TO: Peter Whiting, Director of SAGES
                Kim Emmons, Incoming Director of the Writing Program
                T. Kenny Fountain, Outgoing Director of the Writing Program
                Gusztav Demeter, Coordinator of ESL Writing
                Michael Householder, Associate Director of SAGES
                Megan Jewell, Director of the Writing Resource Center
                Martha Schaffer, Associate Director of the Writing Program

CC: The 2018 Portfolio Assessment Committee: Michael Benard (Biology), Marc Buchner (Engineering), Jennifer Butler (Psychological Sciences), Lisa Camp (Engineering), Eric Chilton (English), Corbin Covault (Physics), Cristián Gómez Olivares (Modern Languages) Caitlin Kelly (English), Jane Marek (Nursing), Gabrielle Parkin (English), Beverly Saylor (Earth, Environmental, and Planetary Sciences), Geneviève Sauvé (Chemistry), John Wiehl (English)

FROM: Erika Olbricht (English), Committee Coordinator

SUBJECT: **SAGES Writing Portfolio Assessment Committee Report**

DATE: June 2018

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The 2018 SAGES Writing Portfolio Assessment Committee, consisting of 14 faculty members from across the university, read and evaluated 1123 student portfolios submitted between May 2017 and May 2018.

The committee's overall holistic assessment found 69% of students' portfolios to be Proficient or Acceptable, which, while somewhat lower than last year's 76%, is in line with the previous two years' numbers (2015: 68%, 2016, 73%; see table 17). The committee found that 18% of students were writing at the Proficient, or highest, level. The highest-scoring category, Readability, was assessed at 77% Proficient or Acceptable (see table 17), with only 2% of portfolios falling in the Unacceptable range. The criterion of Readability has been in previous years students' consistent strength.

Points of interest and concern to the committee are as follows:

- The 2018 holistic results, as in previous years, suggest strong positive programmatic influence on student writing, but continue to show that students' lowest Proficient scores are in the areas of Argument and Evidence (see table 14), which is correlated with the findings from reading research essays (see table 1). The committee found that students

are too often unable to truly weigh and incorporate evidence from their sources, leaving some papers with weak evidence for poorly-constructed arguments. Students tend to use their sources mostly to provide factual information rather than integrating them into the writer's argument as evidence or pushing against those sources to present counterarguments or opposing viewpoints.

- In their reflective essays, students are often eloquent defenders of the SAGES program, detailing its effectiveness in their writing development, the direction it provided to their interests and future majors, as well as crediting it for an increase in their confidence levels with writing and giving presentations. The committee wants to remind the university community that our students' almost always positive opinions about the program should matter in our assessment of its effectiveness, even when those reflective essays provide (often thoughtful) feedback critical of the program.

The committee's major recommendation is that seminar leaders continue to develop students' understanding of academic argumentative writing, particularly the sequence of claims-reasons-evidence and counterarguments as the essential elements of a writer's persuasive argument.

HISTORY

SAGES writing portfolios have always required the following four components: a Reflective Essay, a First Seminar essay, a University Seminar Essay, and a Research Essay from their other University Seminar. During the SAGES pilot and first years of implementation (2002-2008), faculty evaluation of student writing portfolios focused solely on assessing individual portfolios, in order to provide feedback to students who submitted them as a graduation requirement.

In June 2009, the portfolio review process was modified to provide programmatic feedback on student writing to SAGES and English Department Writing Program administrators. From 2009-2014 a consistent but evolving process was used to assess portfolios. In that time period, the committee increasingly stressed argument-based writing rather than report-based writing; subsequent years show more argument writing identified in portfolios. For example, in 2009, the committee found that only 66% of research essays contained arguments; in 2016, that number had risen to 87%. See previous years' reports (at writing.case.edu) for additional details.

In 2014-15, SAGES adopted a new set of Student Learning Outcomes (see appendix 1). Therefore, in order to more closely align with the new outcomes, the writing portfolio assessment categories and rubrics were modified significantly. In response to previous years' committee concerns about weaknesses in the research essay, this newer reading process began with a detailed assessment of the research essay from randomly selected students' portfolios. The resulting changes to the portfolio reading process signified a break in continuity with previous years' results. The data we collected in 2015 established a new descriptive benchmark for the assessment of student writing that now serves as the basis for subsequent committee evaluation.

