GE S1 Introductory Level

This area has now been assessed for 2 cycles. The leader of composition (and the author of Kean's writing rubric), Dr Mark Sutton, conducts norming and closing the loop meetings at the end of each academic year. Given the history of data available to us for S1 introductory, the OAA did not ask Dr Sutton to change his approach this year (to create a special end of Fall report). We are therefore presenting here the results of his 2013 work.

Results of 2013 College Composition Portfolio Assessment

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ABSTRACT

This report presents the results of the June 2013 College Composition portfolio assessment. The first section outlines the procedures used to select and evaluate portfolios during the reading. They correspond to best practice in Composition Studies. Next, the results of the reading will be summarized. Students in all versions of the course showed improvement in their writing ability, as represented by the University Writing Rubric. There was, however, less improvement than last year. The exact cause is unclear, though I expect Hurricane Sandy may have had a strong influence. We also measured students' ability to demonstrate reflective thinking. The results imply that students seem to meet program expectations in terms of reflective thinking, though we may need to work on ensuring those standards are uniformly applied. The report ends by describing changes to the program resulting from the reading. These include requiring faculty to teach rhetorical analysis, modifying our endpoint essay procedures so that they better reflect other timed writing situations, and shifting our professional development focus to emphasize teaching students how to conduct substantive revisions.

INTRODUCTION

In 2012-2013, over 1500 College Composition students created portfolios. A portfolio is a collection of written work, usually containing multiple drafts and preceded by a reflective introduction describing how the portfolio demonstrates the creator's growth. They are considered best practice in Writing Studies because they emphasize process, revision, and reflection, fundamental concepts in the discipline. College Composition emphasizes writing as a process, where student-writers take several days to analyze a rhetorical situation; develop ideas; prepare a first draft; and revise, edit, and proofread that draft repeatedly until it meets their goals. Students learn how to personalize and adapt their writing processes to multiple rhetorical situations and genres. Portfolios are one of the few assessment methods that can display multiple genres and drafts created over time (White *Assigning* 163). Jeffrey Sommers states, "the portfolio itself tends to encourage students to revise because it suggests that writing occurs over time, not in a single sitting, just as the portfolio itself grows over time and cannot be created in a single sitting" (153-54). Overall, portfolio assessment, as The Middle States Commission on Higher Education notes, can "provide an exceptionally comprehensive, holistic picture of student learning" (51).

College Composition portfolios represent a rich data source that can inform instruction in multiple courses (including Research and Technology, College Composition, and Writing Emphasis courses), provide evidence to support institutional assessment efforts, and improve faculty members' ability to teach writing. In order to meet these goals, the College Composition program conducted a three-day portfolio assessment session on June 4-6.

See Appendix A for a description of the portfolio system used by College Composition and a history of past portfolio readings.

PORTFOLIO READING PROCDURES

GOALS
The session was guided by five goals:
- Evaluate the students' use of reflective thinking: The benefits of reflection, "the process by which we know what we have accomplished and by which we articulate accomplishment," are well-documented throughout educational research (Yancey 6). Student reflections can "give faculty members useful insights into the learning process, help students integrate what they have learned, and provide students with an understanding of the skills and strategies they need to learn most effectively" (*Middle States* 45). During the last portfolio assessment, the readers determined our students demonstrated lower ability to demonstrate reflective thinking than we wanted them to possess. We decided to incorporate more reflective assignments throughout the semester and to establish a common prompt for the portfolio's reflective introduction. The portfolios will help us determine if our changes led to student improvement in this area.

