

UCI Upper-Division Writing Rubric

Upper-Division Writing Rubric

The Campus Writing Coordinator (CWC) recommends the use of the following rubric when evaluating upper-division writing assignments. The rubric focuses on four major areas: critical thinking and analysis, the use of evidence and/or research, development and structure, and generic and disciplinary conventions.

Category 1: Critical Thinking and Analysis

4: Mastery: The approach to the assigned topic of study is insightful, and/or creative, persuasive, unique, and worth developing; the level of thinking/analysis is sophisticated; the ideas are clearly communicated with focus and specificity; the topic is considered/discussed from several facets or perspectives; the limitations of the argument or insights posed is made clear; the writer uses discipline-specific methods for producing knowledge; the content seems expertly tailored to the disciplinary audience

3: Good: The approach is acceptable, reasonable, thoughtful; the level of thinking/analysis is appropriate; the ideas offered are usually specific and focused, some are insightful, usually communicated clearly; the writer shows an awareness of other facets or perspectives, or of some of the limitations of the argument or insights posed; the writer seems to understand the disciplinary discourse and has taken some care with including content that is appropriate to the disciplinary audience

2: Some Evidence: The approach is adequate (even if barely so); some evidence of thinking/analysis, or an attempt at analysis, is evident; some of the ideas offered are clearly delineated, thought-through, and appropriate to the task; the writer attempts to show awareness of at least one other facet or perspective, or shows at least some awareness of the need to recognize potential limitations of the argument or insights posed; the writer seems aware of the disciplinary discourse and has included content that is relevant to the disciplinary audience

1: Insufficient Evidence: The approach is inadequate or indeterminable; very little evidence of critical thinking and analysis are evident; although some of the ideas may be worthwhile, the level of insight and clarity of presentation are lacking; the writer does not take into account other facets or perspectives, or does so in an inappropriate or simplistic manner; the thinking lacks focus and clarity, but may illustrate misconceptions; little or no evidence of awareness of disciplinary audience

Category 2: Use of Evidence/Research

4: Mastery: Uses evidence/sources appropriately and effectively, with clear understanding of the disciplinary audience's expectations; considers (if appropriate) of the previous knowledge generated within the discipline (e.g., literature review); evidence/sources used help develop and exemplify the overall argument/purpose of the writer; evidence/sources are clearly and correctly represented and smoothly integrated into writer's argument/purpose; correct and appropriate use of citation methods for the disciplinary genre

3: Good: Uses evidence/sources appropriately and sometimes effectively, with understanding of the disciplinary audience's expectations; shows awareness (if appropriate) the previous knowledge generated within the discipline (e.g., literature review); evidence/sources used generally contribute to the overall argument/purpose of the writer; evidence/sources are usually represented with clarity and with no misreading; evidence/sources are smoothly integrated into writer's argument/purpose (writer controls the ideas, the sources do not); correct and appropriate use of citation methods for the disciplinary genre

2: Some Evidence: Some evidence/sources have been used appropriately, in a way that furthers the writer's purpose/argument; some evidence of disciplinary expectations for sources/research are evident; evidence/sources are presented with some degree of clarity, although some misreading or simplistic reading may be evident; the evidence/sources may overwhelm the writer's own voice and purpose; evidence/sources are usually integrated into the prose; some awareness of the disciplinary genre's expectations for citation and quotation are evident

1: Insufficient Evidence: Evidence/sources, if present at all, are often used inappropriately or simplistically; misreading of the sources may be evident; the writing shows little or no evidence of the discipline's expectations for presenting evidence and using sources; evidence/sources are mismatched with the writer's purpose within the prose; little or no awareness or presence of citation and documentation standards for the discipline

Category 3: Development & Structure

4: Mastery: The prose exhibits a clear articulation of the genre/discipline's methods of organizing written discourse; the organization is apparent, coherent, and contributes to the overall goals; the insightful, specific, focused development of the main purpose/thesis is effectively organized in paragraphs or sections (as appropriate to the genre/discipline); sophisticated transitional devices often develop one idea from the previous one or identify their logical relations; the reader is effortlessly guided through the chain of reasoning or progression of ideas

3: Good: The prose illustrates the writer's understanding of the genre/discipline's methods of organizing written discourse; the organization is usually apparent, coherent, and contributes to the overall goals; the development of ideas is sometimes insightful, usually specific and focused, following a logical progression; appropriate transitions connect the ideas and show relations between them; the reader is guided through the chain of reasoning or progression of ideas

2: Some Evidence: The prose sometimes illustrates the writer's understanding of the genre/discipline's methods of organizing written discourse; the organization is usually apparent, and in some cases, contributes to the overall goals; the development of ideas is sometimes insightful, specific, focused, and logical; some transitional devices are employed to connect the ideas; the reader can follow the chain of reasoning or progression of ideas

1: Insufficient: The prose does not clearly illustrate the writer's understanding of the genre/discipline's methods of organizing written discourse; organization is random, simplistic or inappropriately sequential, and rarely (if ever) contributes to the overall goals; some development of ideas is evident, but there is little insight, focus or logic; the writing lacks internal coherence, using few or inappropriate transitional devices; the reader has difficulty following the progression of the reasoning or ideas

Category 4: Generic & Disciplinary Conventions

4: Mastery: The writing is styled and eloquent, with an easy flow, rhythm, and cadence; sentences have clear purpose and varied structure; sentences and paragraphing are complex enough to show skill with a wide range of rhetorical, disciplinary, or generic conventions; the writer chooses words for their precise meanings and uses an appropriate level of specificity, illustrating his/her facility with the discipline's discourse; mechanics (spelling, punctuation, grammar, usage, and paragraphing) enhance overall readability and purpose; almost entirely free of errors, evidence of careful editing and proofreading

3: Good: The writing is appropriately styled and has an easy flow, rhythm, and cadence; sentences are purposeful and varied in structure; sentences and paragraphing show an appropriate use of rhetorical, disciplinary, or generic conventions; the writer usually chooses words for their precise meanings and uses an appropriate level of specificity, illustrating his/her understanding of the discipline's discourse; mechanics (spelling, punctuation, grammar, usage, and paragraphing) contribute to overall purpose; almost free of errors, evidence of editing and proofreading; when errors do occur, they do not detract from readability

2: Some Evidence: The writing illustrates some aspects of polished style and rhythm appropriate to the discipline/genre; sentences are varied in structure and sometimes show the writer's understanding of how to use rhetorical, disciplinary, or generic conventions; the writer sometimes chooses words for their precise meanings and some level of specificity is evident; mechanics (spelling, punctuation, grammar, usage, and paragraphing) contribute to overall purpose; errors may occur, but they usually do not detract from readability

1: Insufficient Evidence: The writing illustrates no (or very little) ability to use polished style and rhythm; sentences often lack purpose, with little variety in structure; sentences and paragraphing show a lack of understanding of how to use rhetorical, disciplinary, or generic conventions; word choice is often inappropriate and generalized, showing little understanding of disciplinary discourse; mechanics (spelling, punctuation, grammar, usage, and paragraphing) detract (or rarely contribute to) overall purpose; errors occur throughout, illustrating an inability to control language or a severe lack of editing and proofreading