**UWP Grading Standards**

Successful writers consider both the rhetorical situation and discourse community in which their writing will attempt to *do something*. That is, successful writers consider how they might best negotiate the demands set by each writing task—in terms of purpose, content, organization, and style—to make something happen in the world.

Because each writing task is unique, successful writing cannot be reduced to a simple formula. Rather, successful writing should be thought of and assessed as the dynamic interplay between a writer’s goals and all the competing demands placed on written communication.

These grading standards establish four major criteria for evaluating such interplay at each grade level: purpose and adaptation, reasoning and content, organization and structure, and attention to style and conventions. Obviously, every paper will not fit neatly into one grade category; it may, for instance, have some characteristics of B and some of C. The final grade it receives depends on the weight the instructor gives each criterion.

**THE A PAPER**

*Purpose and Adaptation*

The A paper has not only fulfilled the assignment but has done so in a fresh and mature manner. It has effectively met the needs of the rhetorical situation and discourse community; it makes a substantial contribution to the situation; it is fully accommodated to its audience(s) and is likely to move them to act as the writer desires.

*Reasoning and Content*

The evidence is detailed; the sources of information or persuasion have been used creatively and cited appropriately. The evidence presented is appropriate to the audience. The reasoning is valid. Beyond that, the paper is thoughtful, showing hard work, good judgment, and sensitivity to the complexities of the situation or issue.

*Organization and Structure*

The organization is effective for this audience and purpose. The introduction establishes the context and purpose of the communication. Segments, whether sections or paragraphs, are fully developed and follow logically from what precedes them. Headings and subheadings are appropriately used. The conclusion is suitable in tone and strategy.

*Attention to Style and Conventions*

The prose is not only clear and readable but occasionally apt and memorable. It contains few errors, none of which seriously undermines the effectiveness of the paper.

**THE B PAPER**

*Purpose and Adaptation*

The assignment has not just been followed but fulfilled. In taking its stand, the paper shows a clear sense of audience and purpose. It shows more awareness of the implications of what it is saying and of its assumptions about the audience than the C paper does.

*Reasoning and Content*

The writer has not settled for the most obvious evidence. The B paper is characterized by thoroughness. The reasoning is more than adequate. Not only does it make few mistakes, but it shows thoughtfulness and some awareness of complexities and other points of view.

*Organization and Structure*

The B paper has an effective introduction and conclusion. The order of information is logical, and the reader can follow it because of well-chosen transitions. Paragraph divisions are logical, and the paragraphs use enough specific detail to make their point tellingly.

*Attention to Style and Conventions*

The expression is competent, more ambitious than that of the C paper, less felicitous than that of the A paper. Not only is sentence structure correct, but it also uses subordination, emphasis, sentence length and variety, and modifiers effectively. It would be surprising to find serious sentence errors—comma splices, fragments, or fused sentences—in a B paper. Word choice is idiomatic, vocabulary precise. Punctuation, grammar, and spelling demonstrate control of the conventions of academic discourse(s).

**THE C PAPER**

*Purpose and Adaptation*

The assignment has been followed. The paper develops its points with a sense of audience.

*Reasoning and Content*

The information or degree of persuasion in a C paper is appropriate. That means that there is evidence, and though the evidence is perhaps obvious and easily accessible, it has been gathered honestly and used responsibly. The C paper may exhibit some minor imperfections or inconsistencies in mapping out the arguments, but it commits no major flaws in reasoning.

*Organization and Structure*

The organizing logic is easily discernable. The reader could easily outline the presentation. Paragraphs have adequate development and are divided appropriately. Transitions may be mechanical, but they foster coherence.

*Attention to Style and Conventions*

The expression is competent. Sentence structure is appropriate for academic discourse(s), although it may show limited competence with such elements as subordination, emphasis, sentence variety, length, and modifiers. It relies instead on simple and compound sentences. The paper is generally free of comma splices, unintentional fragments, and fused sentences. Word choice is correct though limited. It may contain errors in spelling, mechanics, and grammar that reveal unfamiliarity with the conventions of academic discourse(s).

**THE D PAPER**

*Purpose and Adaptation*

A D paper attempts to follow the assignment, even if the choice of topic or situation is poor, whether too broad, too narrow, or inappropriate. A D paper often shows a poor sense of audience and purpose. For example, it may over or under-estimate the audience’s prior knowledge or assumptions. Or it may correctly assess the situation, but add little of substance to it.

*Reasoning and Content*

Necessary evidence may be missing, irrelevant evidence present, or the interpretation or evaluation of that evidence may be inadequate. The reasoning may be seriously flawed, resting on insufficient understanding of the situation or the audience. Or it may rely too heavily on evidence from published sources without adding original analysis.

*Organization and Structure*

Organization may be significantly flawed in any of the following ways: relevant segments may be missing; topic sentences may be absent or inappropriate to the content of the paragraph; paragraphs are not well developed or divided or arranged; transitions are missing or incorrect; introductions or conclusions are missing or incomplete.

*Attention to Style and Conventions*

A D paper may have numerous and consistent errors in grammar, spelling, and punctuation. The syntax or diction in some sentences may be incomprehensible. Lack of proofreading can turn an otherwise adequate paper into a D paper.

**THE F PAPER**

* The paper is off the assignment, even if it is correctly and coherently written. (**UWP instructors require that such papers be rewritten before assigning any grade.**)
* It relates to the assignment but has no clear purpose or goes off in several directions. It is missing essential elements of the assigned form of communication.
* It falls seriously short of the minimum length requirements.
* It may be plagiarized-either it is someone else’s paper, or it has used sources improperly or without documentation. It may be obvious the paper was generated by A.I. technology with little modification.
* Organizational style, syntax, and diction seriously hinder communication, more so than the D paper.