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CC: The 2017 Portfolio Assessment Committee: Jean Burns (Biology), Cara Byrne (English), Robert Calton (English), Christine Cano (Modern Languages), Angela Ciccia (Psychological Sciences), Ana Codita (English), Corbin Covault (Physics), Colin Drummond (Engineering), Narcisz Fejes (English), John Flores (History), Jane Marek (Nursing), Vasu Ramanujam (Weatherhead)

FROM: Megan Swihart Jewell (English) and Erika Olbricht (English), Committee Coordinators

SUBJECT: **SAGES Writing Portfolio Assessment Committee Report**

DATE: 12 June 2017

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The 2016 SAGES Writing Portfolio Assessment Committee, consisting of 14 faculty members from across the university, read and evaluated 1115 student portfolios submitted between May 2016 and May 2017.

The committee's overall holistic assessment found 76% of students' portfolios to be Proficient or Acceptable, which is higher than the previous two years' numbers (2015: 68%, 2016, 73%; Table 14). The committee found that 19% of students were writing at the Proficient, or highest, level. In the holistic scoring section, 83% of students scored Proficient or Acceptable in terms of Engagement, a measure indicating an awareness of audience as well as the successful presentation of a problem or question. The highest-scoring category, Readability, was assessed at 81% Proficient or Acceptable (see Table 14), with only 2% of portfolios falling in the Unacceptable range. The criterion of Readability has been in previous years students' consistent strength.

Points of interest and concern to the committee are as follows:

- The 2017 holistic results, as in previous years, suggest strong positive programmatic influence on student writing, but continue to show students' lowest scoring Proficient scores are in the areas of Argument and Evidence (Table 14). The committee found that students more frequently tend to summarize, rather than analyze, sources and use them mostly to provide factual information rather than to form synthesized arguments.

- The committee found a strong correlation between students' evidence use and the types of sources they cited. Students who cited more peer-reviewed scholarly sources were more often ranked at the Proficient and Acceptable levels than students who did not incorporate peer-reviewed sources in their essays. The committee concluded that students in SAGES courses should be given more opportunities to work with peer-reviewed scholarly sources, and they should receive additional writing instruction on the written genres that most often include such sources.

- In the reflective essays, the committee found that a large number of students did not directly connect the communication skills and critical thinking skills they build in SAGES to their work in Departmental Seminars, Capstone Courses, post-graduate work, and in the workplace. Thus, the committee concluded that students would benefit from additional instruction about the SAGES curriculum and its outcomes as well as the transferability of the communication and thinking skills students develop in SAGES courses.

Therefore, the committee's major recommendation is that students must become more adept at their critical use of sources, not only to better analyze and incorporate scholarly, peer-reviewed sources, but also to consider how they might use evidence from those sources in ways other than providing factual support for their claims.

The committee also noted that in all categories the majority of percentages remained the same or minimally varied (less than 5% maximum) from both the 2015 and 2016 findings. This three-year consistency in assessment prompted two major committee recommendations: (1) to explore the establishment of programmatic benchmarks and targets for writing in First-Year and University Seminars; and (2) to conduct a smaller, supplemental review of instructor syllabi (and perhaps other course materials) to gather insights on the classroom context for student performance, particularly in the rubric categories of Engagement, Argument, and Evidence.

HISTORY

SAGES writing portfolios have always required the following four components: a Reflective Essay, a First Seminar essay, a University Seminar Essay, and a Researched Essay from their other University Seminar. During the SAGES pilot and first years of implementation (2002-2008), faculty evaluation of student writing portfolios focused solely on assessing individual portfolios, in order to provide feedback to students who submitted them as a graduation requirement.

In June 2009, the portfolio review process was modified to provide programmatic feedback on student writing to SAGES and English Department Writing Program administrators. From 2009-2014 a consistent but evolving process was used to assess portfolios. In that time period, the committee increasingly stressed argument-based writing rather than report-based writing; subsequent years show more argument writing identified in portfolios. For example, in 2009, the committee found that only 66% of researched essays contained arguments; in 2014, that number had risen to 85%. See previous years' reports (at writing.case.edu) for additional details.

In 2014-15, SAGES adopted a new set of Student Learning Outcomes (Appendix 1). Therefore, in order to more closely align with the new outcomes, the writing portfolio assessment categories and rubrics were modified significantly. In response to previous years' committee concerns about weaknesses in the researched essay, this newer reading process began with a detailed assessment of the researched essay from randomly selected students' portfolios. The resulting changes to the portfolio reading process signified a break in continuity with previous years' results. The data we collected in 2015 established a new descriptive benchmark for the assessment of student writing that now serves as the basis for subsequent committee evaluation.

As a result, in 2016 and 2017, we used similar assessment criteria and rubrics for the assessment of portfolios (Appendix 2), and continued the practice of closely evaluating selected researched essays.

METHODOLOGY

As was the practice in 2015-2016, this year's reading process was divided into two parts. First, each reader assessed the research essay from 25 randomly chosen portfolios. Then, each portfolio was read holistically. (See Appendix 2 for rubrics and instructions to readers.) Committee members met for three full days of discussion based on their assessments of approximately 80 portfolios each.

The first committee meeting day was spent discussing the research essay rubric, anchor research essays, and sample research papers in order to calibrate reader assessment of the research essays. Readers had seven days to read the researched essays and enter data into a Qualtrics survey form.

The second meeting day (a week later) was split between discussing initial impressions of the data gathered from the researched essay assessments and discussing the holistic reading process, the anchor portfolios (those portfolios designated to define each performance category), and three calibration portfolios. Readers had ten days to read portfolios (an average of 80 per reader) and enter data into a Qualtrics survey form.

The third meeting day was used to discuss the holistic data generated and the review process itself, and to draft the committee's conclusions and recommendations for classroom instruction and program implementation.

The coordinators drafted this report based on notes from the discussions and reader questionnaires; committee members were asked to offer feedback on the report before it was made public.

RESULTS

Results of the researched essay evaluation and holistic assessment are included below.

Researched Essay Evaluation Results

In their portfolios, students must submit a researched essay from one of their university seminars. The online portfolio submission guidelines explicitly define the genre of this essay:

> By "research essay," SAGES means a sustained engagement with an academic conversation - summarizing and critiquing what others have said on your topic - that includes your own novel claim or argument. This paper must do more than catalog the research you have done (i.e., an annotated bibliography is not sufficient); it should demonstrate your ability to synthesize academic research on a specific topic and to offer your own analysis or critical intervention. Such a paper will have a single controlling idea that represents your own thinking about the topic ….The research paper should be approximately 10-12 pages long …. The research essay must integrate and cite primary and/or secondary source material and include a properly formatted bibliography. (sages.case.edu)

Each reader assessed the researched essay from 25 of their assigned portfolios, for a total of 350 essays, or 31% of portfolios. The committee was pleased to see that the researched essays as a whole addressed a wide diversity of topics that allowed many students to undertake thoughtful, critical, and engaging research projects and to explore meaningful and often controversial questions and problems.

