# Academic Writing Standards

## Writing Standards – Undergraduate Level (Grid Version)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>A excellent</th>
<th>B good</th>
<th>C minimal expectations</th>
<th>D to F below expectations; may be unacceptable</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Content** (quality of the information/ideas and sources/details used to support them) | • shows clarity of purpose  
• shows depth of content  
• applies insight and represents original thinking  
• demonstrates quality and breadth of resources | • shows clarity of purpose  
• shows substantial information and sufficient support  
• represents some original thinking  
• uses quality resources | • shows clarity of purpose  
• lacks depth of content and may depend on generalities or the commonplace  
• represents little original thinking  
• uses mostly quality resources | • lacks clear purpose  
• is superficial in content  
• lacks original thinking  
• uses resources of poor quality  
• includes factual or logical errors  
• may not follow the instructions in content or length |        |
| **Structure** (logical order or sequence of the writing) | • is coherent and logically developed  
• uses very effective transitions | • is coherent and logically developed  
• uses smooth transitions | • is coherent and logically (but not fully) developed  
• uses some awkward transitions | • uses inadequate, irrelevant or illogical development and transitions |        |
| **Style** (appropriate attention to audience: effective word choice, sentence variety, voice; appropriate level of formality for academic writing vs. informal text messages and email) | • is concise, eloquent, and rhetorically effective  
• composes varied sentence structure | • displays concern for careful expression  
• composes some varied sentence structure | • displays some personality but lacks imagination and may be stilted  
• composes little varied sentence structure  
• frequently uses jargon and clichés | • is simplistic  
• composes ineffective sentence style  
• applies limited vocabulary with jargon and clichés  
• is clearly below expectations for college students |        |
| **Conventions** (adherence to grammar rules: usage, mechanics) | • composes well-constructed sentences  
• makes virtually no errors in grammar and spelling  
• makes accurate word choices | • almost always composes well-constructed sentences  
• makes minimal errors in grammar and spelling  
• makes accurate word choices | • usually composes well-constructed sentences  
• makes several errors that distract the reader | • does not compose well-constructed sentences  
• confuses readers with many errors  
• makes frequent inappropriate word choices |        |
| **Source Integrity** (appropriate acknowledgment of sources used in research) | • cites sources for all quotations  
• credible paraphrases, cited correctly  
• includes reference page  
• makes virtually no errors in documentation style | • cites sources for all quotations  
• credible paraphrases, usually cited correctly  
• includes reference page  
• makes minimal errors in documentation style | • cites sources for all quotations  
• mostly credible paraphrases, sometimes cited correctly  
• includes reference page  
• makes several errors in documentation style | • does not cite sources for all quotations  
• less than credible paraphrases, often not cited correctly  
• little to no evidence of source usage  
• may not include a reference page or is very weak  
• makes many errors in documentation style |        |

The weighting of each of the five areas is dependent on the specific written assignment and the teacher’s preference. Plagiarism occurs when a person presents as one’s own “someone else’s language, ideas, or other original (not common-knowledge) material without acknowledging its source” (adapted from Council of Writing Program Administrators).

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<td><strong>Content</strong>&lt;br&gt;(quality of the information, ideas and supporting details.)</td>
<td>• shows clarity of purpose&lt;br&gt; • offers depth of content&lt;br&gt; • applies insight and represents original thinking</td>
<td>• shows clarity of purpose&lt;br&gt; • offers substantial information and sufficient support&lt;br&gt; • represents some original thinking</td>
<td>• shows clarity of purpose&lt;br&gt; • lacks depth of content and may depend on generalities or the commonplace&lt;br&gt; • represents little original thinking</td>
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<td><strong>Structure</strong>&lt;br&gt;(logical order or sequence of the writing)</td>
<td>• is coherent and logically developed&lt;br&gt; • uses very effective transitions</td>
<td>• is coherent and logically developed&lt;br&gt; • uses smooth transitions</td>
<td>• is coherent and logically (but not fully) developed&lt;br&gt; • has some awkward transitions</td>
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<td><strong>Rhetoric and Style</strong>&lt;br&gt;(appropriate attention to audience)</td>
<td>• is concise, eloquent and rhetorically effective&lt;br&gt; • uses varied sentence structure&lt;br&gt; • is engaging throughout and enjoyable to read</td>
<td>• displays concern for careful expression&lt;br&gt; • uses some variation in sentence structure -may be wordy in places</td>
<td>• displays some originality but lacks imagination and may be stilted&lt;br&gt; • uses little varied sentence structure&lt;br&gt; • frequently uses jargon and clichés&lt;br&gt; • uses generally clear but frequently wordy prose</td>
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<td><strong>Information Literacy</strong>&lt;br&gt;(locating, evaluating, and using effectively the needed information as appropriate to assignment)</td>
<td>• uses high-quality and reliable sources&lt;br&gt; • chooses sources from many types of resources&lt;br&gt; • chooses timely resources for the topic&lt;br&gt; • integrates references and quotations to support ideas fully</td>
<td>• uses mostly high-quality and reliable sources&lt;br&gt; • chooses sources from a moderate variety of types of resources&lt;br&gt; • chooses resources with mostly appropriate dates&lt;br&gt; • integrates references and quotations to provide some support for ideas</td>
<td>• uses a few poor-quality or unreliable sources&lt;br&gt; • chooses sources from a few types of resources&lt;br&gt; • chooses a few resources with inappropriate dates&lt;br&gt; • integrates references or quotations that are loosely linked to the ideas of the paper</td>
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<td><strong>Source Integrity</strong>&lt;br&gt;(appropriate acknowledgment of sources used in research)</td>
<td>• cites sources for all quotations&lt;br&gt; • cites credible paraphrases correctly&lt;br&gt; • includes reference page&lt;br&gt; • makes virtually no errors in documentation style</td>
<td>• cites sources for all quotations&lt;br&gt; • usually cites credible paraphrases correctly&lt;br&gt; • includes reference page&lt;br&gt; • makes minimal errors in documentation style</td>
<td>• has sources for all quotations&lt;br&gt; • has mostly credible paraphrases, sometimes cited correctly&lt;br&gt; • includes reference page with several errors&lt;br&gt; • makes several errors in documentation style.</td>
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<td><strong>Conventions</strong>&lt;br&gt;(adherence to grammar rules: usage, mechanics)</td>
<td>• uses well-constructed sentences&lt;br&gt; • makes virtually no errors in grammar and spelling&lt;br&gt; • makes accurate word choices</td>
<td>• almost always uses well-constructed sentences&lt;br&gt; • makes minimal errors in grammar and spelling&lt;br&gt; • makes accurate word choices</td>
<td>• usually uses well-constructed sentences&lt;br&gt; • makes several errors&lt;br&gt; • makes word choices that distract the reader</td>
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The weighting of each of the six areas is dependent on the specific written assignment and the teacher's preference. Plagiarism occurs when one presents as one's own "someone else's language, ideas, or other original (not common-knowledge) material without acknowledging its source" (adapted from Council of Writing Program Administrators).