To: English 150 Students
From: The Director of Composition

Grading Criteria

The A Paper: EXCEPTIONAL

1. It not only fulfills the assignment but does so in a fresh and mature way. The paper is pleasing to read; it accommodates itself well to the intended audience.
2. The evidence is detailed and used persuasively; claims are thoroughly substantiated using sufficient, typical, accurate, and relevant supporting evidence; where appropriate, citations are used effectively and are formatted correctly.
3. The organization gives the reader a sense of the necessary flow of the argument or explanation. Paragraphs are fully developed and follow naturally from what proceeds them; the conclusion reinforces the reader’s confidence in the writer’s control of the argument.
4. The prose is clear, apt, and occasionally notable. It contains virtually no errors by contemporary American Standard English criteria. Think of it as a style consistent with sophisticated adult writing, such as that of op-ed writers found in major American newspapers and magazines. An “A” is a “product” grade.

The B Paper: HIGHLY COMPETENT

1. The assignment has been followed and fulfilled in a predictable way, but nevertheless represents sophisticated understanding of the problem. It addresses its intended audience appropriately. Often, this is the kind of paper that with relatively slight revision could be an A paper.
2. The evidence is obvious, though the writer does not consistently settle for the obvious. The major claims are supported (perhaps not thoroughly) with sufficient, typical, accurate, and relevant evidence. The writer represents an awareness of other points of view.
3. The introduction and conclusion are clear, but perhaps are not as effective or pointed as they could be. Most paragraphs follow well and are appropriately divided, though one or two could be better placed and developed.
4. The expression is clean and competent. Not only is sentence structure correct, but subordination, emphasis, sentence length, and variety are used effectively. No serious sentence errors—comma splices, fragments, or fused sentences—occur in a B paper. Punctuation, grammar, and spelling reveal proficient use of the conventions of edited American English.

The C Paper: COMPETENT

1. The assignment has been followed and fulfilled, but in a predictable way. The thesis may be too broad or unclear. For various reasons the intended audience may have trouble immediately discerning the thesis, although one is present.
2. Though an effort is made to support the argument with evidence, the evidence is nearly always obvious; the paper may lack some pertinent information. Supporting evidence that is relevant and accurate should still be easily discernable to the reader. The reasoning is predictable and/or occasionally flawed. There is slight awareness of other points of view.
3. The paper exhibits an implicit sense of organization, but several paragraphs and/or sentences within paragraphs are ineffectively placed. In short, the organizational structure is recognizable but disjointed.
4. Sentence structure is generally correct, although the writer may show limited competence with sentence effectiveness, failing to use such devices as subordination, sentence variety, and modifiers to achieve emphasis. However, gross mechanical errors such comma splices, unintentional fragments, fused sentences, subject/verb and noun/pronoun disagreement—errors that betray inadequate understanding of sentence

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structure—are absent.

**The D Paper: DOES NOT MEET STANDARDS**

1. The paper exhibits a poor sense of audience and a limited sense of purpose. The purpose or thesis cannot be discerned without significant work on the part of the reader.
2. Necessary evidence is out of order and/or missing; the writer does not supply sufficient, typical, accurate, and relevant evidence that is easily discernable; in fact, irrelevant evidence may instead be present. The reasoning will necessarily be flawed.
3. The organization is difficult to discern, with an introduction that is unclear or nonexistent, paragraphs that are underdeveloped and disorganized, and transitions that are inappropriate or nonexistent.
4. The paper displays numerous errors in grammar, spelling, and punctuation. The diction may be so weak as to make sentences incomprehensible for the intended audience, although experienced readers could make sense of them. Lack of proofreading could turn an otherwise competent paper into an incompetent paper.

**The F Paper: DYSFUNCTIONAL**

1. The assignment is neither followed nor fulfilled. The thesis is unclear, and the paper moves confusedly in several directions. It may fall seriously short of minimum length requirements.
   
   and/or

   1. The writer presents virtually no evidence, or the attribution of evidence is weak.
   
   and/or

   2. The organization appears completely haphazard or arbitrary.
   
   and/or

   3. The paper exhibits numerous grammatical, spelling, and punctuation errors, as well as serious problems with diction and syntax that seriously hinder communication. Many sentences are incomprehensible, even to experienced readers.
   
   and/or.

   4. It is not the student’s own work.