

College Writing Program Grading Criteria

	A (Outstanding)	B (Good)	C (Satisfactory)	D (Unsatisfactory)	F (Failing)
Thesis & Argument	The essay's thesis demonstrates ambition, thoughtfulness, and appropriate specificity. The thesis provokes readers to reflect on the topic's subtleties and complexities. Throughout the paper, arguments remain clear, essential, and sound.	The essay has an ambitious thesis but does not fully deliver on its promise, or it may have thoroughly developed and explored a less than demanding thesis. Supporting arguments progress with very few lapses in clarity, soundness, or relevance.	The essay has a thesis, although it doesn't demonstrate ambition or take on a discernible degree of difficulty. The thesis may be too broad to lead to a focused essay. Argumentation in general seems lackluster or obvious; some arguments might be weak due to lapses in logic or insufficient (perhaps irrelevant) evidence.	The essay's unsatisfactory thesis suffers from logical incoherency or facile aims. Argumentation generally suffers from tangential lapses and/or logical fallacies. Evidence is markedly insufficient or irrelevant.	The essay has virtually no discernible thesis or direction. Arguments often bear no relation to other sections of the essay; logical fallacies may abound.
Support	The essay engages a variety of credible perspectives, demonstrating a sophisticated use of support: other views have been carefully considered, sources have been appropriately synthesized, and the analysis offers readers fresh ways to view the source material.	The essay uses substantive support: arguments consistently follow from evidence. The writer effectively illustrates the conversation on the topic. The analysis almost always offers some insights.	The essay's argument is supported but would benefit from more—or better use of—evidence; the essay demonstrates analysis, albeit occasionally superficially. The analysis offers a few insights.	The essay's supporting arguments often suffer from inadequate evidence that is insufficient, irrelevant, or incorrect. Sources may not be appropriate for the assignment. The essay may misinterpret or misrepresent its source material.	The essay's supporting arguments have virtually no evidence or rely disproportionately on inappropriate evidence.
Organization	The essay's organization develops organically from an outstanding thesis. At the global level, the writer reveals a sophisticated awareness of form; locally, paragraphs cohere, and the essay flows without unintended interruptions.	At the global level, the essay's organization reveals a logical, rhetorically effective progression of the argument. On a local level, transitions between paragraphs and sentences create continuity and coherence.	At the global level, the essay's organizational strategies demonstrate basic cohesion and continuity. On a local level, transitions between paragraphs and sentences usually create continuity and coherence, with some exceptions.	At the global level, the essay's unsatisfactory organization results in an essay that confounds the reader. Locally, paragraphs stumble from one to the next and often lack focus and coherence.	The essay's paragraphs lack most defining features of a traditional paragraph: controlling ideas, transitions, unity, and coherence. The same is true of the essay as a whole.
Style	The essay engages the reader through a sophisticated control of diction, syntax, and tone. The language is concise, precise, and appropriate for the subject.	The essay's prose itself, not just the subject matter, interests the reader through effectively varied sentence styles and word choices. The language is usually concise and precise.	The essay's prose is adequate and, despite some awkwardness, communicates clearly through competent syntax and diction. There may be some wordiness.	The writing's lack of precision often confuses the reader through unclear word choice or problematic sentence structures. The writing may also demonstrate substantial wordiness.	The writing prevents readers from engaging with the piece on any level: the sentences resist coherency, word choices resist clarity, and overall the prose ignores the basic demands of an audience.
Correctness	The writing has virtually no grammatical, mechanical, or formatting errors. Sources are appropriately attributed, documented, and cited. At this level, the presentation reveals professionalism and attention to detail.	The writing has few grammatical, mechanical, or formatting errors, and they do not distract the reader from the content. Sources are appropriately attributed and cited with very few errors.	The writing has several grammatical, mechanical, or formatting errors, and some errors distract the reader from the content. Sources are documented and cited, though not always strictly in the required format and with little attribution.	The writing has substantial grammatical, mechanical, or formatting errors that distract the reader from the content. Many sources are incorrectly documented and cited.	The essay fails to meet minimum standards of correctness: errors in grammar or mechanics prevent readers from understanding the essay. Sources receive incorrect or no documentation and citation.
<p>While the preceding elements demonstrate a hierarchical concern, the following discussion regarding adherence or response to assignment must be seen outside that hierarchy; fundamentally, the question comes down to whether or not an essay properly responded to its assigned goals or not. Though an essay may excel at the above elements, one may view an essay's success in the final element below as an equally important concern.</p>					
Assignment Adherence	The essay meets every essential requirement.		The essay meets the majority of the essential requirements.	The essay fails to meet the essential requirements of the assignment.	