

REPORT EVALUATION GUIDELINES

The primary objective of each research project is to facilitate learning. Consequently, the assessment of completed projects concentrates primarily on each paper's content to assess what the student has learned.

Of importance to any written assignment is not only what content is stated but also how that content is delivered. Report grading thus takes into account five major areas: thesis, structure, argument, diction, and mechanics.

The following guidelines show the basic characteristics of A, B, C, D grades, and failing papers.

The Excellent Paper (A/A-)

1. **Thesis:** The thesis (the main argument or point being made) is easily identified, plausible, insightful, and clear.
2. **Structure:** The structure of the paper is easily followed and reflects the argument implicit in the thesis. The report includes excellent transitions from point to point. Solid topic sentences support well-developed paragraphs.
3. **Content:** The student effectively argues in support of the thesis. The student avoids unfounded claims, backing each point with appropriate evidence. Rather than being a storehouse of quotations, the paper synthesizes original points with strong support material, the majority of which is paraphrased and summarized. Direct quotations are used where appropriate and are clearly contextualized. All sources are clearly documented.

Analysis is used wisely. The student clearly connects the evidence to topic sentences. The thesis and analysis are original and thought-provoking. If a topic is controversial, the student's view is presented objectively. The student successfully defuses counter-arguments by use of evidence derived from research materials.

4. **Diction:** Word choice reflects a superior understanding of both audience and subject.

5. **Mechanics:** Mechanically, the "A" paper is virtually error-free. Sentence structure reflects proper subordination and coordination of ideas. The paper is free of agreement errors, spelling errors, and punctuation errors.

The Above-Average Paper (B+/B-)

1. **Thesis:** The thesis shows promise but lacks clarity or insight.
2. **Structure:** Overall structure is logical, but the thesis is not always clearly supported. Side issues occasionally distract from the main point. Transitions are present but are stiff or awkward.
3. **Content:** The paper contains plenty of evidence in support of the argument, but the student relies on numerous quotations instead of contextualizing, paraphrasing, and summarizing the source material.

Given a controversial topic, the student remains logical and objective in presenting material, but the argument tends to be one-sided. The student cites all sources used in the report.

4. **Diction:** The student has a good command of the language but occasionally misuses or overuses words.

5. **Mechanics:** The mechanics of the paper are strong. The student occasionally errs in sentence structure and grammar, but the mistakes do not significantly distract from the presentation. The student uses punctuation correctly in almost all cases. Though there may be minor spelling errors and one run-on sentence or sentence fragment, the work is still clear and insightful.

The Average Paper (C+/C-)

1. **Thesis:** The paper contains a thesis which is too narrow or too broad given the topic and paper length.

2. **Structure:** The paper lacks consistent structure. Facts and evidence appear in inappropriate places. Many of the paragraphs lack topic sentences. The paper lacks effective transitions.

3. **Content:** Many points lack supporting evidence or introduce ideas irrelevant to the thesis. The paper may overuse sources and provide little original thought, or it may be full of opinion with little factual support. Analysis or explanation of ideas is shallow. Logic is frequently faulty. Given a controversial topic, the student uses subjective, unsubstantiated arguments.

4. **Diction:** Word choice frequently violates the demands of the audience and subject.

5. **Mechanics:** The mechanics of the paper reveal significant problems in sentence structure, grammar, punctuation, and/or spelling. The student's paper may contain several run-on sentences and/or sentence fragments.

The Deficient Paper (D+/F)

1. **Thesis:** The thesis is unclear or absent.

2. **Structure:** The structure of the paper is unclear and confusing. Paragraphs use few or no topic sentences. No transitions are used.

3. **Content:** The paper reflects little or no research and does not follow the requirements of the assignment.

4. **Diction:** Word choice is poor.

5. **Mechanics:** The paper is crippled by significant problems in sentence structure, grammar, punctuation, and spelling.