- Determine the greatest and least areas of improvement in the students' writing: The program's rubric defines the major rhetorical elements faculty teach in our courses. By examining how students apply these elements in their work, the program can see what skills and strategies the composition faculty tend to teach well. We can also determine where we should direct our professional development energies for the coming year so that we can improve in weaker categories.
- Acquire insights on writing growth to inform other programs: College Composition represents a significant point in Kean students' journey toward becoming stronger writers, a journey begun in their K-12 schooling. Other classes, such as Research and Technology and Writing Emphasis courses in the major, build on what they learned in Composition. As a result, the data from College Composition's portfolios can be used to inform instruction for those courses, increasing the chances students will continue to grow as writers throughout their time at Kean.
- Provide data for institutional analysis: Kean must continually gather data on student outcomes in order to increase the chances our students will learn what they need to be successful after graduating. College Composition does its part through the reading.
- Promote the professional development of College Composition faculty: The staff for this session was drawn mostly from College Composition faculty. Participating in this project offered them the opportunity to examine effective teaching strategies they may not have considered. Faculty can then incorporate these strategies into their own classrooms. No other professional development activity provides this opportunity for interaction through as cost-effective a fashion.

STAFFING

The College Composition program followed standard practice in the discipline when staffing the reading. Participants included:

- a chief reader who oversees the reading and resolves any disputes (White *Teaching* 200). I acted as the chief reader.
- table leaders who "maintain a consistent grading standard at their tables" (200). Kim Chen, Charles Nelson, and Lisa Sisler served as table readers.
- readers who review portfolios and assign scores based on a pre-determined set of criteria. The following faculty served as readers: Emily Axelrod, Rochelle Baltin, Neiha Bhandari, Angela Castillo, Anthony Chu, Michele Jelley, Shannon Harry, Christina Nuzzolo, Eliana Rantz, Patricia Schnepf, and Sam Schrieber. All taught in the Composition program during the 2012-2013 academic year.
- aides who "distribute and collect portfolios, conceal the scores given on first readings, discover discrepancies, and check the count" of portfolios to be reviewed (201). Students Jennifer Alverez-Otero, Karl Covington, and Andre Jones served as aides.

PREPARATORY WORK

The portfolios were divided into two strata: one for ENG 1030 and 1620, and the other for 1031/1032 and 1033/1034. A random sample representing approximately nine percent of each strata was selected. The counts by course type were:

- ENG 1030, Summer sessions: 3
- ENG 1030, Fall semester: 80
- ENG 1031, Fall semester: 23

- ENG 1030, Spring semester: 7
- ENG 1031, Spring semester: 7

No 1620 or 1033/1034 portfolios were selected this year. This is not surprising, as we only offered one section of both courses.

Portfolios were identified by number only. Student names, instructor names, and references to the course format were removed.

Several additional portfolios, taken from last year's reading, were selected for training and norming purposes. These portfolios were scored by all participants, and we discussed those rankings as a way to help everyone become part of "an assenting community that feels a sense of ownership of the standards and the process" of assessment (White *Teaching* 215). This type of norming is common practice in Writing Studies.

READING
Training session
Training took place on June 4. Participants read and evaluated four sample portfolios, discussing the scores afterwards in order to reach shared standards for the rubric criteria. We also reviewed the procedures for the reading. Along the way, we discussed our expectations for students' reflective thinking, guided by two chapters from Kathleen Blake Yancey's *Reflection in the Writing Classroom*. We developed the criteria used to evaluate reflective thinking through these discussions.

Reading sessions
The reading sessions took place on June 5 and 6. Both days started with a group norming session where we evaluated one portfolio and discussed the scores in order to maintain consensus. We renormed after lunch on June 5.

Each portfolio was evaluated by two different faculty members, focusing on two levels. See Appendix B for a copy of the scoring sheet. The first level examined the overall quality of writing in a portfolio, using the same criteria as the baseline rubric. See Appendix C for a description of these criteria. While the portfolios were read holistically, readers assigned a separate score for each criterion. For purposes of analysis, averages were rounded to the closest whole number.

Criteria strongly related to the program's mission statement were treated as critical:
- Focus
- Development
- Organization
- Revision

If readers gave scores more than two points apart on any critical criterion, or if they gave scores more than one point apart in two or more, a third reader scored the portfolio on only the contested categories. Only eighteen portfolios required a third read, implying the readers generally maintained a shared understanding of the standards throughout the reading.