As in years past, the evaluative ratings continue to indicate that the quality of argumentation needs significant improvement; indeed, this year's data contain lower numbers (though not always statistically significant) in some categories than last year's. The three weakest criteria in the overall assessment of the researched essay were: the Thesis Statement, Reasoning/Development of the Argument, and the Use of Evidence. (This finding is consistent with both 2015 and 2016 data.) In each case, more than a third of papers were in the Developing or Unacceptable categories (43%, 41%, and 44%, respectively; Table 1). Engagement with a research problem (34% Developing or Unacceptable, combined) also showed room for improvement (Table 1).

While the Quality of Evidence percentage (74%, Proficient or Acceptable, combined) suggests stability in the data (2015: 73%; 2016: 69%), the Use of that Evidence decreased by twelve percentage points this year (2016: 69%; 2017: 57%, Proficient or Acceptable, combined), as the committee continued to look more carefully at how students engage with the evidence they use. Locating good sources appears to be less of an issue than using those sources effectively in the service of an argument.

As in previous years, Correctness and Style has the highest score, with 82% of student work assessed at the Proficient or Acceptable categories (Table 1).

Genre
This committee has long been invested in the genre of the research essay, preferring to see research presented in the form of an academic argument, which encourages stronger critical thinking and persuasion than a factual report, a personal narrative, or other genres. This year, 85% of research papers were determined to be argument essays (Table 2), a number consistent with last year's 87%. The committee was concerned to see that 12% of research papers were factual reports, with another 3% of papers assessed as "other" (Table 2).

Thesis Statements
A second long-standing issue of note has been how well students compose thesis statements. As has consistently been the case, this year thesis statements were often inadequate in the research essays; some readers noted that it was sometimes difficult to determine which sentence was intended as the thesis, in part because the students' thesis statements were sometimes neither clear nor well placed. While 23% of papers' thesis statements were evaluated as Proficient (Table 1)—having a "clear, precisely stated, argumentative thesis that is insightful, compelling, and appropriate in scope"—a higher percent (31%) had Developing thesis statements, meaning that theses were implicit, only articulated part of the argument, lacked insight, or had an inappropriate scope. Twelve percent of thesis statements were unacceptable, an increase from last year's 8%, which the committee found especially troubling (Table 1).

Shortcomings in Argument
The committee continued to determine the nature of argumentative shortcomings they saw in papers (Table 3). This year, the list of options was expanded and included "there is no argument, only a reporting of facts/summary of evidence." That option was chosen for 16% of essays, as was the option "the argument is too broad/ambitious for the scope of the essay." Nine percent of the papers were repetitive (undeveloped), while 10% had "more than one (potentially competing) argument present." Another 6% had shortcomings not enumerated on the survey list. However, the committee found that 54% of papers had proficient or acceptable arguments.

Types and Use of Sources
This year, readers were asked fewer questions about the types and use of sources in the research essays in order to better categorize students' work with secondary materials. Readers categorized the majority of sources cited in the paper, finding that 44% had a majority of scholarly sources (i.e., from a peer-reviewed journal or academic/scholarly press) (Table 4). However, 16% of papers had a majority of sources from popular sources such as newspapers, magazines, or non-academic press material. Eighteen percent had an appropriate balance of scholarly and other sources. Only 7% had .com websites as the majority of their sources; 6% had .gov, .edu, or .org websites as the majority of their sources (Table 4). Only 2% of papers cited Wikipedia (Table 5).

For the most part, sources were used either "to provide ideas that support/enhance the claims of the writer" (43%) or "to provide factual information (i.e., examples, statistics, definitions, etc.)" (26%; Table 6). Fifteen percent provided context or purpose; other uses each yielded fewer than 5% of responses.

As has been the case for several years, the committee expressed disappointment in how students used evidence. Forty-four percent of papers scored in the Developing or Unacceptable categories (39% and 5%, respectively) for Evidence Use (Table 1), which is higher than last year's 32% in

the same categories. This number correlates with the committee's assessment of student engagement with the evidence they used in their papers: 40% of papers were found either to have superficial engagement with their sources (27%) or to overly rely on their sources (13%) (Table 7). Sixty percent of the research essays assessed showed Proficient (20%) or Acceptable (40%) engagement with their sources (Table 7).

The committee was particularly concerned with students' use of sources for factual evidence (26%, Table 6) or superficial support (27%, Table 7) rather than for setting up a more complex position. Too often, the evidence in student papers seemed to be intended for fact checking and not to help support and deepen their arguments. We noted a lack of student ability to analyze data and identify links between sources: often, papers merely listed supportive data source by source. Rather, students should be able to synthesize sources and explore counterarguments and opposing perspectives in order to strengthen their own argument and to ensure writers (and readers) see a problem from multiple perspectives.

As was the case last year, the committee also expressed disappointment that there were not more scholarly and peer-reviewed sources in students' papers. An important take-away from this year's data about the type of sources used was that papers that had a majority of scholarly sources were also rated higher on the rubric (i.e., Tables 4 and 1, respectively). Those papers showed more scholarly grasp of the stakes and framing of their argument and were therefore more persuasive. For example, of the 155 essays in which the majority of sources were from peer-reviewed sources, 115 (75%) were rated as either Acceptable or Proficient in terms of engagement with their topic, which includes purpose, context, and audience.

Number of Sources and Citation Style
Rather than ask for the number of sources on the works cited page, as has been past practice, this year, readers were asked whether there were enough, too many, or too few sources used to support and develop the writer's argument. Whereas 65% of the researched essays were assessed to have enough sources, and only 5% had too many, 29% of the papers were evaluated as having too few sources to develop effectively the evidence the argument needed (Table 8). This data point correlates to the weaknesses noted in students' use of evidence.

Data for the correct and consistent use of citation styles were consistent with last year's numbers. Eighty-one percent of papers used a citation style either very or mostly correctly and consistently. The remaining 19% used a citation style poorly or very poorly, or the reader was unable to tell how the student was using it (Table 9).

Holistic Assessment

For the holistic evaluations, readers were asked to assess the portfolios as a whole, including the Reflective Essay, First Seminar essay, the University Seminar Essay, and the Researched Essay. Readers considered the overall effectiveness, impact, and quality of the combined whole as opposed to taking a simple average or sum of the individual parts.

Nearly all (97%) portfolios were standard (i.e., did not contain substitutions from non-SAGES classes), and this number has remained consistent since 2015. The majority of portfolios (70%)

were submitted by May 2017 graduates, but the committee noted the increase in submission numbers from students in their second year (4%) and third year (10%) as a positive trend indicating the usefulness of programmatic interventions toward earlier submission.

