

Writing Standards and General Evaluation Criteria

Borrowed in part from Dr. Michelle F. Eble, East Carolina University

Professional Writing Standards

The following are general evaluation criteria; for a particular assignment there may also be criteria specific to that work. From a professor's point of view quality writing should meet assignment criteria, maintain professional style and tone, show evidence of critical self-editing, and (relatedly) be essentially error-free.

These criteria reflect a high value placed on rhetorical or higher-order concerns in writing. Therefore aspects relating to a document's *purpose*, *organization*, *tone* and *audience identification* carry much weight. However, errors in *grammar*, *mechanics*, and *usage*—which are sometimes described as “lower order” concerns—will detract from your message and must be kept to an absolute minimum.

A -- Professional quality work (considered exemplary in a real-world setting). Provides the right information and approach for the audience and communication situation. Document has a clear and well-articulated purpose. Content is amply developed and supported. May contain only a minor flaw.

B -- Professional quality work (considered adequate in a real-world setting). Provides the right information and approach for the audience and communication situation. Document has a clear purpose. Content is well developed and supported. May contain a couple of minor flaws.

C -- Marginal in professional quality. Considers audience and communication situation, but may lack some important information and need adjustments in the overall approach. Document purpose evident, but not clear. Content adequately developed, but may lack some support and explanation. Contains a single major or several minor flaws.

D -- Would require major revisions to meet standards of professional quality. Generally lacks consideration for audience and communication situation. Document unfocused. Content developed haphazardly and lacks support and explanation. Contains major and minor flaws.

F -- Ignores most of the standards of professional quality. Lacks consideration for audience and communication situation. Document purpose obscured. Little content development or support. Contains major and minor flaws.

Professional quality means that the document would be considered a good and effective example in a real-world workplace setting. Standards of professional quality include meeting the expectations of the audience in terms of content and appearance. A professional document should answer reasonable audience questions, provide support for ideas presented, not have obvious errors in grammar and mechanics, and conform to the conventions for that genre (i.e. using the correct format for a memo or recommendation report).

Major flaws include problems with higher order concerns such as document purpose, writing for a specific audience and communication situation, and global document organization. problems with lower order concerns such as grammar, spelling, and usage.

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Borrowed in part from Prof. James Stull, San Jose State University

Qualities of an 'A' Paper

Demonstrates superior writing competence:

Addresses the topic intelligently and easy to understand (clear);
Is well organized (coherent);
Is virtually free of errors in grammar, punctuation, spelling, format (correct);
Is to the point (concise);
Uses precise wording (concrete);
Includes all necessary details (complete);
Shows concern for audience (courteous);
Demonstrates clearly the writer will succeed in business with this type of writing;
this message can be sent without additional editing.

Your boss will be impressed, proud to have you author documents, and remember your work at promotion time.

Qualities of a 'B' Paper

Demonstrates writing competence, with occasional minor errors:

Is generally well-organized and detailed;
May address some points better than others;
Addresses most of the seven C's;
Demonstrates the writer will be able to send this document after some editing.

Your boss will be glad you are on the team and will have you write drafts of documents.

Qualities of a 'C' Paper

Demonstrates competence in writing, with some errors that can be remedied:

Is adequately organized;

Addresses the topic adequately;

Demonstrates adequate but not distinguished language usage;

Demonstrates that the writer may need to create one or two more drafts before the message is ready to be sent.

Your boss will ask you or someone else to revise or write your work before allowing clients and others to see it.

Qualities of an 'D' Paper

Demonstrates serious flaws and limited competence in writing and contains errors that may not be remedied in one semester:

Shows inability to use language effectively;

Is not organized or developed coherently;

Leaves out significant details related to content or format;

Does not address the subject matter.

Your boss will be troubled by the poor quality of your writing, will not assign work that requires writing, and may even look for someone to replace you.

More Grading Standards for Written Communication (Starnes at UT)

http://www.mcombs.utexas.edu/dept/msis/courses/syllabi_fall2001/ba/BA324_Starnes.pdf
[& a good syllabus to re-visit generally... - gj]

Grading Standards for Written Communication:

A - an excellent paper. The paper offers an effective solution based on good audience analysis; all purposes, reasons, benefits, information, and answers to questions have been included. It is extremely clear, concise, and to-the-point. It contains necessary content from the case and includes originality. It also has no or minor mechanics errors and the format is acceptable according to business standards.

B - a good paper. The paper offers an effective solution. There may be one major flaw in audience analysis, purpose, reasons, benefits, information, or answers to questions. It is fairly clear, concise, and to-the-point. Possibly originality has been omitted. The paper could have several mechanics errors and format errors, but it is basically well written.

C - an acceptable paper. The paper offers a solution that might be slightly more weak than the A or B paper. There may be 2 major flaws in the expected result of clear communication. It is possible that there are multiple mechanic and formatting errors with 1 major flaw in the organization or tone. Originality may have been omitted.

D - an acceptable (C) paper with major flaws and minor mechanic errors. This paper probably has major flaws in some of these areas: tone, organization, style, solution. It also may contain mechanic, formatting, and originality errors. It shows several weaknesses in clear communication.

F - an unacceptable paper. This paper has multiple major flaws, as well as mechanic and formatting errors, and possible lack of originality. It shows very little understanding of the necessity of clear communication skills.

More Grading Standards

Isenberg School of Management

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<http://intra.som.umass.edu/buscomm/syllabus/grading.htm>

Further considerations of Content, Organization and Style in Business Communication (Utah Valley State College)

<http://www.uvsc.edu/owl/handouts/eval-criteria.html>