

Grading Rubric for Business Writing
Comm 390
Sauder School of Business
University of British Columbia
September 2011

Grading Criteria

The following criteria are the rubric for establishing grades in the Business Writing Program.

Addressing the Tasks of the Assignment:

The extent to which the writer explores the requirements of the assignment in sufficient depth, scope and complexity. Accuracy and thoroughness in following assignment instructions is a necessary, but not sufficient, component of this criterion. Broader objectives will also be assessed, particularly how engaging, informative, persuasive, and effective the document is likely to be for the intended audience.

Argumentation & Analysis:

The extent to which the writer forms an argument based on an issue (descriptive or prescriptive), a conclusion (thesis), and the reasons used to support that conclusion. This criterion is based on the insight, cogency, and strength of analysis brought to support the conclusion, and the absence of ambiguity, unsubstantiated assumptions, and fallacies.

Organization & Structure:

The extent to which the writer arranges the argument and supporting details lucidly, both in terms of their overall structure and flow, and the individual sections and the transitions between them.

Support & Development:

The extent to which the writer substantiates reasons with compelling evidence and examples that are appropriate for the intended audience. A facility for selecting and working with both primary and secondary sources is also considered.

Syntax and Command of Language:

The extent to which the writer uses language that supports the writer's purpose and is suited to the particular audience – public, professional, or academic.

Grammar, Usage & Mechanics:

The extent to which the writer shows a mastery of grammar, punctuation, spelling, headings, and document formatting.

Expanding on each criterion:

Criteria / Topics	Underlying Values
<p>Addressing the tasks of the assignment:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Compliance with assignment instructions • Effectiveness of ideas and content: must be appropriate for the audience, persuasive, informative, engaging, • Scope: full and relevant coverage of topic • Document design, formatting, length, required sections 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Embraces the assignment scenario (content, tone, formality, etc.) and completes the formal requirements • Demonstrates sufficient levels of thought and effort to inform, persuade, and hold the interest of the intended audience. • Fully covers all aspects of the topic • Formatting typical of type of business document (memo, letter, business plan, etc.) • Length within the range given (while maintaining required formatting) • All the required components of the assignment are delivered
<p>Argumentation and analysis:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Depth and complexity of analysis and argumentation • Clarity of argument • Quality of ideas and recommendations • Overall persuasiveness of argument 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analysis and discussion well-thought out and appropriately detailed—not superficial • Clear and understandable with no ambiguity • Ideas original, relevant, specific, and innovative • Focus on relevant issues weighted appropriately
<p>Organization and structure:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overall structure of assignment • Choice of headings and heading hierarchy • Paragraphing and structure of paragraphs • Use of transitions between paragraphs and topics • Methods of presenting information • Page layout 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information is arranged logically so that the document has good flow • Logical and consistent heading hierarchy of 1-3 levels • Appropriate topical headings, descriptive, parallel, consistently capitalized • Paragraphs kept to a length that facilitates reading and understanding (not too long) • Graphics and alternative methods of presenting information used where appropriate (bullet lists, images, tables, charts, etc.) • Page design and layout typical of professional business documents (typefaces, type size, margins, etc.)

<p>Support of the argument:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appropriateness and relevancy of the facts presented • Balance of support • Relevancy of support • Quality of sources • In-text citations and bibliography 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strong support from reputable sources (Statistics Canada report vs. political blog) • Avoidance of unsupportable statements (“everyone knows that...”) • Support relevant to argument and appropriately weighted • Support provided where needed, less provided where less needed • In-text citations and list of references provided where needed, done consistently, and in compliance with accepted standards (such as MLA) • Citations integrated into text to create strong narrative argument (“A Statistics Canada report on poverty from 2001 shows that...”)
<p>Syntax and command of language:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Writing style • Point of view • Flow of language • Tone • Word choice • Sentence length and structure • Ease of understanding • Clarity • Conciseness • Avoids excessive quotation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Written in plain English: clear, direct, conversational • 1st, 2nd, or 3rd person point of view used appropriately • Sentence syntax and word choice typical of current North American business English • Skillful use of language that holds the reader’s attention. • Tone appropriate for audience and context • Lack of run-on sentences, good balance of active and passive verbs, a variety of sentence lengths to develop rhythm and flow of language. • Quotations are brief and/or paraphrased, i.e. no lengthy blocks of quoted material
<p>Grammar, usage and mechanics:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grammar, punctuation, and spelling • Typography and formatting • Capitalization • Treatment of acronyms and abbreviations • Usage conventions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Correct grammar (subject/verb, pronoun/antecedent, typical use of articles and prepositions, correct verb tenses, etc.) • Correct punctuation (placement of periods, commas, general avoidance of exclamation marks, awareness of hyphens, etc.) • Proper nouns capitalized • Headings consistently capitalized • Consistent use of recognized conventions for numbers, units of measure, dates, etc. • Minimal use of acronyms (defined on initial use when needed) • Well proofread with few or no mistakes, typos, or formatting errors

Determining the Grade

Each criterion will be rated based on the scale of 0-5 as described below.

Scale General Description

Score	
5	Excellent – At a professional level with little or no improvements needed
4	Good – Acceptable for business use, some improvements needed
3	Adequate – Barely acceptable for business use, major improvements needed
2	Needs Improvement – Not acceptable for business use, problems throughout
1	Poor – Deeply and widely flawed, major problems throughout
0	Fail — No evidence of relevant content

The total of all six numbers (divided by thirty) will be used to explain the overall grade for the assignment. The grading of a sample assignment is as follows:

Addressing the tasks of the assignment:	4
Argumentation & Analysis:	2
Organization & Structure:	3
Support & Development:	3
Syntax and Command of Language:	3
Grammar, Usage & Mechanics:	2
Total:	$\frac{17}{30} = 57\% = C-$

See Recording and Reporting Grades below for the percent to letter grade conversion.

In the above example, the student received a “C–” and the strongest skill is Addressing the Tasks of the Assignment. The student can also see that the weakest skills are Argumentation & Analysis and Grammar, Usage & Mechanics. Using this information, the student can seek consultation with the lecturer or tutor to improve these weaknesses.

Recording and Reporting Grades

All grades are to be reported in percentages. Letter grades will be assigned automatically, according to the percentage grade. Grading standards are different for Undergraduate and Graduate courses, as shown below:

Undergraduate Students		Graduate Students	
Percent	Letter Grade	Percent	Letter Grade
90 – 100	A+	90 – 100	A+
85 – 89	A	85 – 89	A
80 – 84	A-	80 – 84	A-
76 – 79	B+	76 – 79	B+
72 - 75	B	72 – 75	B
68 – 71	B-	68 – 71	B-
64 – 67	C+	64 – 67	C + “Pass” Standing
60 – 63	C	60 – 63	C
55 – 59	C-		
50 – 54	D		
0 – 49	FAIL	0 – 59	FAIL

NOTE: While the passing grade in undergraduate courses is generally 50%, academic regulations for the BCom program stipulate that in order to qualify for the BCom degree, students must complete the Business Writing course with a minimum grade of 60%.