

Essay Grading Rubric Explanation

Below is an example of the digital grading template I paste into your submitted essays and fill in with grading marks and summative comments before I return your essay work to you. Knowing how to read this template or “grade box” is important to understanding your essay grade.

As you can see in the sample below, there are five areas of your work that I focus on as I read it – these are the categories listed in the grade box. They are:

- The adherence to **Assignment** requirements and **Proofreading** of your work
- The strength of your **Thesis** work and how well you make and sustain that **Argument** in the body of the essay
- The **Focus & Clarity** of your writing
- The quality of paragraph **Development & Support**
- The correctness of the **Language** and attention to **Grammar & Mechanics**

Each of these categories is graded using a **4-point scale**.

- **4** represents exemplary achievement, usually well beyond what the assignment calls for
- **3** represents average or adequate achievement – what the assignment requires, nothing more or less
- **2** represents work that falls below the minimum standards for the given category
- **1** represents work that falls significantly below the minimum standard required for the assignment in each category

Half points are sometimes added or subtracted from a given category to reflect achievement that’s not effectively captured in a full point increase or reduction. The total score at the bottom (minus any point deductions for late submitted work) is the sum of those numbers. That total score corresponds to the percentage and letter grade breakdown you see directly below the total score. This is the final grade I enter in the course for the item.

Comments & Grade Marks (20 point rubric)

Assignment & Proofreading	/4
Thesis & Argument	/4
Focus & Clarity	/4
Development & Support	/4
Language & Mechanics	/4
Late (2 pts = -10%)	-/20
Total	/20

20 = 100% A	17 = 85% B	14 = 70% C-
19 = 95% A	16 = 80% B-	13 = 65% D
18 = 90% A-	15 = 75% C	12 = 60% D-

Remember that I only mark error patterns, not every error – you are expected to note these patterns and then actively apply the lessons I include on fixing those error patterns to all of your essay work, on your own. Revisions will be evaluated based on whether or not those error patterns have been effectively addressed throughout the entire essay, especially the areas of the essay not marked up. You can review some of the most common error patterns along with detailed explanations in Proofreading Notes and other editing documents found within the course.

The yellow grid below is the rubric I use to determine your grade in each category of the grade box atop your essay. The numbers you see above each level of achievement along the top of the yellow grid are the same numbers I enter into your grade box on your essay – you should use these descriptions as a guide when you’re trying to determine the justification for a given grade determination on your work.

	1 Needs Significant Work	2 Needs Work	3 Good / Adequate	4 Excellent
Assignment	Essay topic does not match the prompt, or the writing fails to fulfill basic requirements of language, style, format, or length	Essay confines itself to assigned topic but does not demonstrate proficiency in some elements (e.g. analysis vs. summary, proofreading, etc.)	Essay is adequate in subject, size and scope; other assignment requirements are completed satisfactorily	Essay gives an above average response to the assignment task, and meets or exceeds other required elements
Thesis	Thesis argument engages something other than the assigned topic, or is missing altogether	Although still unfocused and / or vague, thesis attempts with limited success to engage the topic appropriately	Thesis is clear enough, directly engages the topic, and attempts some level of rhetorical complexity	Thesis is complex and mature, and ties itself to the paper topic in a sophisticated and compelling manner
Focus & Clarity	No clear organizational structure — writing is confused and uncontrolled because it lacks focus and consistency	Writing is at times garbled, making illogical shifts in argument, or lacking effective transitions and connective language	Writing is generally focused and clear although some passages may be awkwardly stated or lack sufficient clarity	Sequencing of ideas and placement of transitions is smooth and effective— writing is clear and lucid
Development & Support	Paragraphs are composed entirely of generalizations that lack support and specificity, and do not develop singular ideas	Paragraphs sometimes offer sections of analysis without adequate support, or material that clearly moves off topic	Paragraphs contain mostly solid analysis though some passages may be underdeveloped or inadequately supported	Paragraphs are well developed and well supported, and offer consistently insightful analysis
Language	Frequent errors (e.g. verb tense & agreement, punctuation, spelling, frags & run-ons) occur, indicating a low level of sentence control	Recurring mechanical or construction errors appear, and / or sentences may be presented in a disjointed or overly-simplistic manner	Sporadic errors in grammar and/or mechanics, but writing generally displays confident sentence control	Few grammatical or editing errors — writing shows syntactical mastery through varied sentence structure and style