

# GENERAL EDUCATIONAL OUTCOMES ASSESSMENT RECORD

**Session II 2004**  
**(Session/Year)**

**Communications/Introduction to Speech Communication**  
**(Department/Program)**

**Bill Hall/Jerry Dyer**  
**(Report Prepared by)**

**Within the Last Four Weeks of Introductory Speech Courses**  
**(Date of Administration)**

**April – May 2004**  
**(Time Period Covered)**

## **I. Mission and Goals Statement/General Educational Outcome**

Provide a general education program that results in students' achievement of the following educational outcomes.

Analyze and assess an author's reasoning by applying the methods of critical thinking.

## **II. Means of Assessment & Criteria for Success**

Students were asked to read a famous American speech and then identify eight specific components of critical thinking within the speech. Students were then asked to evaluate the quality of the speaker's reasoning. This two-part test was used to assess students' ability to think critically about a text. A specially trained instructional staff member graded the tests holistically for accuracy and completeness and scored them on a 30 point scale. The results were then grouped by the number of credit hours the test-takers had earned at the time of the test in order to determine whether students performed better as they completed more of the general education curriculum.

## **III. Summary of Assessment Findings**

The average correct response score on the 30 point scale was 2.61 points (8.7% of 30). Students in group 1 (0-24 earned credits) scored 2.32 points (7.7% correct responses). Students in group 2 (25-48 earned credits) scored 2.74 points (9.1% correct responses). Students in group 3 (49+ earned credits) scored 3.4 points (11.34% correct responses). These results suggest that as students progress through the general education curriculum, they do improve their critical thinking skills—rising from 7.7% correct responses for low-credit students to 11.34% correct responses for high-credit students. However, these results also indicate that students in all three groups have serious deficiencies in their ability to think critically.

**V. Action Plan and Timetable for Implementation**

**None at this time. It is in the development process.**

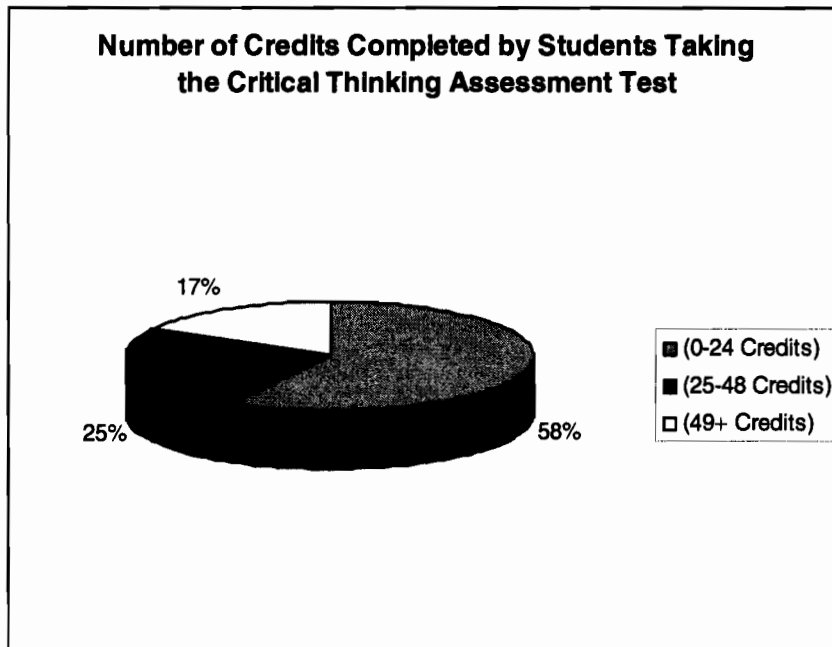
**VI. Budgetary and Planning Implications for Upcoming Unit Planning Cycle**

