



University
of Houston
Clear Lake

University of Houston-Clear Lake Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP): Executive Summary

Applied Critical Thinking (ACT) for Lifelong Learning and Adaptability

As the University of Houston-Clear Lake (UHCL) continues to prepare its students for the twenty-first century, it recognizes the necessity of equipping them with the relevant knowledge, skills, and dispositions to succeed in a rapidly changing environment where the ability to reason and adapt to new information is vital. To this end, UHCL has developed a Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) topic of Applied Critical Thinking for Lifelong Learning and Adaptability. The need for students to develop Applied Critical Thinking (ACT) skills has been identified through the internal analysis of student data, intensive discussion among UHCL constituents (i.e., faculty, staff, students), and several national reports conducted by external professional communities and organizations. By addressing this need, UHCL aspires to enrich the quality of its students' overall educational experiences.

The heart of UHCL's QEP for Applied Critical Thinking for Lifelong Learning and Adaptability is a curriculum revision project that will incorporate key critical thinking skills, concepts, and activities into courses, based on best practices. Such skills and practices will form the framework for redesigning the curriculum, helping the university to develop a common definition of Applied Critical Thinking as well as classroom activities that foster these skills in undergraduate students.

The goals of UHCL's QEP are:

- To increase the Applied Critical Thinking skills of students.
- To provide faculty the support and resources they need to develop the Applied Critical Thinking skills of students.

Thus, the key student learning outcomes of the QEP are:

- Students will use *curiosity* to identify a particular problem or area of interest within a discipline.
- Students will make *connections* to their particular issues or problems based upon evidence acquired by research methodologies and writing styles within the discipline.
- Students will demonstrate *creativity* through a divergent mental approach exploring original alternative views/solutions.
- Students will *communicate* outcomes through writing and/or presentations.

In order to ensure a successful implementation of the QEP, faculty will be afforded multiple opportunities to participate in professional development workshops and conferences, both on- and off-campus, that center on strategies for teaching and assessing ACT skills. Through these activities, the university hopes to instill critical thinking in all of its students, so that the knowledge they gain during their academic careers at UHCL can translate directly into real world career experiences. In doing so, the university will enhance the educational quality of its graduates and, in fulfillment of its mission, provide a benefit to the larger community through the contributions of these graduates.

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