Reflective Essay
Readers answered a series of descriptive questions regarding the Reflective Essay in the holistic assessment of portfolios. They answered a prompt regarding students' perceptions of writing development in SAGES and then identified (1) whether students used evidence and examples to address their development and (2) whether students connected writing development to higher-order skills such as critical thinking, argument, and idea formation (see Tables 12 and 13). Readers also indicated their own perception of students' writing development in the holistic scoring section.

As was the case in 2016, in the reflective essays, nearly all students (91%) acknowledged strong or some improvement in writing, and the clear majority of faculty readers saw strong or some improvement in students' writing across the portfolios (83%; Tables 10 and 11). These percentages remained the same between 2016 and 2017. Yet, this year, more students saw "some improvement" (53%) in writing skills rather than "strong improvement" (38%).

As in previous years, more students (38%) saw "strong improvement" in writing skills than did readers (18%) (Tables 10 and 11). The committee speculated that the discrepancy of these data points not only indicates that students might respond to the prompt with an overly positive representation of their writing improvement, but also logically results from the process (i.e. students are not expected to assess their writing with the same rubric nor possess the same expertise as faculty reviewers).

Our major conclusions regarding the reflective essay are similar to last year's in that our findings continue to reveal that more students are expressing improvement in argument and critical thinking skills as well as the use of evidence. As illustrated in Table 13, 65% of students framed writing development in terms of critical thinking skills, argument, and/or idea formation. We found this increased awareness of the importance of these skills, emphasized in Writing Program faculty training, to be a positive indicator that more instructors are focusing on these "higher-order" writing skills, and that fewer students are equating "good writing" with sentence-level correctness. Committee members did note, however, that students who indicated that English was not their first language tended to more frequently discuss and cite improvement in grammar, mechanics, and vocabulary. Such reflections from ESL/multilingual students should not be considered as uncritical, but as positive developments in their language acquisition resulting from their SAGES courses.

The committee also noted a high number of students indicating that their SAGES seminars positively influenced their confidence and comfort levels with writing and speaking, particularly for ESL/multilingual students. As was also the case last year, many students were grateful for the exposure to different experiences that allowed for personal growth and the exploration of diverse disciplinary topics, and they appreciated the role of their seminar leaders and writing instructors in furthering that development.

Committee members did find some room for improvement in terms of students' reflections. Some students failed to focus primarily on their writing, choosing instead to summarize their course content or critique the usefulness of the program. In such critiques, students often complained that the skills promoted in their SAGES courses did not transfer to skills relevant to their majors. Committee members also found that in such critiques, students failed to take personal responsibility for their learning, placing it more on the instructor or the program as a whole. Committee members therefore discussed recommending that SAGES instructors, particularly in First Seminar, more explicitly address the concept of transferability with their students, and discuss SAGES outcomes or employ the program writing rubric in their instruction (see Recommendations, p. 9).

Overall Holistic Evaluation Results

Readers evaluated each portfolio according to the 2015 revised holistic rubric (Appendix 2). The holistic scores represent readers' assessments of the entire portfolio. The holistic scoring results for 2017 continue to indicate that the solid majority (76%) of students are writing at a Proficient (19%) or Acceptable (57%) level (Table 15). Across most categories, the majority of percentages remained the same or varied minimally (less than 5% maximum) from the 2015 and 2016 findings. This three-year consistency in assessment prompted two major committee recommendations for exploring the establishment of programmatic benchmarks, and for conducting a smaller, supplemental review of instructor syllabi (and potentially major assignment sheets) to gather additional insights on student performance, particularly in terms of Engagement, Argument, and Evidence (see Recommendations, p. 10).

The 2017 Holistic results, as in previous years, suggest strong positive programmatic influence on student writing, but continue to show students' lowest scoring Proficient scores as Argument and Evidence (see Table 14). The committee found that students more frequently tend to summarize, rather than analyze, sources and use them mostly to provide factual information rather than to form synthesized arguments. The numbers of Developing portfolios in all categories, which was of concern to the 2016 committee, declined slightly in all categories from 2% to 5%, with the biggest decline found in the Evidence category. Committee members plan to follow trends in the Developing category.

As was the case in 2016, the majority of students are Proficient or Acceptable in terms of the readability category. This year readability slightly decreased from 83% in 2016 to 81% in 2017 (Table 14).

ESL Holistic Scoring

For the first time, in 2017 readers were not asked to identify portfolios written by students who had been enrolled in ESL first seminars in order to minimize potential bias in assessment. The co-coordinators extracted the ESL holistic data after the committee concluded its work (Table 15).

This year, readers evaluated 85 portfolios from students enrolled in a first seminar for non-native speakers of English. When compared to last year's data, readers noted higher numbers of Proficient or Acceptable portfolios (66%) than in years previous (43% in 2016, 45% in 2015). No more than 7% of portfolios were assessed at the Unacceptable level in any of the categories; no portfolios were assessed unacceptable in the Engagement category. Readers found that 77% of ESL portfolios were assessed at either the Proficient or Acceptable level for Engagement. In the Argument criterion, 59% of ESL portfolios were assessed in the Proficient or Acceptable categories compared to 63% at the same levels for Argument in all portfolios Table 15).

The data on ESL students this year show that ESL students' portfolios rated comparably to all portfolios in many categories, yet in 2015 their performance was higher in the Proficient category than it was in 2016 and 2017. Readers felt that given the fluctuation in numbers in 2015, future committees should continue to follow these numbers to be aware of any potentially downward trends, while also acknowledging any influence that might have been present prior to this year's practice of not demarcating any portfolio as specifically ESL.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations for Seminar Leaders

As was the case in 2015 and 2016, this year's recommendations for writing instruction primarily focus on strengthening instruction in argumentative writing with a specific emphasis on using peer-reviewed scholarly materials persuasively as evidence. Committee members felt that more classroom time should be exclusively devoted to teaching source/evidence use and other argumentative skills, such as thesis construction. The 2017 committee wishes to stress the following best practices as continued recommendations from 2015 and 2016: inclusion of SAGES learning outcomes on syllabi and discussion of them with the class, the use of recommended writing texts, sequenced writing assignments leading to the research essay, and stronger collaborations with writing instructors, the Writing Resource Center (WRC), and Portfolio Coordinator.

SAGES administrators will implement the 2017 recommendations to instructors in various ways: at summer teaching orientations, during weekly SAGES pedagogy sessions, in campus-wide Writing Resource Center workshops for students, at a dedicated UCITE session, at Writing Program All Staff meetings, and in the new Guide for Teaching in SAGES (to be available in the 2017-18 academic year). Committee members encourage this report to be more widely disseminated to relevant university entities, listed at the end of this report.

Committee members wish to make the following recommendations to instructors:

- Instructors should, beginning in First-Year Seminars and continuing in University Seminars, emphasize the concept of transferability, specifically the ways in which the communication and critical thinking skills that students build in SAGES are directly relevant to their work in Departmental Seminars and Capstone Courses, disciplinary

courses, post-graduate work, and in the workplace. To those ends, instructors should devote some classroom time to reviewing the SAGES program outcomes and/or employ its writing rubric in writing assessment.