Second, readers were asked to evaluate the students' ability to effectively reflect on their writing processes and products. The scale was: exceeds program expectations, meets program expectations, does not meet program expectations, and no evidence (given only if the portfolio did not include a reflective introduction).

For our purposes, reflective writing that met program expectations demonstrated the following characteristics:
- draws on text-based/class-based evidence
- makes connections between and among work in the portfolio, events from the class, and the students' overall learning
- rich, appropriate use of details
- not formulaic
- should present an objective self-assessment
- gives a sense of the student's process
- should show metacognition, or that students know what they need to learn

In addition to individual reading, tables could decide to discuss problematic portfolios as a group or take time to re-norm themselves with additional sample portfolios. These activities were conducted at the table leader's discretion.

RESULTS

METHODOLOGY
Overall quality
Scores from both portfolio readers were averaged together and rounded to the nearest whole number. These scores were then compared with data gathered through the baseline rubrics, keyed to the diagnostic taken at the beginning of each semester.

Each strata was divided in half. Students who scored from 3 to 5 on a criterion were grouped together, and students who scored 1 or 2 were grouped together.[1] At this stage, the percentage of students at each level were compared. In the future, I would like to perform statistical tests on these results to determine significance.

Reflective thinking
Scores for reflective thinking were analyzed in two ways. First, the percent of scores given for each criterion was calculated. Second, I counted the number of portfolios to which both readers gave the same results.

Results for reflective thinking are tentative. We generated descriptors for these criteria as a group, and I cannot ensure the criteria were applied consistently.

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[1] See Appendix D for non-aggregated data for each strata.

SUMMARY OF RESULTS

The results of the assessment are:

- Students in both versions of the course seem to have become better writers, though not in the same ways.
- In general, the percentage of portfolios that earned passing scores in each criteria decreased from last year. While the disruptions caused by Hurricane Sandy may have been the biggest influence, I cannot determine the exact cause.
- Approximately half of the portfolios included reflective introductions that met program standards.

The tables below discuss these results in more detail.

OVERALL QUALITY

Table 1 lists the percentage of ENG 1030 students who earned a passing score in each criteria in the diagnostic (pre-test) and portfolio (post-test).

Table 1: Comparison of ENG 1030 Pre- and Post-Rubric Scores

	% rated 3 or higher (passing)		
Criteria	**pre-test (n=700)**	**post-test (n=90)**	**Post-Pre Percent Change**
Genre/Audience	80.29%	87.78%	+7.49
Focus	83.86%	94.44%	+10.58
Development	75.29%	90.00%	+14.71
Organization	85.28%	90.00%	+4.72
Grammar/Mechanics	86.14%	94.44%	+8.30
Revision	54.43%	58.89%	+4.46

Overall, it seems like students' writing ability improved through the work in the course. The most growth occurred in development and focus, which are higher-order issues the program focuses on. Revision showed the least growth, a finding supported by the readers' impressions.

Table 2 compares the passing scores of last year's portfolio reading with this year's.

Table 2: Comparison of ENG 1030 Portfolio Passing Scores for AY 11-12 and AY 12-13

	% rated 3 or higher (passing)		
Criteria	**AY 11-12 (n=97; includes 1620)**	**AY 12-13 (n=90)**	**Percent Change**
Genre/Audience	95.92%	87.78%	-8.14
Focus	98.98%	94.44%	-4.54
Development	93.87%	90.00%	-3.87
Organization	94.90%	90.00%	-4.90
Grammar/Mechanics	95.92%	94.44%	-1.48
Revision	70.41%	58.89%	-11.52

The data show a decrease in the percentage of students who earned passing scores on their portfolios from AY 11-12 to AY 12-13, though most of the decreases are small. At this point, I cannot definitively explain why this change occurred. I speculate that it might be caused by the inclusion of six ENG 1620 portfolios in the AY 11-12 reading. The students in 1620 entered the course as stronger writers and presumably became stronger through practice, so it seems plausible that they may have raised the percentages. I also wonder if the disruption of Hurricane Sandy might have had an influence on student performance. Regardless, I plan to monitor these differences with next year's results to see whether the decline reflects a long-term trend.

