

Rubric to Evaluate MA Comprehensive Exam Essays (Part 2)

16 – 13 = High Pass; 12 – 9 = Pass; 8 – 7 = Low Pass; 6 – 4 = Fail

	4: High Pass	3: Pass	2: Low Pass	1: Fail
I. Argumentation	A thoughtful, well-constructed argument that responds to the prompt and is supported by evidence gleaned from thorough consideration of the texts on the reading list. The essay contains a clear thesis and is grounded in careful analysis of the texts.	Presents a significant argument about the texts on the reading list that addresses all aspects of the prompt. One or more areas might need additional explanation or clarification.	Presents an insignificant argument that addresses most of the aspects of the prompt. The low pass fails to illuminate anything significant or present any original insights.	Fails to make an argument or adequately address the prompt
II. Evidence	Uses the text as evidence well and includes insightful close reading and analysis. Integrates quotations well and includes correct citations.	Uses the text as evidence sufficiently but might occasionally provide inadequate close reading and analysis. A 3 paper might also struggle with integration of the quotes and or citation.	Includes minimal textual evidence with little or no close reading and analysis. Struggles with integrating quotations and might contain incorrect citations.	Fails to include close reading or evidence gleaned from the text.
III. Content and Organization	In addition to meeting the requirements for a “3,” excels in the organization and representation of ideas related to the topic. Raises important issues or ideas that may not have been represented in the literature cited. Would serve as a good basis for further research on the topic	Follows all requirements for the essay. Topic is carefully focused. Clearly outlines the major claims related to the topic; ideas are logically arranged to present a sound scholarly argument. The essay is interesting and holds the reader’s attention. Shows credible knowledge of relevant works used from the reading list. General ideas are elaborated upon in a logical manner thereby extending the significance of the evidence from the works cited from the reading list.	Ideas presented follow conventional ideas with little elaboration and development of new directions. Certain logical connections or inclusion of specific examples from the reading list seems inadequate. Ideas and concepts are generally satisfactorily presented although lapses in logic and organization are apparent. The reader is suitably introduced to the subject, but ideas details and claims seem to be muddled.	The essay may be logically and thematically coherent, but is lacking in substantial ways. The content may be poorly focused, provide insufficient examples from the reading list, and may lack a logical flow. Lacks smooth transitions. Overall, the content and organization needs significant revision to represent a critical analysis of the topic.
IV. Mechanics	In addition to meeting the requirements for a “3,” the essay is essentially error-free in terms of mechanics. Writing flows smoothly from one idea to another. Transitions effectively establish a sound scholarly argument and aid the reader in following the writer’s logic.	While there may be minor errors, the essay follows normal conventions of spelling and grammar throughout. Errors do not significantly interfere with topic comprehensibility. Transitions and organizational structures, such as subheadings, are effectively used which help the reader move from one point to another.	Grammatical conventions are generally used, but inconsistency and/or errors in their use result in weak, but still apparent, connections between topics in the formulation of the argument. There is poor elaboration on claims and/or lack of coherence to keep the reader on track within the topic. Effective discipline-specific vocabulary is used.	Frequent errors in spelling, grammar, sentence structure, and/or other writing conventions make reading difficult and interfere with comprehensibility. There is some confusion in the proper use of discipline-specific terms. Writing does not flow smoothly from claim to claim; appropriate transitions are lacking.

INSTRUCTIONS: Apply this rubric to each essay and assign a value to each of the 4 areas. The grade will be determined based on the sum of the values.

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