- Students should be exposed to peer-reviewed scholarly sources, and they should be given more opportunities to read, use, and cite those types of sources. Given the strong correlation found between Proficient essays and the use of peer-reviewed scholarly sources, the committee believes that students' exposure to them will strengthen their abilities in Engagement, Argument, and Evidence.

- Instructors should mention the portfolio requirement more frequently to their students. Additionally, in teaching the value of reflection and/or other writing skills, such as attention to audience, instructors should remind students that reflection is more than summarizing the content of the papers or claiming to have improved in critical thinking, but being able to demonstrate such skills to a reader.

- Instructors should help students understand that arguments are composed of arguable **claims**, supported by a plausible set of **reasons**, which in turn are based on clear and appropriate **evidence**. Instructors should emphasize that claims need to be clearly and precisely articulated, and that reasons and evidence need to be analyzed and synthesized into the argument rather than merely used to provide factual information or insufficiently support a writer's claims.

- Additionally, instructors should also help students see the benefit of presenting and addressing counterclaims, opposing viewpoints, alternative positions, and counterevidence. Instructors should remind students that addressing counterarguments does not weaken, but, rather, can usefully strengthen their own positions.

- Instructors should spend class time instructing students how to write appropriate thesis statements that clearly articulate the overriding claim or major argument of the essay. The committee recommends providing students with models of thesis statements in order to make the conventions of academic writing more explicit.

Recommendations to SAGES Administrators

Committee members wish to introduce the following recommendations:

- The Teaching in SAGES summer orientation should be required for all faculty teaching for the first time in SAGES (both seminar leaders and writing instructors) in order to assure more consistency in promoting and teaching SAGES learning outcomes and communication among all faculty constituents working in the program. (Under advisement: Director of SAGES)

- Coordinators of the SAGES Weekly Pedagogy Seminars should explore making the sessions accessible to more faculty members by utilizing technology (i.e. WebEx) to

record and distribute the sessions. (Under advisement: Associate Director of SAGES, SAGES Instructional Coordinator)

- SAGES should consider conducting an audit of instructor syllabi in order to gain additional new insights into the data gathered from reading student essays. Of particular concern to committee members is the genre of essays instructors are assigning, the number of essay assignments, whether they are scaffolding writing assignments, and whether students are asked to reflect on their writing. SAGES administrators might also consider collecting (from faculty) the prompts for the major writing assignments used in First-Year Seminars and University Seminars (Under advisement: Director of SAGES, Director of the Writing Program)

- SAGES and the Writing Program should consider establishing performance benchmarks for student writing given that the data has been consistent across the past three annual review sessions. Benchmarks could be developed by examining national multi-university surveys and/or current practices and reports from peer or aspirational universities. However, administrators should strongly consider the extent to which benchmarking may interfere with readers' reliability in assessment and/or become overly prescriptive and/or create standardized goals that do not measure our students' meaningful progress. (Under advisement: Director of SAGES, Director of the Writing Program, SAGES Portfolio Committee Coordinators)

- The Portfolio Coordinator should continue to visit more classes and offer more workshops in collaboration with the Writing Resource Center to promote the timely submission of portfolios. (Under Advisement: Portfolio Coordinator, Director of the Writing Resource Center, Director of SAGES)

- All faculty teaching in SAGES should receive e-mail or other information announcing workshops on portfolios or other workshops focused on portfolio findings as offered by the Writing Resource Center as well as the availability of classroom visits focused on portfolios and/or SAGES outcomes. (Under advisement: Director of SAGES)

Last year's recommendations to administrators were implemented as follows:

SAGES and/or the Writing Program should consider producing a one-page "quick-start" document for instructors emphasizing argumentation, effective evidence use, advice on using recommended texts, and integrating the Fourth Hour timeslot into course content and instruction.
- **Action:** In June, 2017, SAGES will make available a Guide to Teaching in SAGES that will include these elements.

SAGES should consider devoting more attention at the instructional and portfolio-review level to its Ethics outcomes, encouraging more involvement in both pedagogy training and portfolio review by its current Fellow in Ethics.

- **Action:** During the 2016-17 academic year, the SAGES Fellow in Ethics started an Ethical Teaching and Learning Program (ETPL) that ran a series of workshops in the fall for interested SAGES faculty, with 8-10 attendees.

Many committee members supported SAGES' exploration of SIS milestones or other kind of transcript notations to ensure timely submission. Others suggested additionally sending a notification to Department chairs of students who have yet to complete the requirement.
- **Action:** A milestone transcript notation was implemented in the Fall of 2016.

Committee members advocate for an administrative mechanism for denoting ESL portfolios, so that the reader does not have to make that determination. Committee members discussed, but did not resolve, the question of whether readers knowing such information in advance might be biased in their assessment of such portfolios.
- **Action:** ESL portfolio data is now pulled automatically from Qualtrics through SIS and disaggregated. Committee members in 2017 were not asked to identify nor given knowledge of whether a student's portfolio was from a student enrolled in an ESL First Seminar (unless the student revealed that information).

In order to promote timely submission, SAGES and the Writing Program should sponsor an end-of-term workshop on portfolio compilation whereby students compile their essays, draft their reflection, and submit their portfolios.
- **Action:** The SAGES Portfolio Coordinator (PC) offered six workshops in AY 16-17, and piloted a portfolio workshop in four classrooms, reaching approximately 118 students in total. In 2017-18, the PC will be continuing to offering visits to SAGES Seminar classrooms and/or distribute workshop materials to help students in those classes draft their reflections and compile their portfolios for submission.

Distribution List:

All CWRU Deans and Department Chairs
Fall 2016 SAGES Instructors
CEP
FSCUE
UGA

TABLES

I. Research Essay Data Tables

Table 1. Overall Assessment of Research Essays

	Proficient (3)	Acceptable (2)	Developing (1)	Unacceptable (0)
Engagement				
Content/Ideas	29%	36%	29%	5%
Purpose, Context, and Audience	28%	45%	23%	4%
Argument				
Thesis Statement	23%	34%	31%	12%
Reasoning/Development	18%	42%	33%	8%
Evidence				
Quality	27%	47%	22%	4%
Use	17%	40%	39%	5%
Readability				
Arrangement/Organization	23%	48%	26%	3%
Correctness and Style	33%	49%	16%	3%

Table 2. Research Essay Genre

Argument/Analysis	85%
Exposition/Report	12%
Personal Narrative	0%
Other	3%

Table 3. Shortcomings in paper's argument

Please indicate the statement that most accurately describes shortcomings in the argument (select no more than three):	
N/A—The argument is proficient: clearly stated, focused, and fully developed	20%
N/A—The argument is acceptable: it has an identifiable thesis statement and some development of ideas	34%
The argument is too broad/ambitious for the scope of the essay	16%
The argument shifts substantially (i.e., "thesis drift" occurs)	3%
More than one (potentially competing) argument is present	10%
The thesis statement does not match what the body of the paper argues	2%
The argument is repetitive (i.e., not developed)	9%
There is no argument, only a reporting of facts/summary of evidence	16%
Other	6%