Table 3 lists the percentage of ENG 1031/1032 students who earned a passing score in each criteria in the diagnostic (pre-test) and portfolio (post-test).

Table 3: Comparison of ENG 1031/1032 Pre- and Post-Rubric Scores

	% rated 3 or higher (passing)		
Criteria	pre-test (n=237)	post-test (n=30)	Post-Pre Change
Genre/Audience	75.94%	76.67%	+0.73
Focus	74.68%	83.33%	+8.65
Development	63.72%	83.33%	+19.61
Organization	63.71%	80.00%	+16.29
Grammar/Mechanics	72.16%	93.33%	+21.17
Revision	48.53%	66.67%	+18.14

As with the 1030 results, students seem to have grown as writers through their work in the course. In particular, there was strong growth in the fundamental skills of development and organization. Students also became stronger in grammar/mechanics, which tends to be an area of weakness when they enter the course. The small increase in Genre/Audience may come from students' difficulty in writing analysis. Several readers commented that the other genres in the portfolio were much stronger. As Table 1 shows, Genre/Audience was one of the weaker categories for ENG 1030 students.

Table 4 compares the passing scores of last year's portfolio reading with this year's

Table 4: Comparison of ENG 1031/1032 Portfolio Passing Scores for AY 11-12 and AY 12-13

	% rated 3 or higher (passing)		
Criteria	AY 11-12 (n=22)	AY 12-13 (n=30)	Percent Change
Genre/Audience	90.91%	76.67%	-14.24
Focus	95.45%	83.33%	-12.12
Development	95.45%	83.33%	-12.12
Organization	90.91%	80.00%	-10.91
Grammar/Mechanics	95.46%	93.33%	-2.13
Revision	45.55%	66.67%	+21.12

The data show a decrease in the number of students preparing passing portfolios in each criteria except revision. Again, I cannot account for this change beyond the influence of Hurricane Sandy, though I plan to monitor it.

REFLECTIVE THINKING
Table 5 presents the results of the reflective thinking assessment. A portfolio was not placed in a particular category unless both readers independently agreed on a score.

Table 5: Results of Reflective Thinking Assessment

Criteria	1030	1031/1032
Readers did not agree	24 (26.67%)	6 (20.00%)
Readers agreed reflective elements exceeded program expectations	3 (3.33%)	1 (3.33%)
Readers agreed reflective elements met program expectations	48 (53.33%)	14 (46.67%)
Readers agreed reflective elements did not meet program expectations	10 (11.11%)	5 (16.67%)
Readers agreed portfolio did not contain evidence of reflection, primarily the final reflection	5 (5.56%)	4 (13.33%)

Based on this data, it seems many of the students were able to meet our expectations for reflective writing. At least half the portfolios in each strata contained reflective introductions that met program expectations. That said, these standards were only defined explicitly the day before the reading, and the readers did not agree on the quality of reflection for between a fifth and a fourth of all portfolios. This implies the program still needs to work on ensuring faculty share the same standards. At this point, we decided to continue our current teaching practices and revisit the criteria we developed before establishing them as program practice.

PROGRAMMATIC CHANGES

Once the reading ended, the faculty discussed their impressions of the students' work and brainstormed changes to College Composition. They include requiring faculty to teach rhetorical analysis, modifying our endpoint essay protocols so they better reflect other timed writing situations, and increasing our emphasis in professional development on encouraging substantive revision.

ASSIGNING RHETORICAL ANALYSIS
Analysis remains a difficult genre for College Composition students. The readers felt that part of the problem came from too much variation in pedagogy across sections. We

all use the same genre definition, but professors can allow very different lenses, which determine how students construct the analysis.

