



Department of English Grading Guidelines

The following are general descriptions of the categories used by the Department of English to evaluate essays. Not all descriptors will apply equally to a given essay – an essay might have B-level argument with C-level writing, or the quality of the essay might vary from paragraph to paragraph. For more specific comments explaining the grade you have received, please see the feedback given by your instructor.

A (A- 82-85% / A 86-89% / A+ 90-100%) Excellent / Outstanding

- **Content:** The essay presents a cogent, nuanced, persuasive argument and demonstrates the careful and effective use of evidence both from the primary source and, where appropriate, from secondary sources.
- **Structure:** The form of the argument is clear and effective.
- **Writing (style, grammar, mechanics):** The writing is clear and precise with few if any errors.

B (B- 70-73% / B 74-77% / B+ 78-81%) Good / Very Good

- **Content:** The essay attempts a strong argument and uses relevant evidence, incorporating support from sources skillfully into the main line of the argument, though there may be the occasional difficulty.
- **Structure:** The writer has used an effective and appropriate structure for presenting important ideas.
- **Writing (style, grammar, mechanics):** The author's careful attention to language and to details of expression and presentation is apparent, even though there may be lapses.

C (C- 58-61% / C 62-65% / C+ 66-69%) Satisfactory / Average

- **Content:** The essay attempts an argument that does not completely succeed: the ideas may need development and may tend towards summary rather than analysis, with inconsistent or limited use of primary and secondary sources.
- **Structure:** The essay has a thesis, but does not fully develop and sustain it. Important ideas struggle to find expression through a not yet fully coherent structure.
- **Writing (style, grammar, mechanics):** Errors in writing compromise the clarity of ideas.

D (D 50-53% / D+ 54-57%) Minimal Pass

- Content: The essay may struggle to develop a central idea, and the handling of evidence (whether from the primary material the essay discusses or from research sources if these are a part of the writing assignment) raises serious concerns.
- Structure: There is no clear focus or thesis holding the piece together. The evidence is scanty or not clearly linked to the main argument.
- Writing (style, grammar, mechanics): The essay's attention to language and to details of presentation seems wavering and uncertain. Typos and errors in grammar, punctuation and/or spelling are visible and frequently distract the reader from the content.

F (0-49%) Fail

- The paper demonstrates serious deficiencies in content, organization, and/or writing. Additional instruction is required.
- An essay that fails to meet the basic requirements of the assignment (e.g. the required research has not been done, or the essay does not meet length requirements) will receive an "F".
- An essay that contains plagiarized material will be given 0% in accordance with The King's policy on scholarly ethics and academic honesty.