Table 4. Types of Sources in the Research Essay

Which description best fits the type of sources used in the paper	
The majority of sources are scholarly (from a peer-reviewed journal or academic/scholarly press)	44%
The majority of sources are from popular sources, like newspapers or magazines, or non-academic press material	16%
The majority of sources are from websites ending in .gov, .edu, or .org	6%
The majority of sources are from websites ending in .com	7%
The majority of sources are primary ones (film, literature, art works, archival material)	3%
There is an appropriate balance between online or popular sources and scholarly sources	18%
Other	6%

Table 5. Wikipedia

Does the Research Essay use/cite Wikipedia?	
Yes	2%
No	98%

Table 6. Primary Use of Sources

Please indicate the primary use of the Source(s) in the essay (choose one):	
To provide context or purpose (i.e., to outline the problem/question being discussed)	15%
To supply a key definition, theoretical concept, or argument that the writer then applied to another object of study	3%
To provide others' arguments that support/enhance the claims of the writer	43%
To introduce alternative viewpoints (i.e., other perspectives or counter-arguments)	4%
To provide a review of previous sources (i.e., as a literature review)	5%
To provide factual information (i.e., examples, statistics, terms, etc.)	26%
As an object of analysis	1%
As "filler" or without clear purpose	2%
Other	.6%

Table 7. Overall Engagement with Sources

Please indicate the most accurate description of the Research Essay's engagement with its sources	
Superficial engagement with sources (cursory reference to sources, and/or mostly opinion/speculation from the writer with little evidence included)	27%
Proficient engagement with sources (effective use of evidence to critically develop the writer's own argument)	20%
Acceptable engagement with sources (satisfactory combination of evidence and writer's own argument)	40%
Over-reliance on sources (summary of evidence/facts with little analysis from the writer; a factual report)	13%
Other	1%

Table 8. Number of Sources in Research Essay

Were enough sources used to support and develop the writer's argument?	
Yes	65%
There were too many to be effectively incorporated in the scope of the paper	5%
There were too few to effectively develop the evidence the argument needed	29%

Table 9. Correct and Consistent use of Citation Style

How correctly and consistently does the author use a single citation style (e.g., MLA, APA, CMS, etc.)?	
Very correctly & consistently	43%
Mostly correctly & consistently (minor errors)	38%
Poorly (a few citations missing and/or many errors)	10%
Very poorly (many errors & citations missing or impossible to decipher)	5%
Cannot Tell	3%

II. Holistic Data Tables

Table 10.   Student Perception of Development

	Strong improvement in writing skills	Some improvement in writing skills	No change in writing skills	Regression in writing skills	Does not address writing skills
Student perception of development in his/her writing skills across SAGES	38%	53%	6%	.5%	1%

Table 11.   Reader Perception of Student Development

	Strong improvement in writing skills	Some improvement in writing skills	No change in writing skills	Regression in writing skills
Reader perception of development in student's writing skills across SAGES	18%	65%	16%	1%

Student Responses to the Reflective Essay Prompt

Table 12. Does the student use evidence and examples effectively in order to demonstrate their development?

Yes	70%
No	30%

Table 13. Does the student connect their writing skill development to higher-order skills (critical thinking, idea formation, etc.)?

Yes	65%
No	19%
Student discusses mostly lower-order skills (grammar, mechanics)	15%

Table 14. Results of Holistic Assessment for all portfolios

	Proficient	Acceptable	Developing	Unacceptable
Engagement	28%	55%	17%	.8%
Argument	16%	47%	33%	4%
Evidence	17%	49%	29%	5%
Readability	26%	55%	17%	2%
Overall Assessment	19%	57%	22%	2%

Table 15. Results of Holistic Assessment for ESL portfolios

	Proficient	Acceptable	Developing	Unacceptable
Engagement	12%	65%	23%	0%
Argument	7%	52%	39%	2%
Evidence	12%	39%	42%	7%
Readability	3%	46%	46%	5%
Overall Assessment	6%	60%	32%	2%

APPENDIX ONE: SAGES Mission and Student Learning Outcomes

Program Mission	Level Objectives	Course Learning Outcomes (Students will be able to…)
SAGES uses seminar-based instruction to teach students how to use the skills of academic inquiry, to think critically and ethically, to find information, and to communicate their ideas in writing and other media effectively. Its sequence of courses builds core academic skills, introduces discipline-specific concepts and methods, and then culminates in a capstone experience that demonstrates students' ability to apply what they have learned. This mission is achieved through a commitment to five core student learning outcomes: ACADEMIC INQUIRY CRITICAL THINKING AND ETHICAL DELIBERATION RESEARCH AND INFORMATION LITERACY PERSUASIVE WRITING ORAL AND NEW MEDIA COMMUNICATION	**(First Seminar)** To enable students to contribute to general academic conversations by establishing facility with core academic skills.	• Participate in an academic conversation by contributing insightful, relevant ideas. • Consider differences in values and assumptions to think critically and deliberate ethically. • Read, summarize, and apply scholarly concepts and information. • Write clearly and persuasively. • Effectively communicate information orally and/or through new media.
	(University Seminar) To enable students to contribute to general academic conversations by establishing expertise with core academic skills, including the ability to do independent research.	• Participate in a variety of academic conversations by contributing insightful, relevant ideas. • Consider differences in values and assumptions to think critically, deliberate ethically, and respond articulately to questions/problems. • Research and apply scholarly concepts and information. • Write clear, insightful, persuasive, research-based, and appropriately documented argumentative essays. • Effectively communicate information through oral and/or new media presentations.
	(Departmental Seminar) To enable students to contribute to discipline-specific academic conversations by establishing facility with the specific concepts and methods of their chosen discipline.	• Participate in disciplinary conversations by contributing insightful, relevant ideas. • Consider differences in values and assumptions to think critically, deliberate ethically, and respond articulately to discipline-specific questions/problems. • Research and apply discipline-specific scholarly concepts and information. • Write clear, insightful, persuasive arguments using discipline-appropriate forms and conventions. • Effectively communicate information through discipline-appropriate oral and/or new media presentations.
	(Capstone) To enable students to apply their scholarly skills and knowledge in a capstone experience that contributes to the solution of a pressing question or problem.	• Complete a capstone project that articulates insightful, relevant ideas that contribute to the solution of a vital question or problem within a discipline. • Consider differences in values and assumptions to think critically, deliberate ethically, and respond articulately to a chosen question/problem within a discipline. • Perform original, independent, discipline-appropriate scholarship and apply it to a question/problem within a discipline. • Use a discipline-appropriate form to write a clear, insightful, persuasive, research-based, and appropriately documented argument that responds to a question/problem within a discipline. • Effectively communicate information to a public audience about one's scholarship through discipline-appropriate oral and/or new media presentations.