We decided to require all composition classes to teach rhetorical analysis, focusing on the three artistic proofs (ethos, pathos, and logos). In their teaching, faculty would emphasize that the proofs are a lens used for analysis, not the only way someone can examine the features of a text. Readers felt that emphasizing the selection of analytic lenses would help transfer analytic skills to other contexts.

I will announce this change at this year's orientation, and we will review publications on teaching rhetorical analysis. In addition, the manual includes a list of articles and websites faculty can consult for teaching strategies or use in class.

MODIFYING ENDPOINT PROTOCOLS
This year's readers expressed concerns about the role the endpoint plays in the portfolio as a whole, as well as the impressions it gives about the program's values. The endpoint assignment gives students fifty minutes to write an argumentative essay based on a short news story. The interest level of subjects are inconsistent, and there is always a good chance students will know very little about the topic. It is hard to write well about an unfamiliar topic, especially under a pressure situation. We also wondered if we were giving students a sense that this type of timed writing was more important to the program than it actually is. Our goals statement emphasizes writing as an extended process. Portfolios allow the time process writing requires, making them a valid measure for our program. Yet we do feel that students need to know how to write a good piece of writing under constrained time limits.

In response to these issues, we decided to change the protocols for the endpoint. We will use a shell argumentative prompt. Faculty will add into it a topic discussed in class, specifically referring to a couple of readings done that semester. Students will be able to use the texts during the endpoint; we are examining their writing ability, not their reading recall. Students will have either fifty or seventy-five minutes to write their answer, depending on how long their class meets. Faculty will adjust their expectations accordingly, and the difference will be labeled on the portfolio piece.

SHIFTING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FOCUS
The readers felt that students are not completing the kind of substantive revisions we expect. Mostly, they only edit their texts, and they frequently make few changes to the content, organization, or rhetorical features of their texts, even when these types are changes are needed. We wondered if the cause might be the kind of feedback students are receiving from their professors. If we only comment on sentence-level issues, students will consider that aspect of writing the most important. They will not focus on large-scale issues like purpose, audience, and organization, essential elements for conveying one's ideas.

This year's orientation will include two workshops on responding to student work in ways that encourage substantive revision. The first will focus on the scholarship on

responding to student writing. The second, done in cooperation with Karen Harris of the Center for Professional Development, will share tools for responding to student texts electronically, as well as give faculty time to practice those tools. Karen and I conducted a version of this workshop during Kean's Technology Innovation Institute this May, and it seemed to be successful.

CONCLUSION

This year's portfolio reading was a success. The data show that most students grew as writers, in at least some areas, through the course. The event also pointed out issues that the program can explore in order to better meet students' needs. I look forward to making these improvements and seeing how they lead to student success.

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APPENDIX A: COLLEGE COMPOSITION'S PORTFOLIO SYSTEM

INITIAL PLANNING

College Composition's portfolio system was developed in Fall 2008 by the Composition Steering Committee, a volunteer group of faculty who advise me on programmatic matters. The committee members who helped in this work were Sally Chandler, Maria Montaperto, Sara Chmielewski, Johanna Church, and Tara Branch.

Students include the following assignments in their portfolio:
- one assignment that requires students to summarize and respond to a text.
- a persuasive/argumentative essay which asks students to take a specific position on a subject and attempt to persuade readers that position is valid. The following process material for this essay must be included in the portfolio:
    - planning work (ex. brainstorming, freewriting, listing)
    - at least one rough draft, preferably with instructor comments
    - a final, unmarked draft
- an analytic essay which identifies the elements within a text and describes the relationships among those elements. Text, here, is broadly defined as any aspect of culture that can be interpreted. The following process material for this essay must be included in the portfolio:
    - planning work (ex. brainstorming, freewriting, listing)
    - at least one rough draft, preferably with instructor comments
    - a final, unmarked draft
- an in-class argumentative essay written under test conditions. All students respond to the same prompt.
- a letter, addressed to the College Composition Coordinator, that introduces the portfolio. In this letter, students reflect on what they learned in the course and explain how the portfolio demonstrates that learning.