**May require budgetary support.**

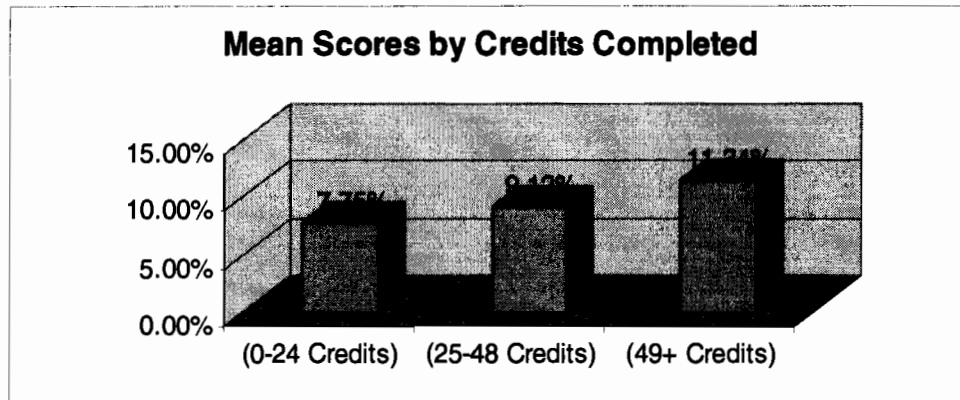
## Critical Thinking Test Data

Tests Scored: 547  
Scoring Scale: 30 points maximum, graded holistically

<u>Score</u>	<u>% of Students</u>	<u>Group 1 (0-24 Credits)</u>	<u>Group 2 (25-48 Credits)</u>	<u>Group 3 (49+ Credits)</u>
0	21.3	76	23	18
1	19.4	69	28	9
2	14.8	47	26	8
3	15.5	50	21	14
4	10.2	28	13	15
5	7.3	21	9	10
6	3.8	9	6	6
7	3.1	7	4	6
8	<1	0	3	1
9	1.4	6	1	1
10	1.3	4	0	3
11	<1	0	0	1
12	<1	1	1	0
13	<1	0	2	0
14-30	0	0	0	0
<b>Totals</b>		<b>318 (58.13%)</b>	<b>137 (25.05%)</b>	<b>92 (16.82%)</b>



<u>Groups)</u>	<u>Group 1 (0-24 Credits)</u>	<u>Group 2 (25-48 Credits)</u>	<u>Group 3 (49+ Credits)</u>	<u>College-Wide (All</u>
<b>MEAN SCORES:</b>	2.32 pts 7.7% correct	2.74 pts 9.1% correct	3.4 pts 11.34% correct	2.61 pts 8.7% correct



The test used was based on the International Critical Thinking Test, which is derived from the Paul/Elder critical thinking model developed by the Foundation for Critical Thinking, a national leader in the critical thinking movement. The test requires students to first analyze the elements of reasoning used in a written sample and to then assess the quality of that reasoning. The tests were graded holistically and scored as follows:

**Part 1 (Analysis):** Questions 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, and 8 were worth 0-2 points each. Questions 5 and 7 were worth 0-4 points each.

The analysis was worth 20 points, or 2/3 of the total score.

**Part 2 (Assessment):** Question 9 was worth 0-10 points.

The assessment was worth 10 points, or 1/3 of the total score.

The test results suggest that students need to significantly improve their ability to think critically. Students were uniformly unable to adequately analyze the elements of reasoning used in a writing sample and to provide a thorough, accurate evaluation of the overall quality of that reasoning. The poor results are actually consistent with results on similar national and international tests. Critical thinking is very demanding, and students are rarely taught how to do it effectively.

Nevertheless, a T-test comparison of the groups shows that the increase in the mean scores from 0-24 credits to 49 or more credits is a statistically significant increase. This gives us something to hang our hats on.

Groups Compared	Outcomes
0-24 credits Vs 25-48 credits	Means not significantly different
0-24 credits Vs 49 or more credits	Means significantly different

Significant at an alpha of 5%

# Critical Thinking Test

## **Student Information:**

- Use your own paper for your answer sheet. You may make notes on the test sheet if you want.
- Do not put your name on your answer sheet.

## **Test Directions:**

You will be given a brief writing sample of a famous speech. After you carefully read the writing sample, you will then be prompted to complete a series of statements in order to demonstrate your ability to recognize key important components in the thinking of the orator and to assess the quality of the reasoning the speaker used. Complete the statements with whatever elaboration you think necessary to make your analysis clear.

