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Critical thinking in a first year management unit: the relationship between disciplinary learning, academic literacy and learning progression

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Abstract

While there appears to be broad acceptance that university graduates must have the capacity to think critically in an increasingly complex, information-rich world, there remains a gap between aspiration and teaching practice in many faculties. We examine this issue through our experience of designing assessment to develop critical thinking in a first year management unit. This case highlighted three important pedagogical considerations. First, there is the need to articulate a conceptualisation of critical thinking that is both discipline- and unit-specific. Second, there is a need to consider the crucial link between critical thinking and academic literacy. Third, there is a need to consider the relationship between the capacity for critical thinking, student learning progression and the development of disciplinary knowledge. These factors will all assist higher education teachers in meeting the challenge of designing developmentally appropriate assessment of critical thinking at each year level.

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