Faculty can adjust the exact requirements of portfolio assignments, as long as they stay within the program's genre definitions. Some professors, for example, may require students to analyze advertisements, while others may require textual analyses. Either of these assignments, as well as myriad others, would meet the requirements of an analysis. Faculty may also require assignments in their courses that are not included in the portfolio.

PILOT: SPRING AND SUMMER 2009

During Spring 2009, the program piloted the portfolio system described above. Faculty were given the option of having students prepare either a print or an electronic portfolio. All portfolios were submitted to me after the semester ended.

During Summer 2009, Sally Chandler, Maria Montaperto, and I reviewed a random sample of portfolios to refine the scoring rubrics needed for program assessment. This approach follows best practice. Liz Hamp-Lyons and William Condon argue that "the criteria [for portfolio assessment should be] grounded in the curriculum of the course in

which the portfolio is produced" (326). Drs. Chandler, Montaperto, and I also developed plans for helping faculty teach in ways meant to produce strong student portfolios.

FULL IMPLEMENTATION: FALL 2009
Starting Fall 2009, all portfolios were created using Google Sites. Faculty were trained in this software during the August orientation and during October follow-up sessions. By the end of Spring 2010, over 1000 College Composition students had created portfolios.

RESULTS OF 2010 PORTFOLIO READING
Writing by students in ENG 1030 improved from the diagnostic to the portfolio in almost all rubric criteria. The results for ENG 1031/1032 and 1033/1034 are more varied, though students showed growth in some rubric criteria. The results for the A-TEAM courses showed some promising results, though the sample sizes of some groups are too small to allow for statistical analysis. Closing the loop activities included the creation of a required course calendar, plans to work on improving the teaching of analytical writing, and suggestions for future professional development events.

RESULTS OF 2011 PORTFOLIO READING
Lamont Rouse analyzed the results of the portfolio reading, comparing it to the baseline rubrics. He did not find any significant differences between the sets of scores. The attitude surveys, by contrast, show that students felt they became stronger writers through their work in the course. Combined, these results imply students benefited from their time in the course.

Research in Writing Studies has shown that expecting significant gains through one course is illogical. Learning to write is a developmental process that extends throughout a student's college career (Haswell "Beyond"; Haswell "Documenting"). In addition, research has shown that people's writing ability can seem to regress when they enter an unfamiliar rhetorical situation. In his well-respected book on teaching writing across the curriculum, John Bean states that "since each new course immerses students in new, unfamiliar ideas, the quality of students' writing, predictably, degenerates" (64). Once students become more familiar with the situation, whether through writing multiple drafts or through other experiences, their writing returns to its previous levels (Carroll; Haswell "Error"; Mayer; "Studies").

College Composition is one of the transitional spaces Bean describes, the first course students take as freshmen at Kean. As a result, it is best seen as a baseline. It provides the University with a sense of how students can write at the beginning of their time here. The data currently being gathered from the capstone courses will provide the best view of how well our institution teaches students how to write.

Closing the loop activities at the 2011 reading included revising the program rubric. Our work was later adopted as the University Writing Rubric.

RESULTS OF 2012 PORTFOLIO READING
Students in all versions of the course showed improvement in their writing ability, as represented by the University Writing Rubric. Students in ENG 1031/1033 showed the most gains. In addition, we assessed students' ability to integrate outside sources into their work and their awareness of different cultures. The results for these categories are inconclusive due to the low amount of agreement among readers; more analysis is needed.

Closing the loop activities included the creation of universal prompts for the reflective introduction, an increased emphasis on teaching revision and integrating sources, and two discussions on how to best assess Composition students' intercultural awareness.