**Now read the following speech:**

### Tribute to the Dog

[Background: In 1869, attorney (and future U.S. senator) George Vest represented a plaintiff whose dog had been cruelly shot by a neighbor. The defendant admitted killing the dog, but he had questioned the \$150 value the plaintiff attributed to his pet. As his closing argument, George Vest delivered the following speech to the jury.]

Gentlemen of the jury,

The best friend a man has in the world may turn against him and become his worst enemy. His son or daughter that he has reared with loving care may prove ungrateful. Those who are nearest and dearest to us, those whom we trust with our happiness and our good name, may become traitors to their faith. The money that man has, he may lose. It flies away from him, perhaps when he needs it the most. A man's reputation may be sacrificed in a moment of ill-considered action. The people who are prone to fall on their knees to do us honor when success is with us may be the first to throw the stone of malice when failure settles its cloud upon our heads.

The one absolutely unselfish friend that a man can have in this selfish world, the one that never deserts him and the one that never proves ungrateful or treacherous... is his dog.

A man's dog stands by him in prosperity and in poverty, in health and in sickness. He will sleep on the cold ground, where the wintry winds blow and the snow drives fiercely, if only he may be near his master's side. He will kiss the hand that has no food to offer, he will lick the wounds and sores that come in encounters with the roughness of the world. He guards the sleep of his pauper master as if he were a prince. When all other friends desert, he remains. When riches take wings and reputation falls to pieces, he is as constant in his love as the sun in its journey through the heavens. If fortune drives the master forth, an outcast in the world, friendless and homeless, the faithful dog asks no higher privilege than that of accompanying him to guard against danger, to fight against his enemies. And when the last scene of all comes, and death takes the master in its embrace and his body is laid away in the cold ground, no matter if all other friends pursue their way, there by his graveside will the noble dog be found, his head between his paws, his eyes sad but open in alert watchfulness, faithful and true even to death.

**Now copy and then complete the following statements on your separate answer sheet. Elaborate as necessary to make your analysis clear.**

- 1) The main **purpose** of the speech is \_\_\_\_\_.

(Here you are trying to state as accurately as possible the speaker's purpose for giving this speech. What, in your view, is the speaker trying to accomplish?)

- 2) The key **question** that the speaker is addressing is

\_\_\_\_\_.

(Your goal is to figure out the key question implicit in the speech. In other words, what is the key question that the speaker addresses?)

- 3) The most important **information** in this article is

\_\_\_\_\_.

(You want to identify the key information the speaker uses, or presupposes, in the speech to support his argument. Here you are looking for facts, experiences, data the speaker uses to support his conclusions.)

- 4) The main **inference(s)** in this speech is (are)

\_\_\_\_\_.

(You want to identify the most important conclusion/s that the speaker wants the audience to reach.)

- 5) The key **idea(s)** we need to understand in this speech is (are)

\_\_\_\_\_.

(To do this, first ask yourself the following: "What are the most important concepts that you have to know in order to understand the speaker's line of reasoning?")

By these the author means

\_\_\_\_\_.

(Elaborate briefly what the speaker means by these ideas.)

- 6) The main **assumption(s)** underlying the author's thinking is (are)

\_\_\_\_\_.

(Ask yourself the following: What is the speaker taking for granted that might be questioned? The assumptions are beliefs that the speaker thinks he does not have to defend in the context of the speech.)

- 7) a) If we take this line of reasoning seriously, the **implications** are

\_\_\_\_\_.

(What consequences are likely to follow if people take the speaker's line of reasoning seriously? Consider the logical outcome of the author's position.)

b) If we fail to take this line of reasoning seriously, the **implications** are

\_\_\_\_\_.

(What consequences are likely to follow if people ignore the speaker's reasoning?)

- 8) The main **point of view** of the speaker is

\_\_\_\_\_.

(Consider the personal perspective the speaker is coming from.)

- 9) I judge the overall effectiveness of the speaker's reasoning to be

\_\_\_\_\_.

(Here you need to assess the quality of the speaker's reasoning. Are his arguments relevant to his purpose? Does he effectively use facts and/or data to support his position?)

Is he logical and precise in his thinking? Does he consider alternative points of view? Does he clarify his points with sufficient examples? Does he address potential bias that might influence his own position? Give credit for strengths and point out any weaknesses you can identify. Elaborate as necessary.)

