

ST. MARY'S COLLEGE COMPOSITION PROGRAM GRADING STANDARDS

	<i>The C essay is competent, exhibiting no serious or frequent deficiencies.</i>	<i>The B essay is strong in most areas.</i>	<i>The A essay excels in all areas.</i>	<i>The D essay is deficient in one or more areas.</i>
Thesis/ Purpose/ Controlling Idea	The C essay addresses the topic and offers a thesis. The thesis, however, may not explore the topic with sufficient complexity or take on a significant intellectual challenge.	The B essay exhibits intellectual engagement. It has a narrowly focused thesis, with a clear sense of purpose and audience. It explores the topic in some depth and with some complexity.	The A essay has a clearly defined, intellectually challenging focus and a strong sense of purpose and audience. It exhibits depth and complexity in its analysis and originality in its thought.	The D essay may lack a clear thesis, or the thesis may be weak or overly general.
Structure, Organization, and Development	The C essay offers support for its thesis; however, this support may not be evaluated or analyzed thoughtfully, or may tend toward plot summary. The C essay has an introduction, body, and conclusion, generally unified paragraphs, and transitions between paragraphs. However, it may proceed formulaically or mechanically (e.g. listing examples). The conclusion may not move beyond the initial thesis.	The B essay proceeds logically and offers appropriate support for its thesis. It is a generally unified essay, with a clear introduction, coherent paragraphs and effective transitions. Its conclusion does not merely restate the argument, but attempts to draw together preceding insights in a new way.	The A essay is distinguished by sound logic. It offers sufficient and appropriate support for the thesis in the form of concrete, specific and relevant evidence. It is a unified essay that proceeds coherently with an effective introduction, well-developed and unified paragraphs, graceful transitions, and a conclusion that, rather than summarizing previous points, explores the implications of the preceding analysis.	The D essay may fail to provide adequate support for its thesis in the form of textual analysis or other evidence; it may deviate from the thesis, substitute repetition for development or make inaccurate or unsupported claims. It may lack a clear structure; paragraphs may lack coherence. Transitions may be awkward or nonexistent.
Language, Style, and Syntax	The C essay employs readable prose, but the sentences may be simple and lack variety. Language may be overly general or wordy.	In the B essay, sentences are sufficiently varied. Language is generally concise and appropriate.	In the A essay, sentences are skillfully crafted and effectively varied: language is fresh, precise and economical. It maintains a consistent and appropriate tone.	The D essay often lacks variety in sentence structure and suffers from inappropriate diction and awkward syntax. Language tends to be vague, imprecise, or rambling.
Grammar, Spelling, Punctuation, Formatting, and Documentation of Sources	The C essay employs generally correct grammar, punctuation, formatting, spelling, and documentation. Errors, however, may be serious enough to detract from the effectiveness of the essay.	The B essay employs generally correct grammar, punctuation, formatting, spelling, and documentation. Errors, when they appear, do not detract from the overall effectiveness of the essay.	The A essay is almost entirely free of errors in grammar, punctuation, formatting, spelling, and documentation.	The D essay is often characterized by grammatical errors such as but not limited to fragments, comma splices, agreement errors, or inappropriate shifts in tense, voice, mood, or person. It may also be rife with spelling and punctuation errors, and be improperly formatted. It may lack documentation or be improperly documented.

The F Essay is seriously deficient. It may exhibit a poor grasp of the assignment or a lack of familiarity with assigned texts. It may be deficient in one or more of the following areas: purpose, organization and development, language, and mechanics. It may lack a clear thesis or fail to support its thesis. Other common features of failing essays are: faulty logic, ineffective organization, incoherent paragraphs, misreadings, incorrect diction, and so many syntactic and grammatical errors that the essay becomes unreadable.