Definitions of SAGES Student Learning Outcomes

ACADEMIC INQUIRY. **Upon completion of the SAGES program, students should be able to pose a question or problem relevant to an academic discipline and independently use knowledge to answer or solve it.** Academic inquiry is founded on the ability to identify questions and problems that engage others. It includes the ability to apply appropriate theories and methods of investigation, ones capable of producing insightful ideas that help answer a question or solve a problem relevant to an academic discipline. In addition, academic inquiry is attended by certain attitudes: passion for learning, a sense of agency, an appreciation of deep rather than surface knowledge, and a willingness to reflect on and assess one's own learning.

CRITICAL THINKING AND ETHICAL DELIBERATION. **Upon completion of the SAGES program, students should be able to think and act with an awareness of their own values and reasoning, as well as an appreciation of the perspectives of others.** Critical thinking starts with the ability to formulate questions and problems clearly and precisely. It also involves the ability to identify the assumptions that frame our thinking and determine our actions, as well as to gauge the degree to which those assumptions are accurate and valid. Critical thinkers are able to look at ideas and decisions from multiple perspectives, and consider open-mindedly the assumptions, implications, and practical consequences of alternative systems of thought. Based on this information, they derive well-reasoned conclusions and solutions, testing them against relevant criteria and standards. This awareness of one's own values and assumptions, combined with an appreciation of the different perspectives of others, forms the basis of ethical deliberation. By developing a coherent ethical framework and considering the likely consequences of a proposed solution as viewed by different value systems, ethical thinkers can make justified, autonomous choices about matters of the human good, of social justice, or of natural value, and do so with self-awareness and clarity.

RESEARCH AND INFORMATION LITERACY. **Upon completion of the SAGES program, students should be able to independently research and evaluate information to answer a question or solve a problem relevant to an academic discipline.** This ability originates in the determination of the nature and extent of information needed to answer a question or solve a problem. It includes the skills needed to find, access, and evaluate that information critically, as well as to use it effectively and ethically in support of an answer or solution to a question or problem. In disciplines where inquiry depends on the generation and quantitative analysis of raw data, this outcome assumes that all students should understand how to use data once it has been processed into information.

PERSUASIVE WRITING. **Upon completion of the SAGES program, students should be able to write a clear and persuasive argument in support of an answer to a question or a solution to a problem.** In an academic setting, all effective communicators are able to express their ideas in writing. The emphasis that SAGES places on open-ended inquiry and critical thinking requires that students be able to articulate and defend an argument that supports an answer to a question or a solution to a problem. Effective communicators are able to express their ideas with an awareness of purpose, as well as how to engage both discipline-specific and broader audiences. In addition, although there may be variations in disciplinary conventions for writing genres and formats, persuasive academic writing demands that the explanation or defense of a proposed answer or solution use a coherent thesis to govern the structured and clear presentation of a persuasive argument based on reasons and evidence.

ORAL AND NEW MEDIA COMMUNICATION. **Upon completion of the SAGES program, students should be able to communicate information in a clear and coherent formal oral or other media presentation appropriate to an academic discipline.** In addition to being able to write persuasively, effective communicators can express their ideas using a range of disciplinary-appropriate media (e.g., discussion, oral presentations, posters, websites, videos, multimedia presentations, mobile apps) and genres (e.g., technical reports, funding proposals, ethnographies, journal articles, reviews). As with academic writing, effective communicators organize the presentation of ideas with an awareness of purpose and audience, and use their understanding of the medium and genre being used to ensure delivery of a clear central message.

Part I: Focused Reading of a Sample of Research Essays
Reading Dates: May 15-22

The Summer 2016 Portfolio Committee found that students have not yet mastered argumentative
The report noted that

> students continue to have difficulty with the critical skills of argumentation, especially articula
> statements and using evidence in critically sophisticated ways. Therefore, the committee's maj
> recommendation is that SAGES and the Writing Program should continue their emphasis on
> argumentation, giving particular attention to the accurate and persuasive use of evidence beyon
> ability to provide factual information.

As a response to these findings, part one of the committee's work this summer is to gather more s
information about students' arguments and uses of sources/evidence in their writing. To assess t
skills, we will conduct a detailed review of a sample of the Research Essays contained in SAGES W
Portfolios.

The Writing Portfolio Submission Guidelines provide the following description of the Research Es

> Your portfolio must contain a research essay from one of your two University Seminars. B
> "research essay," SAGES means a sustained engagement with an academic conversation –
> summarizing and critiquing what others have said on your topic – that includes your own
> claim or argument. This paper must do more than catalog the research you have done (i.e.
> annotated bibliography is not sufficient); it should demonstrate your ability to synthesize
> research on a specific topic and to offer your own analysis or critical intervention. Such a
> have a single controlling idea that represents your own thinking about the topic. A laborat
> report, therefore, is not an appropriate substitute, unless it goes well beyond reporting the
> procedure and results of an experiment.
>
> The research essay should be approximately 10-12 pages long; the absolute minimum len
> pages of prose (not counting the bibliography). The research essay must integrate and cite
> and/or secondary source material and include a properly formatted bibliography.

Please verify that you are reading the essay that the *student* has identified as the Research Essay
Portfolio Submission Form. (In many cases, portfolios will contain two or more source-based essa
we are interested in the one students identify as the Research Essay.)

PLEASE NOTE: In rare cases, portfolios contain substitutions (i.e., papers not written for SAGES c
are included because a student doesn't have access to their SAGES papers). If one of your sample
contains a Research Essay that is *not* from a SAGES course, please select another portfolio from yo
(that does contain a Research Essay from a SAGES course) to read instead for this part of the read
process.

Part I: Research Essay Evaluation (~25 sampled essays)

Student's CWRU Network ID (e.g., abc123): _____

Reviewer's Initials: _____

Overall Assessment

Please characterize the genre of the Research Essay:
☐ Argument/Analysis   ☐ Personal/Narrative
☐ Exposition/Report   ☐ Other: _____

Please evaluate the Research Essay based on the "Researched Argument Rubric" (see Appendix A)

	Unacceptable (1)	Developing (2)	Acceptable (3)	Proficient (4)
Engagement				
Content/Ideas				
Purpose, Content & Audience				
Argument				
Thesis Statement				
Reasoning/Development				
Evidence				
Quality				
Use				
Readability				
Arrangement				
Sentence Level Correctness & Style				

Argument

Please indicate the statement that most accurately describes the argument (select the ones that apply):
☐ N/A—The argument is proficient: clearly stated, focused, and fully developed.
☐ N/A—The argument is acceptable: it has an identifiable argumentative thesis statement and some development of ideas.
☐ The argument is too broad/ambitious for the scope of the essay.
☐ The argument shifts substantially (i.e., "thesis drift" occurs).
☐ More than one (potentially competing) argument is presented.
☐ The thesis statement does not match what the body of the paper argues.
☐ Repetitive (i.e., not developed)
☐ There is no argument, only a reporting of facts/summary of evidence.
☐ Other: _____