## Test Item Analysis

**Question 1 asked students to identify the purpose of the speech.**

A correct response indicated the following: to win the case by persuading the jury that a pet dog has significant financial value to its owner

Most students earned at least partial credit for this question. Those who did not earn credit most commonly responded that the speaker's purpose was to show that dogs are always loyal or that a dog is a man's best friend.

**Question 2 asked students to identify the key question the speaker addresses.**

A correct response indicated the following: should a pet dog be considered to have substantial financial value to its owner?

Most students earned at least partial credit for this question. Those who did not earn credit most commonly responded that the key question was whether a dog's life was worth more than a human's or whether dogs made better friends than humans did. Many students did not even provide a question but instead made a declarative statement about dogs and humans.

**Question 3 asked students to identify the most important information used in the speech.**

A correct response indicated (though not necessarily all of) the following: best friends may betray; a son or daughter may be ungrateful; loved ones may be treacherous; money may be lost during times of need; a reputation may be sacrificed; honor and praise for success turns into malice during failure; a dog stands by during prosperity and poverty, sickness and health; a dog sleeps on cold ground to be near master; a dog will kiss a hand that holds no food and lick wounds and sores; a dog will guard its master's sleep; a dog is a friend whether its master is rich or poor; a dog does not care about its master's reputation; a dog will sit by its master's grave when its master dies

Most students did not earn credit for this question. The most common responses indicated conclusions rather than the specific information that led to those conclusions. For example, many students wrote that a dog was always loyal and/or that humans were not as reliable as a dog.

**Question 4 asked students to identify the main inference in the speech.**

A correct response indicated the following: a pet dog has substantial financial value to its owner

Few students earned full credit for this question. Most responded by saying that a dog is the one unselfish friend a person has, which is not an inferred conclusion because it is directly stated in the speech.

**Question 5 asked students to identify and then elaborate on the key ideas in the speech.**

A correct response indicated the following: loyalty, friendship, love, companionship, success, failure

A correct elaboration of loyalty is that it is maintaining a supportive relationship regardless of the situation.

Very few students earned credit for this question. Most students did not mention specific concepts but instead offered either a question or a conclusion. Almost no students provided any elaboration.

**Question 6 asked students to identify the main assumptions underlying the speaker's thinking.**

A correct response indicated the following: relationships are personally important; personal value can be assessed as financial value; a pet is personal property

Almost no students earned credit for this question. The most common responses indicated that all dogs are loyal and/or that the jurors were dog owners/lovers.

**Question 7 asked students to identify the implications that would result if the speaker's reasoning were taken seriously (A) and if it were not taken seriously (B).**

A correct response for part A indicated the following: the plaintiff would win the case and be awarded the \$150 payment; a pet dog would be considered to be a highly valuable personal asset; legal penalties for harming a pet dog would be more severe

A correct response for part B indicated the following: the plaintiff would lose the case and not be awarded the \$150 payment; pet dogs would not be considered to have significant financial value to their owners beyond replacement cost

Most students earned only partial credit for this question by only mentioning the immediate result of the specific case. Those who did not earn credit most commonly answered that people would prefer dogs to humans (part A) and that more dogs would be harmed (part B).

**Question 8 asked students to identify the speaker's point of view.**

A correct response indicated the following: a male attorney defending a client

Very few students earned credit for this question. Most answered that the dog should not have been killed or that the defendant should be punished.

**Question 9 asked students to assess the overall effectiveness of the speaker's reasoning.**

A correct response indicated that the overall reasoning was very poor and provided elaboration on the following:

Strengths: argument is relative to his purpose

Weaknesses: does not clarify the key question; commits fallacy of appealing to emotion; over generalizes; only generalities are used in support; no specific facts or examples are provided in support; logic is imprecise; does not develop a clear argument; does not draw valid conclusions; no alternatives are considered; no recognition of potential bias

Most students earned little or no credit for this question. The most common answers were that the speaker's reasoning was good and/or the speaker gave a good speech. Many students did not assess the reasoning at all (whether accurately or not) but focused instead on how they would have ruled if they were jurors.

## Final Thoughts

According to the Foundation for Critical Thinking, "The purpose for the critical thinking test is to assess students' ability to think in certain 'disciplined' and skilled ways. If successful, the results will make it possible for those who read it to grasp explicitly what students have and have not learned in the way of critical thinking skills and abilities at this stage in their development as learners and thinkers."