APPENDIX B: SCORING SHEET FOR PORTFOLIO READING

Portfolio Code: _____

Reader: _____

Section A: Overall Quality

Rank the overall quality of the portfolio on each criteria below. Use a 1-5 scale, with 1 being the lowest. Refer to the rubric descriptors for a specific description of each criterion.

If the portfolio includes only final drafts, a "0" should be recorded in the "Revision" category. Do not use a "0" if the portfolio contains rough drafts or any kind of planning work (even one example).

Criteria	Score
Genre/Audience	
Focus	
Development	
Organization	
Grammar/mechanics	
Revision (If the portfolio contains only final drafts, a "0" should be recorded in this category. Do not use a "0" is the portfolio contains rough drafts or any kind of planning work, even one example.)	

Consider the quality of reflective materials in the portfolio, emphasizing the reflective introduction. How effectively does the student reflect on their work? Indicate their level of skill by placing a check mark next to one of the following choices:

_____ Exceeds program expectations

_____ Meets program expectations

_____ Does not meet program expectations

_____ No evidence; does not include reflective introduction

APPENDIX C: RUBRIC DESCRIPTORS

This document contains an expanded explanation of the criteria making up the baseline and portfolio evaluation rubrics for College Composition (revised Summer 2011). Each criterion is briefly defined and linked to common terms used for it in composition textbooks. Characteristics of each level in a criterion are also included.

I would like to thank the 2011 portfolio readers for their help with revising this rubric: Tara Branch, Lisa Canino-Dymbort, Sally Chandler, Diane Danielle, Troy Diana, Sarah Ghoshal, Shannon Harry, Eloise Jacobs-Brunner, Steven Lillis, Leonard Naturman, Michael Rizza, Lisa Sisler, Christa Verem, Rachael Warmington, Tim Wenzell

Genre/Audience: The writing demonstrates an understanding of the conventions of the genres they are writing as well as for academic writing in general.
Terms related to this criterion: conventions, community of readers, discourse community, genre, style, tone
- Score of 5: the writer follows all or almost all of the conventions for the genre and academic writing in general. In addition, the writer demonstrates a skillful ability to manipulate those conventions in ways that make their work stand out while still fulfilling the reader's expectations.
- Score of 4: the writer follows most, if not all, of the conventions for the genre and academic writing in general. There is evidence of effort made to manipulate those conventions in ways that make their work stand out while still fulfilling the reader's expectations. However, those efforts are not as skillful as a level-five essay.
- Score of 3: the writer follows most of the conventions. However, they do so in a formulaic way that shows little attempt to engage the audience.
- Score of 2: the writer follows most of the conventions but does not do so consistently. They may also not follow some conventions, but the reader gets the sense the writer understands the conventions.
- Score of 1: the writer fails to follow most or any of the genre conventions and of academic writing in general.

Focus: The writing presents a unified, clear stance with respect to the characteristics of the assignment. In a given essay, each paragraph relates to that stance.
Terms related to this criterion: main idea, purpose, stance, thesis statement
- Score of 5: explicit, nuanced stance. The reader feels like the writer has constructed a complex, well thought-out point.
- Score of 4: stance is explicit and/or nuanced, but not to the degree of a five. The reader may feel like some minor points are missing or that the stance could be more complex.
- Score of 3: stance somewhat clear, but may be defined in general terms (i.e. "subject A and B are a like in some ways and different in others" or "I agree/disagree with X" without giving reasons for their stance)
- Score of 2: vague stance or purpose. It may only apply to part of the piece.
- Score of 1: no clear stance or purpose.

Development: The main ideas in the writing are supported with specific, relevant information.

