



HEDS Alumni Survey

Fall 2015

Selected Items Related to Critical Thinking & Reasoning

Dates of Administration: November 11, 2014 – December 10, 2014

Method of Administration: Web survey (Administered by HEDS)

Response Ratesⁱ

1 year out (Class of 2014)	87/176 = 49.4%
5 years out (Class of 2009)	61/143 = 42.6%
10 years out (Class of 2004)	52/133 = 39.0%
10+ years out	52/137 = 37.8%

Background:

The HEDS Alumni Survey is designed to assess the long-term impact of undergraduate education. The survey asks alumni about the quality and impact of their undergraduate educational experiences, including co-curricular activities such as internships, study abroad, and community service. The survey also asks alumni to evaluate the impact of their undergraduate education on their postgraduate critical thinking and reasoning, Collaboration and communication, and other learning outcomes. Finally, the survey asks about postgraduate employment, college satisfaction, and college debt.

HMC participates in this survey annually, and surveys all alumni 1, 5, and 10 years out, as well as 5% of each class year more than 10 years out. HMC can add up to 20 supplemental questions at the end of the HEDS Alumni Survey that are specific to our institution. Ten of those questions have been reserved for academic departments going through program review, and 10 for the Office of Alumni and Parent Relations.

The results of the alumni survey are used throughout the campus in departmental program reviews to evaluate growth and development on student learning outcomes; in career services to establish career and graduate school activities one year out; and by the college overall in accreditation and assessment activities.

Highlights:

Practiced extensively across our curriculum, critical thinking and reasoning is central to our Core Curriculum and a Harvey Mudd education. There are a series of items on the instrument that allow us to examine alumni perceptions of the extent to which our curriculum asked students to undertake an exploration of issues, ideas, and artifacts before formulating an opinion, or undertaking an action.

- Overall, 9 out of 10 respondents, regardless of class year, indicated that their critical thinking skills were developed very much or quite a bit by their experience at HMC as an undergraduate. Quantitative reasoning showed the same high levels of development, with 9 out of 10 respondents indicating their quantitative literacy skills were developed quite a bit or very much by their undergraduate experience.

- Similarly, more than 8 out of 10 respondents, regardless of class year, indicated that their creative thinking skills were developed quite a bit or very much by their HMC experience.
- Respondents also reported that their undergraduate classwork asked them to engage in activities which promote critical thinking and reasoning, with more than half of respondents 1, 5, and 10 years out indicating that they were asked often or very often to point out fallacies in ideas, to argue for or against a particular point of view, to compare or contrast ideas, to point out the strengths or weaknesses of an idea, or to argue for a point of view and defend the argument.
- Respondents one year out were more likely than their peers 5 and 10 years out to report they were never or rarely asked to point out fallacies in ideas, principles or points of view, asked to point out the strengths and weaknesses of a particular idea or point of view, or argue for a point of view and defended their argument.

To what extent did your experience as an undergraduate contribute to your knowledge, skills and development in the following areas?		All Alumni	1 Year	5 Years	10 Years
Critical Thinking: Examination of ideas, evidence, and assumptions before accepting or formulating a conclusion					
Very Little		0.9%	2.5%	0.0%	0.0%
Some		6.9%	5.1%	0.0%	9.5%
Quite a bit		25.9%	30.4%	18.4%	31.0%
Very Much		66.2%	62.0%	81.6%	59.5%
MEAN		3.57	3.52	3.82	3.50
Creative Thinking: Developing or combining ideas, images, or expertise in innovative ways					
Very Little		2.3%	1.3%	2.0%	4.8%
Some		11.6%	6.3%	12.2%	14.3%
Quite a bit		38.9%	44.3%	34.7%	38.1%
Very Much		47.2%	48.1%	51.0%	42.9%
MEAN		3.31	3.39	3.35	3.19
Quantitative Literacy: Seeking, understanding and using quantitative information appropriately to solve problems or make arguments					
Very Little		0.9%	2.5%	0.0%	0.0%
Some		2.8%	1.3%	0.0%	2.4%
Quite a bit		19.1%	27.8%	14.3%	11.9%
Very Much		77.2%	68.4%	85.7%	85.7%
MEAN		3.73	3.62	3.86	3.83

Below are statements about experiences you may have had in your classes as an undergraduate. About how often did you experience each?		All Alumni	1 Year	5 Years	10 Years
Faculty asked me to point out any fallacies in ideas, principles, or points of view presented in the course					
Never		1.8%	1.2%	1.9%	0.0%
Rarely		13.2%	16.7%	7.7%	4.3%
Sometimes		32.0%	32.1%	17.3%	41.3%
Often		26.8%	23.8%	38.5%	26.1%
Very Often		26.3%	26.2%	34.6%	28.3%
MEAN		3.63	3.57	3.96	3.78
Faculty asked me to argue for or against a particular point of view					
Never		3.1%	1.2%	1.9%	0.0%
Rarely		12.7%	13.1%	3.8%	17.4%
Sometimes		31.1%	26.2%	28.8%	32.6%
Often		27.2%	31.0%	28.8%	28.3%
Very Often		25.9%	28.6%	36.5%	21.7%
MEAN		3.60	3.73	3.94	3.54
Compared or contrasted topics or ideas from a course					
Never		0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Rarely		9.1%	7.1%	1.9%	4.3%
Sometimes		33.5%	29.8%	28.3%	41.3%
Often		35.2%	35.7%	45.3%	28.3%
Very Often		22.2%	27.4%	24.5%	26.1%
MEAN		3.70	3.83	3.92	3.76
Pointed out the strengths and weaknesses of a particular idea or point of view					
Never		0.9%	0.0%	0.0%	2.2%
Rarely		12.2%	15.5%	5.7%	6.5%
Sometimes		34.1%	26.2%	35.8%	37.0%
Often		32.8%	33.3%	39.6%	30.4%
Very Often		20.1%	25.0%	18.9%	23.9%
MEAN		3.59	3.68	3.72	3.67
Argued for or against a particular point of view and defended my argument					
Never		0.9%	1.2%	0.0%	0.0%
Rarely		17.6%	17.9%	7.5%	15.2%
Sometimes		32.2%	27.4%	37.7%	32.6%
Often		26.9%	23.8%	32.1%	30.4%
Very Often		22.5%	29.8%	22.6%	21.7%
MEAN		3.52	3.63	3.70	3.59

ⁱ Sent to all alumni in each class with valid email addresses