The test results do indeed tell SPC where our students stand regarding these skills. Those who interpret these results should keep in mind, however, that students would most likely have performed better had they been trained in the terminology used in the test instrument, which is specific to the vocabulary espoused by the Foundation for Critical Thinking. For example, "point of view" means something different than the way most students commonly use the term. Although the test included clarification regarding the terminology used, student responses indicated a frequent lack of understanding of what was being asked. Another factor that likely had a more significant negative effect on scores was the fact that the test had no bearing on grades in the speech course. Since there was no reward or penalty attached to their performance, there is no way to tell how seriously students took the test and how much effort they applied to it. This may be a factor that cannot be overcome in future administrations of the test.

## ACTION PLAN FOLLOW-UP REPORT

(This report is to be used to follow-up on the action plan in several functional areas. Please check the appropriate box below.)

	<b>End-of-Program Assessment</b>
	<b>Program Review</b>
<b>X</b>	<b>General Education Outcomes Assessment</b>
	<b>Other (specify)</b>

(Initial Reporting Year)  
**2003-2004**

(Department/Program)

**Speech**

(Report Prepared By)  
**NA**

(Follow-up Reporting Year)  
**2004-2005**

### I. Mission and Goals Statement/General Educational Outcome

#### **IXJ. Think logically, critically and creatively to solve problems and make decisions.**

In 2004-2005 St. Petersburg College took a new look at its general educational outcomes assessment program which is concerned with the outcomes expected of our Associate of Arts graduates. As a beginning point for the process an ad hoc general education outcomes committee composed of program directors, faculty and administration, was formed. The committee's goal was to identify methodologies for assessing the general education outcomes defined in the College's "Mission and Goal Statement". As a consequence we did not ask Assessment Groups that did their initial reports in 2003/2004 to complete a follow-up report in that they would be starting the new process in that same time frame.

## ACTION PLAN FOLLOW-UP REPORT

Check the type of Assessment Activity that is Applicable:

	<b>End-of-Program Assessment</b>
	<b>Program Review</b>
X	<b>General Education Outcomes Assessment</b>
	<b>Other (specify)</b>

Current Date: 2004

Department/Program: Speech

General Education Goal: IXJ. Think logically, critically, and creatively to solve problems and make decisions.

Report Prepared by: Jerry Dyer

Date of Original Assessment Activity: 2003-2004

### **Action Plan:**

1. To enable greater student success, critical thinking will receive greater emphasis in all ethics classes by Fall 2004
2. The college will offer workshops, seminars, and presentations for faculty on teaching critical thinking by Fall 2004
3. The method of assessment will be changed to use a locally developed instrument by Fall 2004
4. Ethics students will become the population for the assessment to improve data collection and analysis by Fall 2004
5. Communication and instructions for faculty and students will be improved by Fall 2004

### **I. Status of each Action Plan item identified in original assessment activity:**

1. Ethics faculty provided activities and assignments to encourage critical thinking and decision making.
2. Seminars such as those by the Instructional Technology Council and others were offered to the faculty. In addition, faculty received materials on increasing critical thinking skills in the classroom.
3. In 2004 – 2005 St. Petersburg College took a new look at its General Education Outcomes Assessment Program. At that time an ad hoc General Education Assessment Committee composed of program directors, faculty and administration, was formed. The committee's goal was to identify, develop, and implement other methodologies for assessing the General Education Outcomes defined in the College's Mission and Goals Statement. The Ethics Department developed an in-class assessment paper for students to demonstrate their ability to think critically and make decisions.

4. Students in PHI 1600 became the new sample population for assessment.
5. The faculty worked as a team to create the assignment and guidelines for students.

**II. Plan for completing each action plan item that is not currently complete (include timeline)**

Everything was completed as scheduled

**III. Evaluate the impact of the implementation of action plan items on program quality**

Providing workshops and placing more emphasis on critical thinking allowed the faculty to revisit the need for developing critical thinking skills in their own disciplines. Moving the assessment to the Ethics Department will provide a more focused impact on students and relevant assistance to improve their critical thinking skills.