

Read the question carefully to understand what the student is asked to do. When scoring a paper, do so holistically, considering it in light of the following criteria. Give appropriate weight to what the student does well and recognize that not all criteria for a particular scoring category may apply to every essay. Booklets with no response or responses that argue with or avoid the question entirely should be given to the question leader.

## POSSIBLE SCORES

### 3 - COMPETENT

*A competent essay is characterized by the following features:*

- Demonstrates a sound understanding of the question and thoroughly answers it
- Thoughtfully engages the question and maintains focus, reveals a clear sense of purpose, and forwards a strong thesis or main point
- Is effectively organized, demonstrating a sense of structure, purposeful paragraphing, an effective introduction, a thoughtful conclusion, and helpful transitions
- Contains apt supporting details and examples, as well as a solid sense of appropriate evidence
- Presents an argument that is cogent, logical, and fully developed
- Reveals a clear grasp of proper sentence structure and some variety of syntax

### 2 - DEVELOPING COMPETENCE

*An essay demonstrating developing competence is characterized by the following features:*

- Demonstrates a general understanding of the question, but may respond to some aspects of the prompt more fully or effectively than to others
- Maintains a degree of focus, while forwarding a plausible thesis
- Is organized, and provides adequate paragraphs and transitions; introduction and conclusion are present, but either or both may be less than thoroughly developed
- Contains some supporting details and provides adequate evidence
- Presents an argument that is coherent, reasonable, and adequately developed
- May include some sentence-level errors, but not enough to cast doubt on the writer's mastery over basic conventions of written English

### 1 - INCOMPETENT

*An incompetent essay demonstrates one of more of the following problems:*

- Fails to comprehend the question, either misunderstanding the prompt or seriously distorting it
- Is unfocused, lacks a sense of purpose, and/or fails to forward a thesis
- Is unorganized and/or poorly paragraphed
- Relies on insufficient evidence, failing to provide specific or relevant details
- Is incoherent, illogical and/or insufficiently developed
- Demonstrates a pattern of errors that casts doubt on the writer's mastery over basic conventions of written English