Use of Sources & Evidence

Which description best fits the type of sources used in the paper?
- ☐ The majority of the sources are scholarly (from a peer-reviewed journal or academic/scholarly press).
- ☐ The majority of the sources are from popular sources, like newspapers or magazines, or non-academic press material.
- ☐ The majority of the sources are websites ending in .gov, .edu, or .org.
- ☐ The majority of the sources are websites ending in .com.
- ☐ The majority of the sources are primary ones (films, literature, art works, archival material).
- ☐ There is an appropriate balance between online or popular sources and scholarly sources.
- ☐ Other: _____

Please indicate the <u>main use</u> of the majority of sources (as indicated above) in the essay:
- ☐ To provide context or purpose (i.e., to outline the problem/question being discussed)
- ☐ To supply a key definition, theoretical concept, or argument that the writer then applied to another object of study
- ☐ To introduce others' arguments that support/enhance the claims of the writer
- ☐ To introduce alternative viewpoints (i.e., other perspectives or counter-arguments)
- ☐ To provide a review of previous sources (i.e., a literature review)
- ☐ To provide factual information (i.e., examples, statistics, terms, etc.)
- ☐ As an object of analysis
- ☐ As "filler" or without clear purpose
- ☐ Other: _____

Does the Research Essay use/cite Wikipedia?
- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

Please indicate the most accurate description of the Research Essay's critical or analytical engagement with its evidence to help further classify its genre:
- ☐ Proficient engagement with sources (effective use of evidence to critically develop the writer's own argument)
- ☐ Acceptable engagement with sources (satisfactory combination of evidence and writer's own argument)
- ☐ Superficial engagement with sources (cursory reference to sources, and/or mostly opinion/speculation from the writer with little evidence included)
- ☐ Over-reliance on sources (summary of evidence/facts with little analysis from the writer; a factual report)
- ☐ Other: _____

Were enough sources used to support and develop the writer's argument?
- ☐ Yes
- ☐ There were too many to be effectively incorporated in the scope of the paper
- ☐ There were too few to effectively develop the evidence the argument needed

Citation Practices

How correctly and consistently does the author use a single citation style (e.g., MLA, APA, CMS, etc.)?
- ☐ Very correctly & consistently
- ☐ Mostly correctly & consistently (minor errors)
- ☐ Poorly (a few citations missing and/or many errors)
- ☐ Very poorly (many errors & citations missing or impossible to decipher)
- ☐ Cannot Tell

Conclusion/Other Comments

Other comments about this essay? (Optional) Please use this space to document any other thoughts you have about this Research Essay and to let us know if this essay might be an outstanding or challenging example for classroom/pedagogical use.

Part II: Holistic Reading of Portfolios
Reading Dates: May 23-June 2

This reading is intended to assess portfolios holistically based on **University Seminar Outcomes.** The goal of University Seminars in SAGES is "to enable students to contribute to general academic conversations by establishing expertise with core academic skills, including the ability to do independent research." (SAGES Outcomes AY 2014-2015.)

According to the **University Seminar Course Outcomes**, at the completion of each course, students will be able to:

- Participate in a variety of academic conversations by contributing insightful, relevant ideas.
- Consider differences in values and assumptions to think critically, deliberate ethically, and respond articulately to questions/problems.
- Research and apply scholarly concepts and information.
- Write clear, insightful, persuasive, research-based, and appropriately documented argumentative essays.
- Effectively communicate information.

The SAGES Writing Portfolio – Holistic Rubric (Appendix B) is designed to assess students' ability to meet these outcomes based on readers' overall assessment of their Writing Portfolios.

Part II: Holistic Portfolio Assessment (~80 portfolios)

Student's CWRU Network ID (e.g., abc123): _____

Reviewer's Initials: _____

Student's Expected Graduation Date (5/14 format): _____

Does this portfolio contain substitutions/
variations from the standard elements: Yes/No

Reflective Essay

This is the reflective prompt to which students respond when compiling their portfolios:

> Reflecting on the essays included in your portfolio, discuss how your writing has developed across your First-year and University SAGES seminars. Provide evidence and examples from your essays and/or your writing process to demonstrate your development. (2-3 pages)
>
> Portfolio readers are genuinely interested in your own thinking about the writing you did in SAGES as well as the writing you do or plan to do outside of SAGES. They are most interested in what you have learned about the relation of writing to ideas and to your own critical thinking.

Does the student use evidence and examples effectively in order to demonstrate their development?
- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

Does the student tie their writing skill development to higher order skills (critical thinking, idea formation, etc.)?
- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Mostly lower-order skills (grammatical or mechanical) were discussed

Please indicate the student's perception of her/his writing development:
- ☐ Strong improvement in writing skills
- ☐ Some improvement in writing skills
- ☐ No change in writing skills
- ☐ Regression in writing skills
- ☐ Does not address writing skills

Comments on the reflective essay? Please let us know if there are significant concerns raised or important insights described in the reflective essay.

Holistic Assessment

Please evaluate the portfolio based on the "SAGES Writing Portfolio–Holistic Rubric" (see Appendix B).

	Unacceptable (1)	Developing (2)	Acceptable (3)	Proficient (4)
Engagement				
Argument				
Evidence				
Readability				
Overall Assessment				

Conclusion/Other Comments

After reading the portfolio, please indicate your own perception of the student's writing development:
- ☐ Strong improvement in writing skills
- ☐ Some improvement in writing skills
- ☐ No change in writing skills
- ☐ Regression in writing skills

If you believe that this portfolio should receive additional attention, please indicate your assessment:
- ☐ Exceptional – this portfolio should be recognized as being in the top 2-3% of all portfolios submitted
- ☐ Needs additional support (N/A for students who have graduated)– this portfolio suggests that the writer will struggle to meet expectations in her/his future coursework that requires writing and the writer should be contacted and advised to seek additional writing support
- ☐ Not Applicable

Other comments about this portfolio? Please use this space to document any other thoughts you have about this portfolio and to let us know if this portfolio might provide outstanding or challenging examples for classroom/pedagogical use.

