the broader implications of their findings.

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