WPE Scoring Guide
California State University, Los Angeles

The scores on this page constitute a Credit (or CR) judgment.

6 — The 6 essay demonstrates superior writing ability. It is distinguished by its thoughtfully and effectively developed content and by its rhetorical sophistication. An essay in this category typically

- responds to the topic with insight, depth, or originality, while clearly meeting the terms of the assignment.
- has a clearly focused, coherently developed main idea and is effectively organized.
- uses specific examples and details appropriately and effectively.
- exhibits superior control of language, including diction, phrasing, and syntactic variety.
- avoids serious errors in mechanics, grammar, and usage, although it may have a few minor flaws.

5 — The 5 essay demonstrates strong writing ability. It may be less thoughtful or less polished than the 6 essay, but it will be solid in content and development and will employ an effective style. It is clearly a passing essay. An essay in this category typically

- goes beyond a routine response to the topic while satisfying all the terms of the assignment.
- has a well-focused main idea and a clear and appropriate organization.
- is fully developed using specific examples and details.
- demonstrates strong control of language and a general facility with diction, phrasing, and sentence structure.
- may have minor flaws or occasional awkwardness, but it will be largely free of serious errors in mechanics, grammar, and usage.

4 — The 4 essay demonstrates adequate college-level writing ability. It may be undistinguished in content, development, or style, but the writing is competent enough to indicate that the writer is ready for an upper-division writing course. Language weaknesses do not significantly limit the writer’s ability to develop and communicate ideas. An essay in this category typically

- may respond somewhat routinely or simplistically to the topic, but it satisfies all the terms of the assignment at least minimally or implicitly.
- has a recognizable main idea and an apparent organization, however mechanical.
- uses some specific details or examples to develop and clarify ideas.
- demonstrates basic competence in diction, phrasing, and sentence structure, although there may be some imprecision, clumsiness, and/or repetitiveness.
- has minor errors in mechanics, grammar, and usage, but these will be neither frequent nor serious enough to confuse or significantly distract the reader.
The scores on this page constitute a No Credit (or NC) judgment.

3 — The 3 essay reflects inadequate college-level writing ability. It is marked by significant weaknesses in content, development, or expression, indicating that the writer is not yet prepared to handle upper-division writing. Language weaknesses may impair the writer’s ability to develop and communicate ideas clearly and effectively. An essay in this category typically has one or more of the following weaknesses: it may

- be confused or inconsistent in its response to the topic, or fail to satisfy the most important terms of the assignment.
- be unfocused, unclearly or incoherently organized, or logically flawed.
- lack sufficient examples and specific details to clarify or develop ideas.
- be uncertain or confusing in diction, phrasing, and sentence structure.
- have errors in mechanics, grammar, and usage that are frequent and serious enough to confuse or distract the reader.

2 — The 2 essay represents very weak writing. It is marked either by the severity of weakness or by the combination of weaknesses in development and expression that severely limit the writer’s ability to develop and communicate ideas. It is clearly not a passing essay. An essay in this category typically has more than one of the following weaknesses: it may

- seriously confuse or misconstrue the assignment.
- have obvious and significant flaws in organization and/or logic.
- lack specificity, either of examples or reasons, or its use of detail is largely irrelevant.
- lack control of diction, phrasing, and sentence structure.
- have such frequent and serious errors in mechanics, grammar, and usage that the writing is largely incoherent and meaning is nearly lost.

1 — The 1 essay represents the most minimal response to the assignment. This score is reserved for essays in which the writer manages to produce only a few largely incoherent sentences or one or two paragraphs that fail to sustain or develop a meaningful response to the topic.