# Essay Self-Evaluation Checklist

**Instructions:** Put an “X” or check mark in the blanks on the left of the page when you have read over your essay and have done what is asked. Attach **this** **page** to your essay when you hand it in.

**\_\_\_\_\_ The essay begins with an introductory paragraph that includes:**

* A statement of the source materials you are discussing.
* A statement of the problem that you are considering or topic that you are addressing, including just enough context to allow a general understanding of the problem or topic.
* A thesis statement that briefly indicates:
  + Your position or argument related to your essay’s problem or topic.
  + How your discussion will break this problem or topic down into smaller, related parts.

**\_\_\_\_\_ The essay is organized into proper paragraphs, each of which:**

* Develops a sub-topic or works out an argument point related to your thesis.
* Begins with a topic sentence that answers the question “what is this paragraph **about**?”
* includes explanations (in your own words) of the idea or topic the paragraph elaborates.
* relates your explanations to source material or evidence (ie. a primary text or scholarly article), and provides appropriate citation information for that reference.

**\_\_\_\_\_ The essay’s writinghas been checked.**

* It is free from spelling, grammatical and syntactical (ie. sentence structure) errors.
* Its language is clear, direct and free of vague or confusing word choices.

**\_\_\_\_\_ The essay’s argument has been checked.**

* The paper defines a problem, question or project related to its topic with **insight** and **nuance**.
* The argument develops clearly and logically through the paragraphing of the paper in a way that is consistent with what is indicated in the opening paragraph.
* The arguments in the paper satisfy the **ARtS** criteria:
  + **Acceptable**: the premises accurately reflect the evidence; key terms are clearly defined.
  + **Relevant** to the **thesis**: premises and supporting evidence are “on topic.”
  + **Sufficient**: the thesis is supported by enough evidence, and the presented evidence is representativeof the whole range of available evidence (not cherry-picked).

**\_\_\_\_\_ The essay is formatted according to MLA or CMS-NB style (as per instructor’s directions).**

* It has title; your name and ID#; course # and name; instructor’s name and the submission date.
* The paper is double-spaced, with one-inch margins, 12-point font, and has your last name and a page number at the upper-right header of each page after the first.
* All references are cited using the **MLA** or **CMS-NB** format, and all citations refer to a bibliographic entry on the “Works Cited” or “Bibliography” page.

\_\_\_\_\_ **I understand the grading scheme (see below) that will be used to evaluate my essay.**

\_\_\_\_\_ **I am the author of this essay. Words and ideas not attributed to others are my own, or common knowledge. I understand that the failure to properly attribute others’ words and ideas constitutes plagiarism, that plagiarism is a form of academic fraud, that Laurier can take disciplinary against plagiarists, and that the Laurier Senate allows this paper to be electronically checked for plagiarism**.

Student Signature: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

# Grade Scales

Humanities writing is not graded by deducting "marks" from some imagined perfect paper that would get 100%, but by measuring the writing against the **expected competence** of the student at that level. Grade scales and expectations vary slightly by discipline, instructor, and year level, but "**competence**"usually indicates the point where expectations are set (usually close to 70%: a B- or a C+) and is often expected to be close to a mean outcome for an average class at that level.

**Most humanities instructors measure competence in terms of both the technical proficiency of the essay's writing and the strength of the essay's argument.**

“**Proficiency of** **Writing.**” A well-written essay is clear, concise and uses the most appropriate words in the most direct sentence structure possible. It builds its argument through clearly defined paragraphs that each articulate a premise in support of a position set out in the thesis statement. It is formatted in the scholarly style stipulated by the instructor, with appropriately formatted citations and bibliographic information.

“**Strength of** **Argument.**” The first measure of the essay’s argument lies in how well – with how much nuance, subtlety and clarity of definition – its **problem** or **topic** is framed in terms of a **thesis statement**: the set of claims related to the problem or topic that the argument defends. The second measure of argument lies in the **strength** of the argument or **precision** of your description. You can check for strength by remembering **ARtS**: Is the argument **Acceptable**to a reasonable person? (i.e. Is the evidence accurately represented, and are the key terms clearly defined?) Are the arguments **Relevant** to the **thesis**? (i.e. Do they directly support your claims, or are they off-topic?) And are they **Sufficient***?* (i.e. Do the premises adequately account for the available evidence, or do they cherry-pick evidence to support the argument while ignoring evidence that doesn’t fit?) The third measure of the argument's strength is its **explanatory power:** how much insight and ingenuity is shown in the analysis of the evidence and the formulation of the argument.

* **A+ (90-100): Extraordinary.** Significantly exceeds argument and writing expectations in every way.
* **A (85-90): Excellent.** Significantly exceeds expectations in almost every way.
* **(80-84): Exceptionally good.** Significantly exceeds expectations in most ways, with isolated weaknesses.
* **B+ (77-79): Very good.** On the whole, well above average expectations, with a few isolated weaknesses.
* **B (74-76): Good.** On the whole, exceeds average expectations but may have significant isolated weaknesses.
* **(71-73): Fairly good.** Meets or exceeds most expectations, though may fall below in some aspects.
* **C+ (67-69): Competent.** On average, meets basic expectations.
* **C (64-66): Fairly Competent.** Falls slightly below basic expectations in either argument or writing.
* **(60-63): Barely Competent.** Falls significantly below expectations in either argument or writing.
* **D+ (57-59): Passing.** Falls significantly below expectations in both argument and writing.
* **D (54-56): Barely Passing.** Either writing or argument is below minimum standards.
* **(50-53): Borderline.** Close to minimum standardsin either writing or argument, below in the other
* **F (50 or less): Fail.** Clearly below minimum standards in both argument or writing.