

Virginia State University General Education WRITTEN COMMUNICATION VALUE RUBRIC

For more information, please contact value@aacu.org

The VALUE rubrics were developed by teams of faculty experts representing colleges and universities across the United States through a process that examined many existing campus rubrics and related documents for each learning outcome and incorporated additional feedback from faculty. The rubrics articulate fundamental criteria for each learning outcome, with performance descriptors demonstrating progressively more sophisticated levels of attainment. The rubrics are intended for institutional-level use in evaluating and discussing student learning, not for grading. The core expectations articulated in all 16 of the VALUE rubrics can and should be translated into the language of individual campuses, disciplines, and even courses. The utility of the VALUE rubrics is to position learning at all undergraduate levels within a basic framework of expectations such that evidence of learning can be shared nationally through a common dialog and understanding of student success.

Definition

Written Communication is defined as the ability to develop, convey, and exchange ideas in writing as appropriate to a given context and audience.

Framing Language

This writing rubric is designed for use in a wide variety of educational institutions. The clearest finding to emerge from decades of research on writing assessment is that the best writing assessments are locally determined and sensitive to local context and mission. Users of this rubric should, in the end, consider making adaptations and additions that clearly link the language of the rubric to individual campus contexts.

This rubric focuses assessment on how specific written work samples or collections of work respond to specific contexts. The central question guiding the rubric is “How well does writing respond to the needs of audience(s) for the work?” In focusing on this question, the rubric does not attend to other aspects of writing that are equally important: issues of writing process, writing strategies, writers’ fluency with different modes of textual production or publication, or writer’s growing engagement with writing and disciplinarily through the process of writing.

Evaluators using this rubric must have information about the assignments or purposes for writing guiding writers’ work. Also recommended is including reflective work samples of collections of work that address such questions as: What decisions did the writer make about audience, purpose, and genre as s/he compiled the work in the portfolio? How are those choices evident in the writing—in the content, organization and structure, reasoning, evidence, mechanical and surface conventions, and citational systems used in the writing? This will enable evaluators to have a clear sense of how writers understand the assignments and take it into consideration as they evaluate.

The first section of this rubric addresses the context and purpose for writing. A work sample or collections of work can convey the context and purpose for the writing tasks it showcases by including the writing assignments associated with work samples. But writers may also convey the context and purpose for their writing within the texts. It is important for faculty and institutions to include directions for students about how they should represent their writing contexts and purposes.

Faculty interested in the research on writing assessment that has guided our work here can consult the National Council of Teachers of English/Council of Writing Program Administrators’ “White Paper on Writing Assessment” (2008)¹ and the Conference on College Composition and Communication’s “Writing Assessment: A Position Statement” (2008)².

¹ The original 2008 hyperlink to this resource is no longer functional (www.wpacouncil.org/whitepaper). An updated version is available online as of 2022 (<https://cccc.ncte.org/cccc/resources/positions/writingassessment>); however, this VALUE rubric is based off the original 2008 version, which differs from the updated version.

² The original 2008 hyperlink to this resource is no longer functional (www.ncte.org/cccc/resources/positions/123784.htm). An updated hyperlink is in use as of 2022 (<https://ncte.org/statement/ncte-wpa-white-paper-on-writing-assessment-in-colleges-and-universities/>).

Glossary

The definitions that follow were developed to clarify terms and concepts used in this rubric only.

- **Content development:** The ways in which the text explores and represents its topic in relation to its audience and purpose.
- **Context of and purpose for writing:** The context of writing is the situation surrounding a text: who is reading it? who is writing it? Under what circumstances will the text be shared or circulated? What social or political factors might affect how the text is composed or interpreted? The purpose for writing is the writer's intended effect on an audience. Writers might want to persuade or inform; they might want to report or summarize information; they might want to work through complexity or confusion; they might want to argue with other writers or connect with other writers; they might want to convey urgency or amuse; they might write for themselves or for an assignment or to remember.
- **Disciplinary conventions:** Formal and informal rules that constitute what is seen generally as appropriate within different academic fields (e.g., introductory strategies, use of passive voice or first person point of view, expectations for thesis or hypothesis, expectations for kinds of evidence and support that are appropriate to the task at hand, use of primary and secondary sources to provide evidence and support arguments and to document critical perspectives on the topic). Writers will incorporate sources according to disciplinary and genre conventions, according to the writer's purpose for the text. Through increasingly sophisticated use of sources, writers develop an ability to differentiate between their own ideas and the ideas of others, credit and build upon work already accomplished in the field or issue they are addressing, and provide meaningful examples to readers.
- **Evidence:** Source material that is used to extend, in purposeful ways, writers' ideas in a text.
- **Genre conventions:** Formal and informal rules for particular kinds of texts and/or media that guide formatting, organization, and stylistic choices (e.g., lab reports, academic papers, poetry, webpages, or personal essays).
- **Sources:** Texts (written, oral, behavioral, visual, or other) that writers draw on as they work for a variety of purposes—to extend, argue with, develop, define, or shape their ideas, for example.
- N/A: Not applicable to the assignment. Artifact is not appropriate for the assessment of this SLO.

