

# CONTENT RUBRIC

## CONTROVERSIAL ISSUE ESSAY

### 6 Superior

A **superior paper** commands attention because of its insightful development and mature style. The writing is confident, purposeful, coherent, and clearly focused. Writers establish themselves as informed, knowledgeable individuals often with a stake in the issue at hand. A strong stand based on a clearly focused thesis impresses the reader with its power and unity. The issue is clearly defined. Writers create a compelling argument with sound, fully-developed reasoning and solid evidence, including information from the article. Counter-arguments are acknowledged and effectively refuted.

Characteristics of a **6** paper:

- Smooth and seamless organization
- Compelling introduction and effective conclusion
- Sophisticated, surprising word choice
- Well-crafted, varied sentences
- Attribution of sources provided
- Sustained quality throughout

### 5 Strong

A **strong paper** communicates the writer's position in a purposeful, coherent, and focused argument. Although writers clearly define the controversial issue, they may not engage readers as skillfully or be as aware of the audience throughout the essay as in a 6 paper. Writers take a strong stance and maintain a consistent position throughout. Writers support a convincing argument with sound reasoning and solid evidence, including information from the article. Counter arguments are both acknowledged and addressed but may not be as effectively refuted as they are in a 6 paper.

Characteristics of a **5** paper:

- Addresses the prompt with thoroughness
- Logical organization
- Strong introduction or conclusion
- Effective word choice
- Strong, varied sentences
- Attribution of sources provided

### 4 Adequate

An **adequate paper** exhibits an acceptable level of writing competence, although it lacks the purposeful development or stylistic command of the 5 and 6 essays. The stance is clear and consistent but less authoritative; it may be more simplistic and lack the commitment of a 5 or 6 paper. Writers support the position taken with some logical, relevant arguments and evidence, including information from the article. Counter arguments may be acknowledged, but not adequately addressed. Reasons may not be as thoughtful or as developed as those found in a 5 or 6 paper. Characteristics of a **4** paper:

- Organizational plan with some supportive detail
- Introduction and conclusion present
- Appropriate but not dynamic word choice
- Some sentence variety
- Attribution of sources at least attempted

**\* NOTE: Attribution means giving the name of the author and the name of the book, article, or internet documents from which you have taken statistics or quotations.**

### 3 Minimal

A **minimal paper** addresses the prompt. The writer's tone may seem unconvincing or unsure. While the writing may contain some insights, it may also demonstrate superficial or unclear thinking. Writers provide a brief explanation of the issue, making at least reference to the article. Although the writer's stance may seem to waiver by overcommitting to counter arguments, it does return to the central argument. The thesis may not be easily identifiable, but the writer has taken a stance. Arguments may be quickly sketched and may seem slightly confused. Reasons may be brief or illogical. Counter arguments may not be presented. Characteristics of a **3** paper:

- Some sense of organization
- Introduction or conclusion may be missing or inadequate
- Predictable word choice
- Repetitive or simple sentences
- **May attempt attribution of sources; no obvious plagiarism**

### 2 Weak

A **weak paper** may be sketchy and brief or fail to develop ideas. Writers may not explain the issue. They may not take a stand or may veer from, contradict, or abandon their stand. There may be no clear thesis. Writers may not give reasons to support their arguments. The evidence presented may be vague, irrelevant, illogical, or thinly developed. Characteristics of a **2** paper:

- Vague or confusing organization
- No counter arguments presented
- Simplistic or inappropriate word choice
- Lack of sentence variety
- Plagiarism may be obvious; words or phrases may be copied directly without quotation marks

### 1 Inadequate

An **inadequate paper** suggests severe difficulties in reading and writing conventional English. Writers touch on the prompt but may seem unsure or confused by the task. The writing may be incoherent and is usually very brief (it may be only three or four sentences). Writers may neither state the issue nor take a stand. No reasons or evidence may be given. Characteristics of a **1** paper:

- Lacks organization
- Limited or inappropriate word choice
- No sentence variety or clarity
- No stance or unclear stance
- No counterarguments are presented
- May be mostly or wholly plagiarized

### OT Off Topic

An **off-topic paper** does not merely *stray* from the topic; it has absolutely no connection to the prompt. If the writer mentions key words from the prompt, score the paper.

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