

Criteria for Scoring Writing in Writing-Intensive Courses

4--Strong

Superior student writing will exhibit the following characteristics:

- **Purpose:** Convincingly achieves a clearly articulated purpose
- **Context:** Exceeds all the requirements of the context or assignment
- **Audience:** Reflects sensitivity to the audience's needs; anticipates and responds to the audience's questions and expectations
- **Content:** Presents convincing support for all claims and conclusions with adequate and appropriate conventions
- **Organization:** Effectively and explicitly organizes content in a logical and coherent structure; assists reader to grasp structure and to locate specific information
- **Secondary Material and Documentation:** If appropriate, effectively incorporates, explicates, and documents secondary material using appropriate conventions
- **Design:** Effectively utilizes principles of document design and, if applicable, effectively and attractively displays visual information using appropriate conventions
- **Style and Mechanics:** skillfully adapts style to the audience, document, and discipline; contains few, if any, mechanical and spelling errors.

3—Competent

Competent student writing will exhibit the following characteristics:

- **Purpose:** Defines a purpose, and adequately addresses it
- **Context:** Addresses requirements of the context or assignment
- **Audience:** Reflects the effort to adapt writing to the needs of an audience, but may fail to anticipate adequately the audience's questions and expectations
- **Content:** Presents claims and conclusions and supports them with content that is appropriate and minimally adequate; may make superficial claims
- **Form:** Utilizes an appropriate form of document and mechanically adheres to the form's conventions
- **Organization:** Organizes content in a coherent structure; provides minimal assistance to reader in understanding structure
- **Secondary Material and Documentation:** If appropriate, incorporates and documents secondary material using appropriate conventions
- **Design:** Conforms mechanically to principles of document design and, if applicable, displays visual information using conventional conventions
- **Style and Mechanics:** May not exhibit stylistic variety; demonstrates competent writing but may contain flaws in grammar and spelling.

2—Weak

Weak student writing will exhibit the following characteristics:

- **Purpose:** Defines a purpose but does not adequately achieve it or may confuse reader about purpose
- **Context:** May fail to consider some requirements of the context or assignment
- **Audience:** does not adequately reflect the effort to adapt writing to an audience
- **Content:** Presents claims but does not support them with adequate or appropriate content; may contain irrelevant or unnecessary material and poorly developed ideas; may fail to draw appropriate conclusions
- **Form:** Utilizes an appropriate form of document but lacks understanding of the form's conventions
- **Organization:** May confuse reader about logic of organization; does not inform reader about structure; structure may fail to cohere

- **Secondary Material and Documentation:** May not incorporate adequate material or may rely too heavily on secondary sources; may not adequately integrate or explicate secondary material; may document sources inappropriately
- **Design:** Does not reflect understanding of document design and, if applicable, does not adequately display visual information
- **Style and Mechanics:** Style may be stilted or inappropriate for audience; reflects a pattern of mechanical and spelling errors.

1—Incompetent

Incompetent student writing will exhibit the following characteristics:

- **Purpose:** Does not define a purpose or may express contradictory purposes
- **Context:** Ignores essential requirements of the context or assignment
- **Audience:** Reflects insensitivity that may offend or alienate the audience
- **Content:** Consistently presents superficial and unsubstantiated claims; contains content that is neither appropriate nor adequate
- **Form:** Utilizes an inappropriate form of document and/or reflects ignorance of the form's conventions
- **Organization:** Organizes content in an incoherent or illogical manner
- **Documentation:** May fail to incorporate secondary material or may include plagiarized material
- **Design:** Document is unprofessionally or unattractively designed and, if applicable, does not display information visually or does so in an unprofessional manner
- **Style and Mechanics:** Style is immature or inconsistent; contains frequent and serious errors in mechanics and spelling that may inhibit comprehension.

The above was compiled by Ellen Millsaps from information obtained at the National WAC Conference, Ithaca, NY June 3, 1999

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