

## Rubric for Formative Peer Review of Papers

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### Purpose

Formative exercises such as this may generate a grade for participation, but should not generate a summative grade for the papers themselves, as only teachers of record have the authority to assign such grades. The goal of engaging students in peer reviews of papers is to prompt students to carefully read each other's work with an eye to the criteria used by experts in the field to assess the quality of the work. In using rubrics for formative exercises, instructors may increase students' awareness of the general and discrete criteria that scholars seek in academic papers, and increase students' sensitivity to the standards of performance, so that they may be better able to distinguish subtle but important differences between achievement that is accomplished and achievement that is exemplary, and achievement that is accomplished and emerging or nascent.

The objective of formative work is also to provide students with insights as to the strengths and limitations of their work prior to the submission of that work for a summative grade. Formative work may include proof-reading of rough drafts of papers, rough drafts of presentations, reports for field work, or outlines for research.

### Logistics

Instructors may facilitate peer reviews in class or assign them as homework. The advantage of assigning the exercise in class is that the instructor is present and able to respond to questions or concerns immediately as student encounter challenging material.

The formative exercise may require students to "grade" their classmate's work, but the students' papers will not receive a summative grade. Instead, students will receive credit for participating in the formative exercise. Instructors have the option of asking students to compose a paragraph that speaks to what they learned as result of participating in the exercise, and may earn credit for doing so.

### Sample

The following rubric may be used in formative assessments of students' compositions. Note that it steers students' attention not only to the criteria or elements that will be assessed, but also describes the characteristics of various levels of achievement.

The number of points associated with each level of achievement may be adjusted so that it is compatible with the instructor's grading scheme. It is vital for instructors to use the same rubric when grading students' work for summative grades as students used in their formative exercises. This reinforces the consistency of expectations for student work, and allows students to focus on criteria they know will be used to generate summative grades.

Note that the sample rubric emphasizes composition skills as well as the quality of personal reflection.

**Sample Rubric for Assessing A Short (2-page) Reflection Paper (based on 20 points)**

<b>Criteria</b>	<b>Exemplary (5)</b>	<b>Accomplished (4)</b>	<b>Emerging (3)</b>	<b>Nascent (2-1)</b>
Introduction	Background is highly developed; well-focused on purpose of assignment; context of discussion and main ideas are clear and abundant	Background is largely developed; good focus on purpose of assignment; context of discussion and main ideas are mostly clear and sufficient	Background is moderately developed; focus on purpose inconsistent; context of discussion and main ideas are few and sometimes vague	Background is not well-developed; lacks focus on purpose; context of discussion and main ideas are vague or underdeveloped
Development of Main Ideas	Excellent analysis; offers multiple insights; composition is rich with sensitivity and fair approach to issues and personal attitudes; outstanding use of relevant evidence to support assertions	Good analysis; offers some insights; the composition is fair and sensitive to issues and personal attitudes is adequate; use of relevant evidence to support assertions is sufficient	Moderate analysis; offers few insights; sensitivity to and fair treatment of issues and personal attitudes is inconsistent or underdeveloped; use of relevant evidence to support assertions is marginal	Lacks analysis and offers few insights; composition offers little sensitivity to issues and treatment of personal attitudes; evidence to support assertions often not explored or irrelevant
Organization and Formatting	Consistently strong topic sentences followed by supports with relevant and very deep discussion; exemplary application of formatting requirements	Generally strong topic sentences followed by supports with relevant and some deep discussion; application of formatting some minor errors in required formatting	Sufficient topic sentences; supports are largely relevant but underdeveloped; several minor errors in formatting requirements	Inconsistent or weak topic sentences; supports often relevant, tangential, or vague; several major errors in required formatting
Grammar and Spelling	Exemplary; masterful use of grammar; void of spelling errors	Generally good; some minor errors in grammar and/or spelling	Emerging; several minor and major grammatical and spelling errors	Beginning; many major and minor grammatical and spelling errors