

Write REASON - Using the Trivium to Improve Writing and Logical Thinking Skills
Quality Enhancement Plan
Aquinas College – Nashville, Tennessee

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Aquinas College stands in the Dominican and Catholic tradition of higher education. The **Write REASON** QEP draws from the riches of this tradition to address the pressing need to improve writing and critical thinking skills among today's college students. At its historical inception in the medieval era, the university set forth the Trivium of grammar, logic, and rhetoric as the foundational and practical disciplines upon which all higher education stands. The **Write REASON** QEP takes the Trivium as a template for assessing student learning outcomes in the areas of writing and critical thinking. This Trivium-based assessment strategy seeks to demonstrate student growth in the effective expression of clear, organized, and accurate ideas stated convincingly according to the objective standards of truth and reality.

The QEP utilizes an array of assessment measures to track student progress in writing and critical thinking, including standardized national tests as well as locally developed tools. These measures follow students at three assessment points (entry, midlevel, and capstone) as they progress through general education courses into their specific major programs of study. A unique feature of the **Write REASON** plan is a special Trivium-based rubric, designed by the College's faculty, which will assess student writing and critical thinking skills in terms of grammar, logic, and rhetoric. The **Write REASON** Rubric will be embedded and utilized in designated classes spanning a student's entire course of study and calls for a collaborative assessment effort between individual faculty members who will apply the rubric and the QEP Director. The use of the **Write REASON** Rubric illustrates not only broad buy-in for the QEP from the College community, but also the wide degree to which the entire academic community will be involved in assessment strategizing and implementation. Faculty seminars will be held each semester to establish consensus on standards and best practices for the Rubric's application.

The QEP will also provide additional student services and student experiences related to a Trivium-based understanding of writing and critical thinking skills. The QEP calls for a renovated and up to date Writing Center and support staff that will provide individual tutorial support for student writing; a tutorial support system associated with freshman composition courses; and an enhanced advising program for supporting and directing students identified as at risk regarding writing and critical thinking skills. The **Write REASON** plan will also host a bi-annual lecture series, an annual student writing contest and symposium, a new student publication, and other popular events in support of a Trivium-based vision for writing and critical thinking.

The QEP Director, in collaboration with an Advisory Committee made up of faculty members and administrative staff, will coordinate the implementation of assessment measures as well as the collection and analysis of data. It is our belief that the **Write REASON** QEP will demonstrably measure and improve the student learning outcomes of writing and critical thinking as understood in the Dominican and Catholic tradition of higher education. This tradition maintains that the Trivium of grammar, logic, and rhetoric has but one goal: seeking the truth through clarity of expression and logical rigor.