

It's Critical to Think Critically
The University of Texas M. D. Anderson Cancer Center
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Executive Summary

The M. D. Anderson School of Health Profession's QEP is an undergraduate student competency-based curriculum and instruction model that involves systemic implementation of faculty development and integrated student learning activities in the area of critical thinking.

The goal that all students graduating from M. D. Anderson's School of Health Professions will be fully competent as critical thinkers prepared with both the content expertise and experience in critical thinking necessary for success in their chosen profession will be measured by five student learning and faculty development outcomes. The plan will incorporate a five year graduated implementation of activities into all SHP program courses. The five key components of the QEP were organized into the following "THINK" framework.

Targeted faculty development
Hands-on student research project
Integrated course activities
Needs-based faculty resource center support
Knowledge/Competency based student outcome model

Collectively, they represent all activities related to the QEP plan. Outcomes, program framework and assessment strategies are fully aligned to support a continuous improvement approach to evaluating program effectiveness and identifying modifications.

From the inception of the QEP, M. D. Anderson's leadership and faculty were committed to an inclusive and comprehensive process for its development. The final plan was the result of a deliberate step-by-step approach, outlined in the QEP Handbook allowing for extensive dialogue and reflection among faculty and stakeholders (faculty, staff, students, alumni and employers). The QEP committee reviewed institutional effectiveness data as well as current literature and best practices allowing the theme of the QEP (critical thinking) to evolve over time through structured data analysis. This process resulted in the following operational definition of critical thinking as the ability to: 1) effectively evaluate and interpret data; 2) apply existing knowledge to solve problems in new situations, with emphasis on evaluating ideas and other points of view; 3) demonstrate creativity and resourcefulness in learning and problem-solving; and 4) effectively and persuasively communicate findings."

A comprehensive assessment plan has been designed to provide a structured data analysis for each of the five student learning and faculty development outcomes. Analysis and modification of the QEP will occur at the annual QEP committee retreat during presentation of the annual report. This process positions the QEP to impact both student learning and faculty development outcomes and support the education mission of M.D. Anderson which is to: "Provide educational programs of the highest quality to fully address the needs of all learners."