Grading Standards for the Writing Program at Stetson University

The faculty of the English Department have high standards for academic writing, and we try to pass those standards on to our ENGL 100 and ENGL 101 students. What many freshmen do not understand or are not prepared for is the rigor with which academic writing is graded; while many entering students have consistently earned As in their previous writing courses, freshmen are often shocked to see that those writing skills are considered average by Stetson faculty. We believe in maintaining grade ethics: we will not inflate a course grade over and above the student's actual achievement, and we will not give grades of B and A without warrant.

In general, A writing is characterized by absolute clarity and original thought. No essay earns an A if it is not outstanding, academically challenging, and excellent. As are NOT awarded for completing the assignment or for working hard; while we appreciate effort, effort does not guarantee superior grades. Rather, As are awarded for rich and full detail, adroit transitions and effective arrangement, ethical and broad research, successful and vivid development and use of the individual voice, and quality of thought, expressed in high quality prose.

In general, B writing is characterized by above average achievement. An essay earning a B is one that demonstrates most of the qualities of average writing, illuminated in some spots by evidence of excellence: for instance, while organization may be sound throughout the essay, a superb introduction and conclusion might reflect "above average" skill in this area. Few mechanical errors are present. A B essay is often considered a C essay with some extra "good stuff"—style, voice, humor, and so on.

In general, C writing is average and expected writing. The essay has no particular lacks or weaknesses, but neither does it demonstrate excellence. Organization is coherent if slightly inconsistent, use of evidence is often limited to one or two kinds, and the essay sounds somewhat anonymous. Mechanical errors are present but not intrusive. Most students are average writers when they enter Stetson.

In general, D writing falls below the average mark in two ways: meeting the assignment and mechanical proficiency. Writing that is off topic, doesn't address the assignment, or ignores one or more elements of the assignment is below average; mechanical errors that interfere with the reading process are clearly below average. Incomplete essays, or essays that do not get revised, are often D level essays that could be raised to C essays with substantial work.

In general, F writing fails to meet the assignment, fails to show effort at passing the course, fails the ethical expectations or in some other irreparable way falls far, far short of being acceptable work. An F on just one essay does not mean a failing grade for the course; an F on the research project cannot be made up and requires the student to retake the entire course.