

Marking Standards for English Courses

Marking Standards for English 1st year Writing Courses

Marks are a form of evaluation in a course, but they also represent communication between the instructor and the student. The letter and number grades given below are the most basic form of such communication. They can give a general overview of how students are performing but they cannot identify the specific areas in which the students are excelling and those areas in which they need to improve. Students should therefore always read carefully and completely through their instructors' comments, referring back to these marking standards, when necessary, for further explanation and description of particular grades and, when in doubt, contacting instructors for further clarification. These standards refer specifically to the expository essay. Instructors will explain the criteria for other types of assignments in their courses.

English Writing papers are graded according to the following criteria:

Content: original thinking expressed in depth and detail; demonstrated skill at generating ideas for and about a topic; appropriate subject and purpose for the audience; relevant and persuasive evidence and other support for points being made; appropriate use of secondary material where applicable.

Organization: well-articulated purpose through use of clear thesis statement; well-structured introduction and conclusion; paragraph unity and coherence throughout; appropriate use of signposting, topic sentences and various transitional devices to guide the reader through the paper.

Style: appropriate diction and language level for the audience; rhetorical flair; varied sentence structure; clear, concise prose; clear and individual voice appropriate to the purpose and audience of the work.

Mechanics: correct spelling, grammar, punctuation, syntax, word usage, proofreading, and integration of quotations; use of direct quotation when necessary only; accurate summarizing and paraphrasing of secondary material; accurate documentation; accurate and consistent use of APA, MLA, or other documentation style throughout.

Grade Descriptions for English courses

A+(90-100%) EXCEPTIONAL An "A"+ paper has exceptional content and is organized very well. It is also well-written as a whole and has no errors at the sentence, the paragraph, or the word level. It has a consistent point of view for a well-defined audience and it has a clear purpose. It uses rhetorical devices competently and its style is clear and interesting. Above all, this essay is unusually creative and intelligent. It has an extra something that makes it stand apart from the others.

A (80-89 %) EXCELLENT An "A" paper is well-organized and well-written both as a whole and at the sentence, the paragraph, and the word level. It has no major errors in any of these areas. It has excellent content with a consistent point of view for a consistent audience. The writer clearly understands the reason for writing the document and offers a well-thought-out argument. The essay shows competence in the use of rhetorical devices, and it is written in a clear and interesting style.

B (70-79%) GOOD A "B" paper has good content and is well-organized and well-written in general, with a strong thesis and a coherent, logical argument. But it has some problems, such as lack of clear paragraph structure or consistent lack of transitions so that the relationships between ideas in sentences or between paragraphs are not clear and probably have not been thought out by the writer. It might also have a few grammatical, spelling, or punctuation problems.

C (60-69 %) SATISFACTORY A "C" paper shows some competence in organization and development, but it has only a moderately successful analytical argument; noticeable problems at the paragraph or sentence level; some development problems; some grammatical and spelling problems; some consistent word choice problems; or some comma splices or sentence fragments.

D (50-59%) MINIMAL PASS A paper with a mark of "D" represents a barely acceptable performance. It shows an attempt at generating ideas but no real analysis of the ideas. It has little clear focus or evidence of a thesis and has little clear idea of purpose or audience. Therefore, it does not have satisfactory content and as a result it has serious development problems. It also has numerous paragraph and sentence problems, grammatical errors and punctuation problems. A mark of "D" on an essay indicates that the student should make a concerted effort at improvement.

E (40-49%) BORDERLINE FAIL An "E" paper has no clear thesis and offers either very little or no evidence at all or evidence that is not related to the essay's argument. It might have such serious problems of style, mechanics, organization or content that a reader would have trouble following the main ideas from the beginning to the end.

F (1-39%) FAILURE An "F" paper demonstrates severe errors in mechanics, content, style, and/or organization that are unacceptable at the university level. This essay may have nothing to say about its subject, it may be off topic, it may lack a thesis, it may lack clear and adequate paragraphs, and/or it may contain such repeated and serious errors in grammar, sentence structure, and diction that its meaning is obscured.

F (0%) ACADEMIC DISHONESTY Plagiarism is the unacknowledged use of someone else's words and/or ideas. Not acknowledging your debt to the ideas of a secondary source, failing to use quotation marks when you are quoting directly, buying essays from essay banks, copying another student's work, or working together on an individual assignment, all constitute plagiarism. Resubmitting material you've submitted to another course is also academic dishonesty. All plagiarized work (in whole or in part) and other forms of academic dishonesty will be reported to the Dean, who is

responsible for judging academic misconduct and imposing penalties. The minimum penalty for academic misconduct is a 0 on the assignment in question. It might also be subject to more severe academic penalties. See the [Student Code of Conduct](#) for more details.

Marking Standards for Literature and Theory Courses

Marks are a form of evaluation in a course, but they also represent communication between the instructor and the student. The number and letter grades given below are only the most basic form of such communication. They can give a general overview of how the student is performing, but they cannot identify the specific areas in which s/he is excelling, and those areas in which s/he needs to improve. Students should therefore always read carefully through all of the instructor's comments, referring to these marking standards and, when in doubt, contacting the instructor for further clarification. These standards refer specifically to the expository essay. Instructors will explain the criteria for other types of assignments in their courses.

