

Criteria for Marks (Essays and other Writing Assignments)

Emily Parke

08/2013

A-range papers are well-written, clearly organized, and exhibit mastery of the material. They make impressive, well-thought-out points about the issue at hand. They go beyond merely repeating points discussed in class and in course readings, demonstrating intellectual creativity. (Note: In undergraduate writing, intellectual creativity does not necessarily mean coming up with a point nobody has ever thought of before. Examples of creativity include raising thoughtful points that build on ideas covered in class, discussing interesting connections between the topic or argument at hand and other topics or arguments, or using new examples to support your reasoning). The author anticipates objections to her views and responds to them effectively. If a paper is not clearly written it will not merit a mark in the A-range. This is because good, clear writing and organization are necessary for communicating good, clear philosophical thinking.

B-range papers display solid knowledge of the material. They do not warrant an A-range mark because they make an important error or two, or numerous small errors, in answering the question. Alternately, they may be largely descriptive, canvassing the terrain covered in class without offering new bits of analysis or insight. They might have a few mistakes or obscurities, but no serious problems or misunderstandings. Overall, the author has shown that she understands the material and has put some good thought into discussing it and developing a coherent argument.

C-range papers have more serious problems. These can include (but are not limited to) the paper being very hard to read; lacking discernible structure; the author not appearing to understand the text or positions she is discussing; seriously misrepresenting the views of other authors; or the paper not attempting to offer a clear argument of its own.

D-range papers have more problems. They may simply contain so many grammatical and spelling errors that the author's intended meaning fails to come across. Or they may be well-written (grammatically speaking) but get the facts wrong, showing lack of comprehension of the readings or class discussions. They may fail to come close to providing a comprehensive answer to the question. Those are examples; it is difficult to give a general gloss because the problems can be quite varied.