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Evaluators are encouraged to assign a zero to any work sample or collection of work that does not meet benchmark (cell one) level performance.

	Exceeds Standard	Meets Standard (Assess @ Reinforce)	Approaching	Introducing (Assess @ Introduce)	Not Evident Or Not Applicable
	4	3	2	1	0 / N/A
Context of and Purpose for Writing SLO 2: Express ideas through the written word appropriate to a specific audience, purpose, rhetorical situation, and genre.	Demonstrates a thorough understanding of context, audience, and purpose that is responsive to the assigned task(s) and focuses on all elements of the work.	Demonstrates adequate consideration of context, audience, and purpose and a clear focus on the assigned task(s) (e.g., the task aligns with audience, purpose, and context).	Demonstrates awareness of context, audience, purpose, and to the assigned tasks(s) (e.g., begins to show awareness of audience's perceptions and assumptions).	Demonstrates minimal attention to context, audience, purpose, and to the assigned tasks(s) (e.g., expectation of instructor or self as audience).	<p>Did not address the established standard</p> <p>Not applicable to the assignment.</p>
Content Development SLO 4: Articulate ideas using logical support, including informed opinions and facts, and their interpretations to develop the students' ideas, avoiding fallacies, biased language, and inappropriate tone.	Uses appropriate, relevant, and compelling content to illustrate mastery of the subject, conveying the writer's understanding, and shaping the whole work.	Uses appropriate, relevant, and compelling content to explore ideas within the context of the discipline and shaping the whole work.	Uses appropriate and relevant content to develop and explore ideas through most of the work.	Uses appropriate and relevant content to develop simple ideas in some parts of the work.	<p>Missing relevant empirical and/or theoretical content</p> <p>Not applicable to the assignment.</p>
Genre and Disciplinary Conventions SLO 3: Write adhering to discipline-specific attribution standards, including in-text citation	Demonstrates detailed attention to and successful execution of a wide range of conventions particular to a specific discipline and/or writing task(s) including organization, content,	Demonstrates consistent use of important conventions particular to a specific discipline and/or writing task(s), including organization, content, presentation, and stylistic choices.	Follows expectations appropriate to a specific discipline and/or writing task(s) for basic organization, content, and presentation.	Attempts to use a consistent system for basic organization and presentation.	<p>Did not address the established standard</p> <p>Not applicable to the assignment.</p>



and reference	presentation, formatting, and stylistic choices.				
Sources and Evidence SLO 3: Write adhering to discipline-specific attribution standards, including in-text citation and reference. (APA/MLA - Relevant to the discipline).	Demonstrates skillful use of high-quality, credible, relevant sources to develop ideas that are appropriate for the discipline and genre of the writing.	Demonstrates consistent use of credible, relevant sources to support ideas that are situated within the discipline and genre of the writing.	Demonstrates an attempt to use credible and/or relevant sources to support ideas that are appropriate for the discipline and genre of the writing.	Demonstrates an attempt to use sources to support ideas in writing.	Did not address the established standard Not applicable to the assignment.
Control of Syntax and Mechanics SLO 1: Order sentences and paragraphs to communicate central points with logical connections using established syntax and minimal grammar and punctuation errors.	Uses graceful language that skillfully communicates meaning to readers with clarity and fluency and is virtually error-free.	Uses straightforward language that generally conveys meaning to readers. The language in the portfolio artifact has few errors.	Uses language that generally conveys meaning to readers with clarity, although writing may include some errors.	Uses language that sometimes impedes meaning because of errors in usage.	Substantial segments of the writing are incomprehensible due to errors. The language use is not appropriate for the genre and academic context of the assignment. Not applicable to the assignment.