Terms related to this criterion: details, evidence, examples, facts, observations, statistics, testimony

- Score of 5: all ideas are developed with specific, relevant information that clarifies, extends, and illustrates the essay's focus. The reader feels like she or he has learned a lot from reading the piece.
- Score of 4: all major and most minor ideas are developed with specific, relevant information that clarifies, extends, and illustrates the essay's focus. However, the reader occasionally raises questions or wishes for more information.
- Score of 3: ideas are not developed consistently, causing the reader to want more information about some points. Ideas, in places, are clear or made up of vague or commonplace generalizations. Some examples may not be appropriate.
- Score of 2: most ideas are not developed or are supported with inappropriate examples. The support is made up almost entirely unclear or made up of vague or commonplace generalizations. Overall, the piece seems to have been written quickly and without the writer thinking through the ideas he or she wanted to convey.
- Score of 1: ideas are stated without any development at all.

Organization: The writing uses an overall and paragraph structures appropriate to the assignment(s).

Terms related to this criterion: coherence, cohesion, mode, patterns of development, structure, transitions

- Score of 5: the writer uses a logical order for both paragraphs and the overall pieces that imparts a feeling of wholeness and skill.
- Score of 4: the writer uses a logical order for both paragraphs and the overall piece that is effective but that may not be artful. Some slight breakdowns exist, but they are almost unnoticeable and seem more like isolated gaffes than patterns of error.
- Score of 3: the structure of the essay breaks down in some places, but holds together overall. At the paragraph level, some sentences are out of place. Some transitions between sentences are abrupt or inappropriate for the kind of relationships implied among the paragraphs ideas.
- Score of 2: the structure of the essay feels rough and unclear. At the paragraph level, multiple sentences are out of place. Most of the transitions between sentences are abrupt or inappropriate for the kind of relationships implied by the paragraph's ideas. The pieces seems to have been planned quickly and not revised.
- Score of 1: the writer uses an unclear or confusing overall organization. The paragraphs lack coherence; sentences are disorganized, with little or no effective use of transitions.

Grammar/Mechanics: the essay follows the conventions of Edited Academic English. This includes conventions for citing sources, regardless of the system used.   An essay does not have to be perfect to receive a score of 5 in this criteria. Instead, consider whether the errors would either distract an average reader or make them doubt the writer's credibility.
Terms related to this criterion: diction/word choice, documentation, punctuation, sentence boundaries, sentence structure, spelling

- Score of 5: errors do not detract from the essay's central focus and from the smooth delivery of the writer's ideas. Few or no errors exist, and those that appear are minor or reflect obscure rules.
- Score of 4: errors are obvious but not to the point of distracting an average reader.
- Score of 3: grammatical, mechanical, spelling, and documentation errors begin to interfere with understanding the text's meaning. Patterns of status-marking error may exist (ex. sentence boundaries, verb endings).
- Score of 2: several distracting grammatical, mechanical, spelling, and documentation errors make understanding the text's meaning difficult. Multiple patterns of error exist.
- Score of 1: numerous distracting grammatical, mechanical, spelling, and documentation errors make understanding the text's meaning difficult or impossible.

Revision: the writer made changes between drafts to the essay's focus, organization, development, and/or style that lead to a more successful final essay. These changes can take place at any level of the text (overall, paragraph, or sentence). Invention and planning work used to create a rough draft counts as evidence of revision.
Terms related to this criterion: addition, deletion, substitution, and rearrangement. (Note: The last two are not done as often, even when they are needed.)

- Score of 5: almost all of the revisions make the final draft stronger than the original. The writer used all four forms of revision as appropriate.
- Score of 4: Most, but not all, of the revisions make the final draft stronger than the original. The writer used most of the forms of revision, but may have needed to use others. (ex. the added and deleted material, but should have also rearranged it).
- Score of 3: the draft includes some revisions that make the final draft stronger, but others are needed. The writer mostly used addition and deletion, even if substitution and rearrangement was also needed. Some of the revisions may distract from the draft's quality.
- Score of 2: The draft includes few revisions, most of which have no influence on the final draft's quality. The writer may have used only one form of revision even though others are needed.
- Score of 1: the draft includes very few revisions; most either have no influence on the final draft's quality or make it worse. It seems like the writer just retyped the original draft.
- Score of 0: no evidence of revision. The writer turned in only one draft and no invention/planning work.