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## Approaching Midterm Grades in English W131

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The following descriptions indicate what writing faculty at IUPUI look for at the passing level (C work), at the better than passing level (A or B work), and below passing level (C-, D, or F work).

When deciding what grade to give, an instructor considers the merits of a portfolio and uses the descriptions to make a decision about a grade.

In general, portfolios that reflect what is discussed in the “Passing” section below hit the mark and pass; portfolios that hit above the mark earn a higher evaluation; and portfolios that hit below the mark fail to pass.

Students are welcome to challenge a grade if they feel an instructor has misread what appears in a portfolio.

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### Passing

**Text Engagement through Writing:**

- The writer shows signs of reading critically by engaging with ideas and texts, questioning some ideas he or she reads, and adding to or enhancing others.
- The writer is able to summarize satisfactorily when engaging sources in his or her text.
- The writer shows signs of comprehending the difference between summarizing, paraphrasing, and responding to sources.
- The writer uses examples to engage his or her topic appropriately and sufficiently.

**Developmental and Organizational Strategies:**

- The writer uses questions and prewriting activities to generate drafts.
- Essay introductions lead readers into the essay and introduce the essay’s topic.
- The writer is recognizing the value of using a variety of organizational patterns that promote his or her purpose, the interests of the audience, and the communication of the main idea of the essay.
- The writer is using paragraph topic sentences to relate an essay’s main idea (its thesis or theme).
- The writer attempts to use supporting details in paragraphs to expand ideas.
- The writer is realizing that strategies of coherence (transitional phrasing and the thoughtful repetition, restatement, or “echoing” of words and phrases) help move a reader forward through an essay.
- The writer is attempting to close essays in an appropriate and even meaningful way.

**Develop Ideas Beyond Familiar Thinking:**

- The writer attempts to move beyond familiar thinking by engaging with outside ideas.
- The writer works to develop reasonable questions, responses, and assertions.
- The writer attempts original ideas in his or her papers and shows signs of wanting to keep readers’ needs in mind.

**Revision:**

- The writer responds to feedback from peers and instructor by implementing changes in a text.
- The writer revises aspects of his or her paper as ideas are challenged.

**Final Product:**

- The papers follow instructions and guidelines.
- It is apparent that papers address interesting questions.
- The papers show focus.
- Drafts may have grammar and usage errors, but they do not interfere with the clarity of ideas.
- Evidence of revision appears.
- The writer can write thoughtfully about his or her process of composing and drafting a paper in writer’s statements.
- The writer is learning to use the retrospective to make claims about goal achievement in the course.
- Each paper has as a title that summarizes what the essay is about.
- MLA documentation style is used appropriately with few errors.

## Better than Passing

### **Text Engagement through Writing:**

- It is obvious that engagement with the reading is leading the writer to feel the need to write; the writer appears inspired.
- Because of how the writer uses examples, the essays of the portfolio prove more interesting to read.
- The examples the writer uses show a deeper engagement with the topic.

### **Developmental and Organizational Strategies:**

- Drafts of the portfolio are compelling to read because the writer grapples with complexity from draft to draft.
- Drafts of the portfolio become stronger as one reads them.
- It is apparent the writer has thought carefully about how to organize the papers found in the portfolio; the writing stays on track.
- Textual features like transitional phrasing and the thoughtful repetition, restatement, or “echoing” of words and phrases help to create topical coherence in the essay, leading to compelling reading.
- Reflective writing shows the writer can thoughtfully assess his or her writing and his or her writing process.
- Reflective writing shows the writer has a sense of comfort with the writing process.

### **Develop Ideas Beyond Familiar Thinking:**

- The writer shows that intellectual complexity is an important priority.
- The writer obviously takes risks with his or her thinking.
- The writer sees value in challenging his or her thinking or the thinking of others; the result is the writer expresses creative ideas and insights.
- The writer creatively adapts to the assignments.

### **Revision:**

- The writer moves beyond his or her initial conceptions while revising. In the process, subject matter changes are apparent between drafts.
- The writer thoughtfully responds to peer and instructor response.
- Work with the language leads to writing that is both engaging and clear. (In fact, it may be so good that you don’t notice it.)

### **Final Product:**

- The writer shows a good sense of style through stylistic devices like repetition, use of metaphor, and use of sentence variety.
- As a result of the work with style and stylistic devices, a voice is apparent that is sincere, confident, and best of all, enthusiastic.
- The writer appears to have fun with the language.
- The writer obviously makes a personal investment in the writing (the texts read as if the writer “owns” or feels quite comfortable discussing the topics).
- A clear thesis (or theme, if relevant to the type of essay) appears and the details support an insightful point of view.
- Paper titles are catchy.
- MLA documentation style is used well.

## Below Passing

### Text Engagement through Writing:

- Few examples may be used to back up ideas.
- If sources are used, the writer misses the point or misinterprets the sources.
- Sources are used in bits and pieces scattered all over the essay rather than used cohesively (they appear to be dropped in).
- There is little to no interaction (or conversation) with the sources (sources are mentioned but the ideas from the sources are not discussed or are discussed with little insight into what the source is talking about).
- Few citations appear, which suggests that the writer fails to understand that sources need documentation and credit.

### Developmental and Organizational Strategies:

- The writing lacks purpose, suggesting the writer is struggling with how to express his or her ideas.
- There is weak organizational structure.
- Essays may be hard to follow because the writer writes assuming the reader will already know what he or she is referring to; the writer does little work to help audience members move from the beginning of the essay to the end.
- Reflective writing offers weak analysis of the writer's own process.

### Develop Ideas Beyond Familiar Thinking:

- The writing in the portfolio shows that no risk taking is occurring.
- Essays depend too much on binary thinking, which means that the writer seeks quick and easy yes-no answers rather than attempts to understand the complexity of issues.

### Revision:

- Revision is superficial, because based on a literal reading of what the instructor wants rather than a thoughtful analysis of how an essay may better appeal to an audience (the writer just follows the directions of the teacher).
- Because little time has been put into revising, the essays are less polished: it is obvious that additional drafts are needed

### Final Product:

- Papers are written as if book reports for the teacher rather than essays for a larger audience.
- The writer struggles to complete assignment goals.
- A reader may come away from the essay thinking, "I expected more."
- The essays become less and less reader friendly the more one reads.
- Essays may follow what an assignment asks, but offer an audience few insights.
- Problems with grammar and usage interfere with clarity.
- Failure to document appropriately using MLA style: there are serious errors.