As a result, since 2016, we have used similar assessment criteria and rubrics for the assessment of portfolios (see appendix 2), and continued the practice of closely evaluating selected research essays.

METHODOLOGY

As has been the practice since 2015, this year's reading process was divided into two parts. First, each reader assessed the research essay from 25 randomly chosen portfolios. Then, each portfolio was read holistically. (See appendix 2 for rubrics and instructions to readers.) Committee members met for three full days of discussion based on their assessments of approximately 80 portfolios each.

The first committee meeting day was spent discussing the research essay rubric, anchor research essays, and sample research papers in order to calibrate reader assessment of the research essays. Readers had seven days to read the research essays and enter data into a Qualtrics survey form.

The second meeting day (a week later) was split between discussing initial impressions of the data gathered from the research essay assessments and discussing the holistic reading process, the anchor portfolios (those portfolios designated to define each performance category), and three calibration portfolios. Readers had twelve days to read portfolios (an average of 80 per reader) and enter data into a Qualtrics survey form.

The third meeting day was used to discuss the holistic data generated and the review process itself, and to draft the committee's conclusions and recommendations for classroom instruction and program implementation. Readers completed questionnaires where they articulated their own conclusions and interpretations of the data.

The coordinator drafted this report based on notes from the discussions and reader questionnaires; committee members were asked to offer feedback on the report before it was made public.

RESULTS

Results of the research essay evaluation and holistic assessment are included below.

Research Essay Evaluation Results

In their portfolios, students must submit a research essay from one of their university seminars. The online portfolio submission guidelines explicitly define the genre of this essay:

> By "research essay," SAGES means a sustained engagement with an academic conversation - summarizing and critiquing what others have said on your topic - that includes your own novel claim or argument. This paper must do more than catalog the research you have done (i.e., an annotated bibliography is not sufficient); it should demonstrate your ability to synthesize academic research on a specific topic and to offer your own analysis or critical intervention. Such a paper will have a single controlling idea that represents your own thinking about the topic ….The research paper should be approximately 10-12 pages long …. The research essay must integrate and cite primary and/or secondary source material and include a properly formatted bibliography. (sages.case.edu)

Each reader assessed the research essay from 25 of their assigned portfolios, for a total of 350 essays, or 31% of portfolios. The committee was pleased to see that the research essays as a whole addressed a wide diversity of topics that often allowed students to explore their passions and develop new areas of interest, which they reported in their reflective essays. Sixty-three percent of research papers were assessed overall at Proficient or Acceptable (see table 1).

As in years past, the evaluative ratings continue to indicate that the quality of argumentation needs significant improvement. The three weakest criteria in the overall assessment of the research essay were: the Thesis Statement, Reasoning/Development of the Argument, and the Use of Evidence. (This finding is consistent with data since 2015.) In each case, more than a third of papers were at the Developing or Unacceptable level in those three categories (42%, 46%, and 40%, respectively; see table 1).

A category closely related to Argument is the Quality and Use of Evidence. This year, the percentage of Quality of Evidence (68%, Proficient or Acceptable; see table 1) suggests relative stability in the data (2015: 73%; 2016: 69%; 2017: 74%). This consistency suggests that a majority of students are able to locate and cite good sources. However, the Use of that Evidence—how it is incorporated into the paper and engaged by the writer—needs attention as part of argumentation. Sixty percent of students used evidence in their papers at the Proficient or Acceptable categories (2016: 69%; 2017: 57%; see table 1). Readers were particularly concerned with how writers used evidence to support the reasoning of a particular argument.

As in previous years, Correctness and Style has the highest score, with 78% (down from 82% last year) of student work assessed at the Proficient or Acceptable categories (see table 1).

