

First-Year Writing Critical Essay Rubric

Focus/ Thesis	Multiple ideas competing for or interfering with the focus of essays.	Evident focus with some digressions or non-contextual ideas.	Focus is present but lacks sufficient clarity or complexity.	Clear, precise, complex focus.
Purposeful Organization/Design	No clearly developed organizational structure; essays difficult to follow. OR Inadequate organization, design, or explanation of process	Organizational structure is weak or inconsistent, often missing connections between and among ideas. OR Inconsistent design or a lack of connection between the design and the ideas outlined in the process essay	Organizational structure is present, and consistent; needs stronger connections between OR Clear design that reflects many of the ideas outlined in the process essay ideas.	Paragraphs are carefully structured around specific supporting claims. Essay makes purposeful connections among ideas/paragraphs; progresses clearly from beginning to end. OR Cohesive design that reflects the purpose(s) or ideas outlined in the process essay
Relevant & Specific Evidence	Does not include specific evidence to support points; relies on faulty reasoning or incorporates inappropriate/inaccurate information.	Uses some specific evidence to support ideas; much is non-contextual, general, or not connected to the argument; weak or missing explanations about how the evidence supports the points.	Student includes appropriate evidence to support points; might rely heavily on block quotes or someone else's ideas for support. Primarily uses specific evidence but relies in a few places on generalizations. May incorporate specific evidence, but not all evidence is well integrated or explained.	Strong use of evidence: sound reasoning and effective use of specific information (examples, anecdotes, data, testimony from sources, images, audio samples, etc.) to support points; evidence is appropriate and well- integrated with the student's ideas.
Citation and Documentation	Outside sources are not cited or are cited correctly within and at the end of the text.	Inconsistent citation of sources within the text or overreliance on quotations; absence of the writer's ideas and voice to explain, connect.	Consistent citation of sources, though the writer could continue to work on integrating their own voice into essays. Minor formatting errors may be present.	Consistent citation of sources; the writer is comfortable making connections between sources and her own writing.

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Use of Genre/Mode	The choice of genre/mode does not fit the needs of the composition.	The writer communicates somewhat effectively through the chosen genre, but some information does not come through clearly in this mode.	The writer uses the genre/mode well, but may have more effectively used the affordances of the chosen genre	The writer thoughtfully and complexly uses the affordances of the chosen genre/mode/medium to communicate their thesis/focus and design.
Editing, Mechanics, and Correctness Technique/Usability/ Accessibility	Poor mechanics that distract the reader; sentence-level problems that make comprehension of ideas difficult.	Essays contain consistent mechanical errors; some sentences are difficult to follow because of wording.	Some errors in mechanics, but they seem random; most sentences are clear and well-formed.	Few errors in mechanics; demonstrated editing abilities; sentences are clear and well-formed.
Historical or Cultural Context and Accuracy	Demonstrates little to no understanding of relevant historical or cultural contexts. There is a lack of connection between the essays and the significant events, periods, or cultural elements related to the topic. Includes broad sweeping generalizations that detract from the overall meaning.	Shows some understanding of historical or cultural contexts, but the treatment is inconsistent or superficial. Connections to relevant contexts are made but lack depth and accuracy. Includes several broad sweeping generalizations that sometimes detract from the overall meaning.	Exhibits a clear understanding of historical or cultural contexts with mostly accurate and relevant connections. Some minor gaps or errors may exist, but overall, the student demonstrates a solid grasp of the contexts. May include a few broad sweeping generalizations that do not detract from the overall meaning.	Consistently demonstrates an in-depth and accurate understanding of historical or cultural contexts. The essays effectively integrate prior knowledge and what has been learned, providing insightful and precise analysis of the relevant contexts without broad sweeping generalizations.

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Reflection Letter Section A

Selection and Rationale for Essay Choices; Critical Thinking	No evidence for selection of essays or choosing the writing prompt. Little to no critical commentary.	Some marginal reasoning for selecting assignments and including them in the portfolio. Surface-level critical commentary.	Clear reasons for including essays in the portfolio. The writer shows ability to think critically about their own writing.	Purposeful reasons for including the essays in the portfolio. Demonstrates connections between the writings with critical reflection on their work.
Realistic Self-Assessment	No reflection on how writing meets College standards for First Year Writing.	Some presentation of and application to College standards for First Year Writing.	Clear representation of relevant writing criteria, and explanation of performance of College standards for First Year Writing.	Complex presentation and application of the writing criteria of the College standards for First Year Writing.
Reflection on Future Writing Contexts	Student does not articulate development in their own writing aimed at their major or college career.	Limited relevant information about writing activities related to major, or few plans for future development.	Student articulates some uses of writing related to a major. Student identifies a reasonable plan for their future, although the plan may not be fully developed.	Student notes demands of major or college career and develops a thoughtful plan for continued development.
Editing, Mechanics, and Correctness	Poor mechanics that distract the reader; sentence-level problems that make comprehension of ideas difficult.	Essays contain consistent mechanical errors; some sentences difficult to follow because of wording.	Some errors in mechanics, but they seem random; most sentences are clear and well-formed.	Few errors in mechanics; demonstrated editing abilities; sentences are clear and well-formed.