

Guide to the Grading of Essay Questions

In order to reduce the subjectivity of grading essays and to provide the student with guidelines for answering essay questions, this class will use the following standards in grading essay questions on tests.

The student will receive points for the essay as he or she includes the proper form and content as outlined below. For example, including a proper introduction will count +1 and lack of an introduction would be 0 points.

Essays will normally be worth 15 points.

Form

1. Introduction (either paragraph or topic sentence): +1
2. Conclusion (either paragraph or summary sentence): +1
3. Proper essay format (not a list, etc.): +1

Content

1. Addressing the question posed: +1
2. Logical outline of thought: +1
3. Relation of content to main point: +1
4. Correct factual content and support: +1 for each correct fact or interpretive point; -1 for each incorrect fact or interpretive point

Please note: The goal is not simply to cram facts into the essay but to offer factual evidence in support of each point the student is making. *Factual content can never exceed a total of +8 on a single question.* If the professor believes the supporting evidence inadequate—even when there are sufficient points to total +8—he may subtract a point (-1).

Also, use *specific evidence*, not generalities, to support your points. Do not write simply, “The Nixon administration fell because of political corruption.” Write instead, “The Nixon administration fell because of corrupt acts, such as the cover-up of the Watergate burglary and charges that Vice President Agnew took bribes.”

Overall Quality

1. Coherence: A final point (+1) will be awarded or not awarded as the professor sees fit regarding whether the essay displays an overall coherence in style and form.
2. Bonus: If the professor finds an essay to be of especially good quality, he may add a bonus (+1). This is the only case in which the total for an essay question can exceed 15 points.

After reviewing each essay, the professor will assign a number value (e.g., +14) to be added to the score on other portions of the exam.

Keep in mind that the overall goal of essay questions is to develop and to demonstrate writing and analytical skills. The essays should help the student develop a writing style that is clear, logical, and comprehensible.

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