Sample Rubrics for grading written work

Sample Rubric 1 (from the Auburn University Department of English)

The “A” Essay
The “A” essay demonstrates the writer's ability to address rhetorical situations in innovative, creative, and perceptive ways. The writing is more than above average; it is exceptional. The purpose is distinguished by some depth or breadth of insight; all support offered is interesting, relevant, and boldly thought-provoking. The organization is not only coherent but marked by appropriateness to the specific rhetorical situation, and the transitions show sophistication and originality. The writing exhibits finesse on the writer's part in matters of style, diction, and usage. There are no grammatical errors.

The “B” Essay
The “B” essay demonstrates the writer's ability to address the rhetorical situation beyond mere competency. The writing goes beyond the basics in the following ways: the point is original and/or more exciting for the reader; the organization is clear and appropriate, the transitions are sophisticated and/or original, and the support offered is more than adequately substantive and/or relevant. The style and tone reflect more attention to rhetorical concerns and the readers' needs; the writer has used a more sophisticated and varied sentence structure throughout. The work is relatively free of distracting grammatical errors.

The “C” Essay
The “C” essay demonstrates the writer's ability to address the rhetorical situation competently. There is adequate support of a recognizable point; the paper meets the minimum page requirement of the assignment. The organization is logical but may at times be formulaic or not appropriate for the audience. Transitions may be formulaic in nature. The tone and style are appropriate though not exceptionally engaging to the audience. The papers are readable; the reader does not encounter awkward sentence structures or wording. There are few errors in usage and mechanics. A grade of “C” means that your writing is “good” in the sense that you are able to write at the level of competency expected of you by the University.

The “D” Essay
The “D” essay indicates the writer's ability to address rhetorical situations somewhat competently, but the writing contains weaknesses and/or errors that mark it as less than what is expected in one or more of the following ways: The purpose is confused or too general; the support offered is vague, unconvincing, inaccurate, irrelevant or too narrow in focus; the organization is confusing or unsuccessful; the style, voice or tone is inconsistent or inappropriate; the sentence structure is difficult to read or inappropriate. Numerous mechanical and grammatical errors hinder the readers' ability to understand the text.

The “F” Paper
The “F” essay fails to address the assignment or contains weaknesses in one or more of the following ways: there is little or no awareness of the rhetorical situation or purpose; there is no support; the essay is unorganized and logically flawed. There is no sense of tone or voice. The sentence structure is very difficult to read or inappropriate. There are substantial errors in grammar and usage.

Sample Rubric 2 (from the Auburn University Department of English)

The “A” Essay
The superior “A” paper demonstrates the writer's ability to address the rhetorical situation (the assignment) in innovative, creative, and perceptive ways. The thesis is argumentative, insightful, and
crystal clear. All ideas in the paper flow logically; the argument is extensive, identifiable, reasonable, and sound. Essay demonstrates mastery of rhetorical appeals and ample consideration of counterargument(s) that could be raised against thesis. Content and overall writing style are striking and the purpose is distinguished by extraordinary depth and breadth of insight; effective use of a variety of appropriate support/sources. The essay includes excellent integration and effective use of direct quotes, paraphrases, summaries, and citations of outside material according to assignment parameters. Overall structure, organization, and paragraph construction are appropriate to the assignment and an academic audience. The writer shows consistent awareness of audience/reader expectations as evidenced by voice, tone, and level of formality appropriate to assignment. Transitions show originality and sophistication. Sentence structure, grammar, and diction are excellent; correct use of punctuation and citation style; minimal to no spelling errors. Indication of strong proficiency with technology element as defined by assignment (ie. effective incorporation of commonly used research databases and web sources or masterful incorporation of technological creativity according to assignment).

The “B” Essay
The good “B” paper demonstrates the writer’s ability to address the rhetorical situation (the assignment) beyond mere competency. The thesis is promising but may be slightly unclear, or somewhat lacking in insight or originality. Most ideas in the paper flow logically; the argument of the paper is clear, adequately developed, and usually makes sense. Essay demonstrates respectable attention to and understanding of appeals, and evidences sufficient consideration of counterargument(s) that could be raised against thesis. Content and overall writing style reflects adequate concern for the reader and the purpose. Some evidence does not support main point, or may appear where inappropriate. Good integration and reasonable use of direct quotes, paraphrases, summaries, and/or citations of outside material into sentences according to assignment parameters. Writer’s credibility is strong. Overall structure, organization, and paragraph construction are appropriate to the assignment and an academic audience, though may be less evident and understandable in some places. Moderate awareness of audience/reader expectations as evidenced by voice, tone, and level of formality appropriate to assignment. Transitions are adequate but may be unclear or missing at times. Sentence structure, grammar, and diction are strong despite occasional lapses; punctuation and citation style often used correctly; some minor spelling errors. Indication of respectable proficiency with technology element as defined by assignment (ie. effective incorporation of commonly used research databases and web sources or masterful incorporation of technological creativity according to assignment).