Papers in literature and theory courses are graded according to the following criteria:

Content: original insights and thinking expressed in sufficient depth and detail; demonstrated grasp of concepts and grappling with topic; relevant and persuasive evidence or support; sufficient quotation and explication of the primary text(s); appropriate use of secondary sources.

Organization: well-articulated focus (usually in a thesis statement); well-structured introduction and conclusion; paragraph unity and coherence throughout; appropriate use of signposting, topic sentences, and transitions to guide the reader through the paper.

Style: appropriate diction and language level; rhetorical flair; varied sentence structure; clear, concise prose; no overuse of passive voice; literary discussion kept in the present tense; development of writer's own voice appropriate to the genre of the academic essay.

Mechanics: correct spelling (including names and key terms), grammar, punctuation, syntax, word usage, proofreading, integration of quotation, and documentation; use of MLA style throughout.

Grade Descriptions:

A+(90-100%) EXCEPTIONAL An "A+" paper has distinctive ideas and content organized in a compelling and appropriate form. Where relevant, it intelligently engages with larger discourses, while still retaining its own position. The paper is strong in organization, and mechanics, with no errors in grammar or spelling, and its overall effect exceeds that of precision and correctness. In essence, an A+ paper is stylistically pleasing to read and displays evidence of a rare talent.

A (80-89%) EXCELLENT An "A" paper is well-organized and persuasive, and uses direct reference to the text to prove a precise and interesting thesis. It is stylistically pleasing to read, and is strong in content, organization, and mechanics. Grammatical and spelling errors are virtually non-existent. Where relevant, it is situated in a larger critical discourse through judicious use of secondary sources, but does not allow those sources to overwhelm the author's own ideas. It moves beyond class discussion and shows an active engagement with the text.

B (70-79%) GOOD A "B" paper displays a generally coherent, well-organized argument. The thought, organization, and style are all effective, and the mechanical skills are strong. It displays some complexity in its argument, and, where relevant, refers to larger critical discourses. Quotations and references to primary and secondary sources are well integrated into the text, with proper documentation. Some problems with content, organization, style, or mechanics might prevent the paper from gaining an "A" grade, or

the paper might have attempted less, settling for a safe argument. Errors are, however, occasional, rather than chronic, and they do not obscure meaning.

C (60-69%) SATISFACTORY A "C" paper demonstrates an acceptable grasp of the subject matter, and an ability to construct an argument that engages with that subject in a moderately critical and analytical manner. It has a reasonably clear thesis, with proper paragraphs, though it might have problems with both, such as a thesis that is a simple summary of the structure of the argument, or paragraphs that lack unity and/or clear topic sentences. There is evidence of an effort to support points with quotations and references to the text, with reasonable attempts at documentation. Errors in content, style, organization, and/or mechanics are still relatively few, but occasionally serious, hampering, at times, the coherent presentation of ideas. However, any such errors will not be so serious or so chronic as to make the overall paper difficult to understand. More effort needs to be put into developing language and writing skills, or in attempting more sophisticated original thought.

D (50-59%) MINIMAL PASS A "D" paper represents a barely acceptable performance with some evidence of familiarity with the material, and of analytical skill. It might attempt to address moderately complex issues, but with only minimal success. It might be lacking a clearly focused argument, or it might present observation in place of argument. While it attempts to present textual evidence, it either does not properly integrate this material into the body of the essay, or it relies too heavily on irrelevant paraphrase and/or plot summation. It might synthesize ideas from secondary sources without contributing any of its own analysis. Problems with organization, style, content and/or mechanics make the overall ideas of the essay difficult to comprehend, or the argument difficult to follow from start to finish. Such papers demonstrate the need for concentrated efforts at improvement.

E (40-49%) BORDERLINE FAIL An "E" paper might have no clear thesis; it might present evidence that is scanty and/or irrelevant to the argument; or it might have

serious problems with style, mechanics, organization and/or content that prevent the reader from following the main ideas from the beginning to the end.

F (1-39%) FAILURE An "F" paper demonstrates severe errors in mechanics, content, style, and/or organization that are unacceptable at the university level. It might be off topic, it might lack a thesis, it might lack clear and adequate paragraphs, and/or it might contain repeated and serious errors in grammar, sentence structure, and diction, such that the meaning is entirely obscured. It might also reveal significant misunderstanding of the course material.

F (0%) ACADEMIC DISHONESTY Plagiarism is the unacknowledged use of someone else's words and/or ideas. Not acknowledging your debt to the ideas of a secondary source, failing to use quotation marks when you are quoting directly, buying essays from essay banks, copying another student's work, or working together on an individual assignment, all constitute plagiarism. Resubmitting material you've submitted to another course is also academic dishonesty. All plagiarized work (in whole or in part) and other forms of academic dishonesty will be reported to the Dean, who is responsible for judging academic misconduct and imposing penalties. The minimum penalty for academic misconduct is a 0 on the assignment in question. It might also be subject to more severe academic penalties. See the [Student Code of Conduct](#) for more details.