

UAPB Instructors,

A review of 1718AY assessment data indicated some need for improvement of Critical Thinking among our students. Context and Assumptions was an aspect of Critical Thinking that was at or near the bottom of Critical Thinking assessments across the institution and among classifications. To improve overall Critical Thinking, one might plan to improve instruction specifically targeting Context and Assumptions. The Office of Assessment was asked for an example of an assignment focused on Context and Assumptions.

Below is an example of an assignment that would reinforce the aspect of Context and Assumptions of the skill of Critical Thinking. It is meant as an example, to be modified or refined within the context of your own discipline or course.

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Write a micro theme answering the questions outlined below. The micro theme should be no more than 2 pages, single-spaced, using 12-point Times New Roman font and 1-inch margins. Use correct grammar, punctuation, and spelling. Use topic sentences for each paragraph. The following definitions should help with your understanding of the assignment. The AAC&U Critical Thinking rubric defines assumptions as, "Ideas, conditions, or beliefs (often implicit or unstated) that are taken for granted or accepted as true without proof." The Critical Thinking Rubric defines Context as, "The historical, ethical, political, cultural, environmental, or circumstantial settings or conditions that influence and complicate the consideration of any issues, ideas, artifacts, and events." These definitions should provide insight in the following narrative.

The statement, "It is the role of universities to teach students soft skills (critical thinking, problem solving, teamwork) in addition to discipline specific skills" was made in a congressional hearing. Identify some assumptions inherent in the statement, given that the statement was made in the context of a congressional hearing. Which of the assumptions might be true? Which might be incorrect or misguided? How might these assumptions have been formed?

If the above statement was made in the context of a business meeting, how would your list of assumptions change? Would the perspectives of the meeting attendees and the context of the business meeting itself affect your list of assumptions?

If the above statement was made in a university faculty meeting, how would your list of assumptions change? What might be the source of these assumptions, given that the statement was made in a faculty meeting?

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We hope that this example helps instructors improve their pedagogy of Context and Assumptions, as well as the construction of assignments used to assess Critical Thinking.