The “C” Essay
The competent “C” paper demonstrates the writer’s ability to address the rhetorical situation (the assignment) adequately. The thesis may be unclear and contain many vague terms, appear unoriginal, or offer relatively little that is new; provides little around which to structure the paper. The main idea is recognizable but is somewhat ineffective and lacks depth and development. The argument of the paper is often unclear, inadequately developed, and does not always flow logically and make sense. Essay demonstrates unpredictable attention to and slim understanding of rhetorical appeals, and evidences insufficient consideration of counterargument(s) that could be raised against thesis. Content and overall writing style are somewhat appropriate for the audience but are not exceptionally engaging; thesis/main points often lack supporting evidence, or evidence used where inappropriate (often because there may be no clear point). The essay demonstrates inconsistent integration and use of direct quotes, paraphrases, summaries, and/or citations of outside material into sentences according to assignment parameters. Writer’s credibility is compromised. Overall structure, organization, and paragraph construction are readable, somewhat appropriate to the assignment and an academic audience, though may be a bit awkward in some places. The essay demonstrates meager awareness of audience/reader expectations as evidenced by voice, tone, and level of formality somewhat inappropriate to assignment. Transitions are formulaic and may be few or weak. Sentence structure, grammar, and diction have problems (usually not major); errors in punctuation and citation style; some major spelling errors indicative of careless proofreading. Some attempt made at using the technology element as defined by assignment (ie. incorporation of commonly used research databases and web sources or incorporation of technological creativity according to assignment).

The “D” Essay
The “D” paper only begins to meet the assignment requirements, indicating the writer’s ability to address the rhetorical situation (the assignment) somewhat competently, but the writing contains major weaknesses and/or flaws that mark it as less than what is expected in one or more of the following ways: The thesis is difficult to identify; may be a bland restatement of an obvious (non-debatable) point. The main idea is barely recognizable and is wholly ineffective, confused or too general. The paper lacks coherence, providing no discernible argument; ideas do not flow logically and do not make sense. Scant or no attention to rhetorical appeals; little to no addressing of counterargument(s). Content and overall writing style is inconsistent, simplistic, and inappropriate for the audience. The support offered is weak, vague, unconvincing, inaccurate, irrelevant or too narrow in focus; there is a general failure to support statements or evidence seems to support no statement. Scant or no insightful connections to outside material made. Quotes, paraphrases, summaries, and reference are not integrated appropriately. Analysis is scant or very weak in attempt to relate evidence to argument; may be no identifiable argument, or no evidence to relate argument to. Writer's credibility is suspect. Overall structure, organization, and paragraph construction are difficult to read, or inappropriate for audience. Little to no awareness of audience/reader expectations. Transitions are confusing or nonexistent. Sentence structure, grammar, and diction have major problems (so many that the text is difficult to read – ie. awkward, vague); frequent major errors in punctuation and citation style; frequent and repeated major spelling errors indicative of careless proofreading. Inadequate attempt made at using the technology element as defined by assignment (ie. incorporation of commonly used research databases and web sources or incorporation of technological creativity according to assignment).

The “F” Essay
The “F” paper fails to address the assignment and shows an obvious minimal lack of effort or comprehension of assignment purpose. The writing is very difficult to understand owing to major problems with organization, clarity, structure, analysis, and mechanics. There is no thesis (or thesis is unclear, unsuitable to assignment, and does not adequately address assignment topic and rhetorical situation); no central main idea, no support or evidence, unreadable style and voice or tone alienates audience). Substantial errors in grammar and mechanics that deviates significantly from conventions of standard written English. Research and technology inappropriately incorporated (if at all) and is incorrectly documented.

Sample Rubric 3 (from Lindsey Zanchettin, PhD student and GTA in the Auburn University Department of English)

“A” work is consistently thought-provoking, cogent, inspired, and exceptional. The writer/thinker demonstrates a sophisticated understanding of the complexities involved in rhetorical situations. She writes with purpose, an authoritative and original voice, and uses polished language and rhetorical moves. She demonstrates an understanding of scholarly research and contributes new ideas to the larger academic discussion in which she is participating. She employs the appropriate tone and formality in crafting the assignment by a thoughtful consideration of her audience. The organization is purposeful and effective. There are little to no grammatical or mechanical errors.

“B” work is above a competent level and reflects a thoughtful, well-argued consideration of the assignment’s guidelines. The writer/thinking demonstrates an above satisfactory understanding of the complexities involved in rhetorical situations. She writes clearly and with a unique voice. She demonstrates an adequate understanding of scholarly research and attempts to make contributions to academic discussions. The organization is good overall, though it may not support the overall argument
of the assignment as effectively as possible. There are no grammatical or mechanical errors that seriously hinder the audience’s ability to understand the assignment.

“C” work is competent and satisfactory. The writer/thinker demonstrates a satisfactory understanding of the complexities involved in rhetorical situations. She writes clearly for the most part, though there may be moments of uncertainty or self-doubt. Her work does little to contribute new ideas to an academic discussion because she provides analysis and observations rather than advancing claims of her own. She demonstrates an understanding of scholarly research, though she may make mistakes with properly quoting, paraphrasing, or summarizing scholarly sources. She may not engage with this scholarly research in an extremely effective way. The organization is generally acceptable. There may be some grammatical or mechanical errors that hinder the audience’s ability to understand the assignment.

“D” work is below average. The writer/thinker demonstrates little understanding of the complexities involved in rhetorical situations. She does not write with a clear and original voice, though there is evidence she at least attempts to address the demands of the assignment. The organization is most likely not effective. She demonstrates a lack of understanding of scholarly research and makes mistakes quoting, paraphrasing, summarizing, and analyzing scholarly sources. She does not contribute to an academic discussion, and does not demonstrate a movement to higher level, critical thinking. There are grammatical and mechanical errors that hinder the audience’s ability to understand the assignment.

“F” work is unsatisfactory in every way. The writer/thinker demonstrates no understanding of the complexities involved in rhetorical situations. She ignores the assignment’s demands in various ways and reflects minimal effort in preparing the assignment. She either does not understand scholarly research and/or fails to use it effectively or at all. She does not demonstrate an understanding of academic discussions. The assignment is littered with grammatical and mechanical errors that hinder the audience’s ability to understand the assignment.