_____

_____

Appendix A: Researched Argument Rubric

		Unacceptable (1)	Developing (2)	Acceptable (3)	Proficient (4)
Engagement	**Content/Ideas**	Inadequately engages a question or problem or merely reports what is already known	Partially engages a relevant and somewhat focused question or problem to reveal some insight(s)	Thoroughly engages a relevant and mostly focused question or problem to reveal somewhat important insight(s)	Thoroughly engages a relevant and focused question or problem to reveal significant—perhaps even highly original—insight(s)
	Purpose, Context, and Audience	Little or no attention to purpose, context, and/or audience	Attends to purpose, context, and audience, though often inconsistently or partially	Attends to purpose, context, and audience, though sometimes inconsistently or partially	Thorough and nuanced attention to purpose, context, and audience
Argument	**Thesis Statement**	No thesis statement or thesis statement unrelated to the argument	Thesis statement only partially articulates argument or is too general	Articulates argument through clear thesis statement, though it may be somewhat imprecise or broad in focus	Articulates argument through clear, focused, and precise thesis statement
	Reasoning/ Development	Develops all claims superficially, repeats ideas, or wanders from the argument	Many claims are only moderately developed, or argument contains several minor—or one major—logical inconsistencies	Claims mostly developed, though contains one or two partially developed claims, or minor logical inconsistencies that do not seriously affect overall argument	All parts of the argument (major and sub-claims) are developed thoroughly, deeply, and logically
Evidence	**Quality**	Evidence is missing, irrelevant, unreliable, or undocumented	Uses evidence from somewhat reliable sources documented to ensure retrievability	Mostly uses relevant evidence from reliable and properly documented sources	Always uses relevant evidence from reliable and properly documented sources
	Use	Does not use evidence, merely reports it without explanation, or plagiarizes	Uses some evidence, but may struggle to integrate it logically or smoothly into the argument, or to explain it fully	Mostly integrates and explains evidence to support the primary claim(s)	Consistently integrates and fully explains evidence to support all claims thoroughly and carefully
Readability	**Arrangement**	Does not use transitions, or sentence and paragraph arrangement interferes with logical coherence	Simple transitions limit the coherence and/or complexity of sentences and paragraphs	Mostly uses effective transitions to enhance the coherence of sentences and paragraphs	Consistently uses sophisticated transitions to enhance the coherence of sentences and paragraphs
	Sentence Level Correctness and	Mechanically incorrect or stylistically unclear sentences critically impede	Sentences usually mechanically correct and clear; reader	Sentences almost always mechanically correct and stylistically	Sentences always mechanically correct and stylistically sophisticated;

SAGES Writing Rubric – Terminology

Engagement – SAGES pushes students to engage with current research and thinking about a wide range of topics. In each writing assignment, students should thoroughly understand – and be able to explain – the central question, problem, or idea that motivates their written work. At its root, this category assesses how well a paper performs the task(s) laid out in the assignment; but good, persuasive writing should be compelling to a smart reader who may not know the specifics of the assignment prompt. So, a proficient writer will provide necessary context in a compelling and audience-aware way.

- *Content/Ideas* assesses the relevance and significance of the paper's central insight(s). There are many words that can define our expectations for engagement of a problem/question—thorough, careful, creative—but we have found that words like "insightful," "significant," and "original" can be helpful in pushing students to go beyond what they read or discussed in class and their old habits of information retrieval in order to begin doing the kind of independent thinking that characterizes college work.
- *Purpose, Context, and Audience* assesses the writer's ability to engage respectfully with diverse perspectives and to present her/himself as a credible and persuasive voice on the topic. Purpose: Is the writer able to express the motivation for writing? Context: Does the writer frame the essay's ideas such that the reader can locate them in a broader conversation? Audience: Does the writer correctly assume what readers should know and properly introduce what they do not? Does the writer acknowledge other points of view, especially ones that may conflict with the writer's?

Argument – SAGES asks students not only to engage with questions/problems, but also to respond with persuasive and valuable answers and solutions. This category assesses students' abilities to present their contributions in the forms of clearly stated and thoroughly developed arguments. The proficient writer will articulate a strong, precise, and insightful thesis that governs the development of the paper.

- *Thesis Statement* assesses the clarity and precision of the governing statement. It is possible for a student to write a great piece without an explicit thesis statement, but it's so hard for student writers to do so that we encourage them to use one. The thesis is the one-sentence (even if it technically uses more than one) version of the piece. It governs everything that gets said in it, telling the writer (and reader) what should be included (and left out), as well as suggesting the order in which information will be presented.
- *Reasoning/Development* assesses the depth and nuance of the argument throughout the paper. Do the claims made in the body of the piece link back to the thesis? Is each claim logically persuasive (i.e., does the writer establish premises first, then logically build toward reasonable conclusions)? Does the writer push on the ideas presented to go deeper into them, beyond the obvious or superficial? You may note that there is some overlap here with ENGAGEMENT. One way to think about the difference: a writer may ENGAGE an insight through a flash of brilliance, but it is how thoroughly and well the writer *develops* that idea that should determine the grade for ARGUMENT.

Evidence – SAGES introduces students to a range of evidence and teaches them to evaluate and make use of credible, persuasive information in their writing. This category assesses students' abilities to identify appropriate (often scholarly) evidence to support their arguments, as well as their abilities to accommodate and use potentially discrepant data or contradictory ideas.

- *Quality* assesses the relevance and reliability (for researched arguments, the gold standard of reliability is peer-reviewed scholarship) of the evidence used. Evidence refers not only to secondary sources, but also anything that could be used to support a claim, including observational data or personal experience.
- *Use* assesses the way the writer integrates information into her/his argument. Is the evidence presented necessary *and* sufficient to support the claim(s)? How is evidence introduced, analyzed, and incorporated into the writer's text? Typically, the logical relationship between evidence and claim is not self-evident and thus must be stated explicitly through an explanatory sentence (often called a warrant).

Readability – SAGES teaches students to attend to the mechanics and style of their written performances. This category assesses papers on their "surface" features, including mechanical correctness and artful style.

- *Arrangement* assesses the paper's coherence (sometimes called "flow") and its intentional structure and wording. Although arrangement might refer to the order of paragraphs, it also refers to the transitions used between paragraphs, as well as the inclusion and order of sentences within them. So for example, if a paragraph begins with a non-sequitur, but then introduces an evidence-supported claim that logically links back to the thesis, we might say that the point is *argued* logically, but that the paragraph is not yet as readable as it could be.
- *Sentence Level Correctness and Style* assesses the paper's technical consistency. This criterion refers to what many graders call "grammar," but what linguists would refer to as a writer's control of "Standard Edited English." For mechanics and correctness, consider persistent patterns of error and errors that interfere with comprehension to be most serious.

Appendix B: SAGES Writing Portfolio – Holistic Rubric (2016)

	Expectations for SAGES Writing Portfolio, submitted at the end of the First & University Seminar Sequence	Unacceptable (1) (portfolio mostly does not meet expectation)	Developing (2) (portfolio marginally meets and occasionally does not meet expectation)	Acceptable (3) (portfolio mostly meets and occasionally exceeds expectation)	Pro (p cor meet e exp
Engagement	*Responds to complex and compelling questions/problems; Attends flexibly & ethically to the demands of audience, context & purpose.*				
Argument	*Contributes insightful, relevant ideas in the form of independent arguments or controlling ideas that are developed logically and thoroughly.*				
Evidence	*Demonstrates effective use of researched scholarly sources, concepts, and information in support of arguments.*				
Readability	*Demonstrates clear and precise language use, effective sentences and paragraphing, and mastery of standard English conventions.*				
Overall Assessment					