**MOORPARK COLLEGE ENGLISH DEPARTMENT**

**GRADING CRITERIA for Expository Essays with Source Citations**

These criteria apply to typical papers in English composition and literature courses. These standards do not consider a student's effort or ability; they apply only to the finished paper itself. A grade of C is considered adequate or satisfactory. Grades of A and B represent significantly higher performances, while D and F are not passing grades. Instructor may consider the context of the paper (type/level of the course, point in the semester, in-class preparation, focus of the assignment) in assigning a grade.

**The A paper** is an outstanding performance; it may exceed the expectations of the assignment. It is thought-provoking and well-crafted. It demonstrates excellence on all levels.

THESIS: clear, specific, original, significant, insightful.

ORGANIZATION: logical, creative organization growing naturally from thesis and content; paragraphs linked to thesis and to each other using fluid transitions; strong introduction and conclusion. Source material is thoroughly and creatively integrated into student’s argument.

DEVELOPMENT: paragraphs thoroughly developed and linked by unobtrusive, organic transitions; graceful use of varied rhetorical strategies; rich variety of convincing reasons, explanations, examples, illustrations; concrete, powerful details.

INFORMATION LITERACY: sources are of the highest quality and are sufficient in number; thorough and creative use of varied source material. Quotations, summary, and paraphrases are deftly analyzed or interpreted.

LANGUAGE: grace and economy of expression; conscious choice of language; vivid, precise, original word choice.

 TONE/VOICE: authoritative, genuine authorial voice; awareness of audience.

SENTENCES: rich variety and complexity of sentence structure; free of basic errors such as fragments, run-ons, and subject/verb agreement.

 MECHANICS: mastery of conventions of edited standard English.

 MLA: quotations correctly introduced, punctuated, and formatted (e.g., blocked, when necessary). Parenthetical citations done correctly. Works Cited page follows most recent MLA guidelines; very minor, if any, formatting errors. Most recent MLA guidelines are followed.

**The B paper** is a good, better-than-average performance. It meets the expectations of the assignment. It is interesting and clearly written. It demonstrates competency on all levels.

THESIS: clear and purposeful.

ORGANIZATION: logical organization; paragraphs linked to thesis and to each other using effective transitions; well-developed introduction and conclusion. Source material is integrated into student’s own argument.

DEVELOPMENT: rhetorical strategies used as necessary; coherent paragraphs, fully developed with supporting reasons, explanations, examples, illustrations; generalizations supported with relevant, specific details.

INFORMATION LITERACY: sources are of good quality and number; appropriately varied and thorough source material; quotations, summary, and paraphrases are analyzed or interpreted.

LANGUAGE: concise sentences; accurate and effective word choice.

 TONE/VOICE: engaging authorial voice; some awareness of audience.

 SENTENCES: some variety and complexity of sentence structure; mostly free of basic

 errors such as fragments, run-ons, subject/verb agreement.

 MECHANICS: observes conventions of standard written English.

 MLA: quotations are correctly introduced, punctuated, and formatted in most instances. Parenthetical citations and Works Cited page are mostly correct. Minor formatting errors do not deter from comprehensibility of citations; all significant information included. Most recent MLA guidelines are followed.

**The C paper** represents adequate, readable college-level writing that generally responds to the assignment.

THESIS: controlling idea may be overly general or not closely linked to content of essay.

ORGANIZATION: some evidence of organization or rhetorical framework; clear beginning, middle, and end. Source material relates to student’s argument but is not smoothly integrated.

DEVELOPMENT: uses paragraphs and topic sentences; gives supporting reasons and examples, but may not be logically reasoned or fully developed.

INFORMATION LITERACY: sources are of acceptable quality and number; may not be the most relevant or current sources; quotations, summary, and paraphrases are commented upon simplistically.

LANGUAGE: clear writing, mostly accurate word choice.

 TONE/VOICE: inconsistent authorial voice; basic awareness of audience.

SENTENCES: complete, mostly correct sentences; may contain occasional grammatical or syntactical errors.

 MECHANICS: free of distracting errors of spelling and punctuation.

MLA: some errors in quotation formatting (dropped quotations, failure to block long quotes, errors in punctuation). Some content and formatting errors exist in parenthetical references and Works Cited page. Parenthetical references may not coordinate well with Works Cited entries. Most recent MLA guidelines are used primarily, though some inconsistency may occur.

**The D paper** is confusing, difficult to read, unfocused. It does not demonstrate competent college-level writing. It may fail to address all parts of the assignment.

THESIS: unclear or vague, poorly linked to content of essay.

ORGANIZATION: poorly structured or disordered. Source material is irrelevant, awkwardly placed, or not coherently integrated into paper.

DEVELOPMENT: underdeveloped; paragraphs overly long or short, arbitrarily or illogically ordered; incoherent or not unified; lack of support for ideas; lack of or errors in concrete detail; irrelevancies, redundancies, oversimplifications, filler. May not meet length requirement.

INFORMATION LITERACY: insufficient number of sources or insufficient amount of source material used. Sources are inappropriate for college-level research (dubious web page quality, lack of Library sources, outdated or irrelevant sources). Some source material is plagiarized (quotations marks not used, insufficient paraphrases, summaries of others’ ideas not attributed to sources); source material does not adequately support student’s argument; source material is not sufficiently reflected upon or interpreted.

LANGUAGE: unclear or incoherent writing.

 TONE/VOICE: little awareness of audience.

SENTENCES: wordy, confusing, or incomplete sentences; frequent grammatical or syntactical errors.

 MECHANICS: distracting mechanical errors.

 MLA: frequent, significant errors in quotation formatting. Parenthetical citations are frequently absent or inaccurate. Many errors or omissions in content and formatting of Works Cited entries. Outdated MLA formatting guidelines may be used.

**The F paper** is weak in several areas. It fails to communicate its ideas effectively. It may not address the assigned question. It may be late without instructor approval. Plagiarized papers merit an automatic F.

THESIS: lacks a thesis or controlling idea; does not address assigned topic.

ORGANIZATION: lacks organizing principle; lacks clear beginning, middle, and end; lacks clear paragraphing; lacks clear transitions. Source material is irrelevant and illogically placed.

DEVELOPMENT: severely underdeveloped; seriously and consistently illogical and/or predicated on false premises; absence of or severe errors in concrete detail.

INFORMATION LITERACY: unacceptable number and/or quality of sources. Inadequate amount of source material used in essay. Much source material is plagiarized (quotations marks not used, insufficient paraphrases, summaries of others’ ideas not attributed to sources, essay has been written by someone other than the student who claims authorship). Source material is irrelevant or contradicts student’s argument; source material is not reflected upon or interpreted.

LANGUAGE: obscure, vague writing; inaccurate word choice.

 TONE/VOICE: little or no awareness of audience.

 SENTENCES: numerous grammatical or syntactical errors.

 MECHANICS: numerous distracting mechanical errors.

 MLA: severe deficiencies in quotation formatting, parenthetical citations, and Works Cited entries; lack of parenthetical citations; missing Works Cited list. Outdated MLA formatting guidelines may be used.