Genre
This committee has long been invested in the genre of the research essay, preferring to see research presented in the form of an academic argument, which encourages stronger critical thinking and persuasion than a factual report, a personal narrative, or other genres. This year, 76% of research papers were determined to be argument essays (see table 2), a number down considerably from last year's 85% and the previous year's 87%. For the first time, the committee had the option of designating the research essay as a "Proposal for Research Study," which counted for 4% of the papers read. It is possible that in previous years' assessments, those papers were considered argument papers. However, the committee was concerned to see that 18% of research papers were factual reports (see table 2). While readers recognize the value of a well-written factual report, the type of writing required in the research paper for USEMs is explicitly of an argument-based genre.

Thesis Statements
A second long-standing issue of note has been how well students compose thesis statements. As has consistently been the case, this year thesis statements were often inadequate in the research essays. While 26% of papers' thesis statements were evaluated as Proficient (see table 1)—having a "clear, precisely stated, argumentative thesis that is insightful, compelling, and appropriate in scope"—a higher percent (31%) had Developing thesis statements, meaning that theses were implicit, only articulated part of the argument, lacked insight, or had an inappropriate scope. Eleven percent of thesis statements were unacceptable, a number consistent with last year's 12% (see table 1).

Shortcomings in Argument
The committee continued to determine the nature of argumentative shortcomings they saw in papers (see table 3), though they were also given the option of denoting the argument as Proficient or Acceptable; 65% were in those two categories, a number up from last year's 54%. Readers assessed 24% of the papers as either having an argumentative thesis but a factual report body (13%) or as a factual report with no argumentative thesis (11%). Papers that lacked focus (15%) or contained gaps in logic (12%) were the other ranking shortcomings (see table 3). These data suggest places for improvement consistent with other findings: students should ensure they have focused, logically reasoned arguments in their research papers.

Counterargument
For the last three years, the committee has articulated the value of counterargument in a persuasive paper. This year, readers were asked a separate question about the use of counterarguments: we found that 52% of students "acknowledged a perspective different from the author's own position," but 17% of those did so poorly (see table 4). Forty-eight percent did not include a counterargument. Therefore, 65% of papers would have benefited from the strategic inclusion of a perspective different from the argument being presented. Indeed, readers were struck by the proficiency of research papers that engaged or presented effective counterarguments.

Types and Use of Sources
Readers were asked questions about the types and use of sources in the research essays in order to better categorize students' work with secondary materials. Readers categorized the majority of sources cited in the paper, finding that 50% had a majority of scholarly sources (i.e., from a peer-

reviewed journal or academic/scholarly press) (see table 5), while 21% of papers had a majority of sources from popular sources such as newspapers, magazines, or non-academic press material. Only 5% had .com websites as the majority of their sources; 10% had .gov, .edu, or .org websites as the majority of their sources (see table 5).

For the first time this year, readers were asked if the sources used were *appropriate* to the type of paper the student was writing, and a gratifying majority (79%) were using sources appropriate to the paper (see table 6). Only 11% were not appropriate. For the most part, the number of sources was enough to develop the argument (63%; see table 7), though 34% still did not use enough sources to support their argument. Forty-five percent of papers were assessed as needing more scholarly sources (see table 8), as was supported by conclusions from the committee discussion, that more emphasis needs to be given to the ways in which scholarly sources can be used as evidence for supporting arguments. At the same time that readers clearly value scholarly sources, they also understand the importance of a range of sources that are appropriate to the type of paper (e.g., a policy paper that uses mostly .gov websites for statistics and analysis), a recognition again captured in the table 6 data. Just because a paper includes "more" scholarly sources does not mean that it is necessarily better argued or that the sources are incorporated more effectively.

For the most part, sources were primarily used either "to provide ideas that support/enhance the claims of the writer" (58%) or as a literature review (8%), contrasted with the use of sources "to provide factual information (i.e., examples, statistics, definitions, etc.)" (31%; see table 9). While examples, statistics, and definitions are all necessary ingredients of research papers, the strategy of listing them as facts instead of leveraging them as evidence to support an argument was felt by readers to be a definite weakness in the papers. On the one hand, the committee recognizes the difficulty of that skill; on the other, we wish to underscore those areas as necessary to successful argument writing.

As has been the case for several years, the committee expressed disappointment in how students used their sources, while also acknowledging the skill it takes to effectively incorporate evidence. Forty percent of papers scored in the Developing or Unacceptable categories (35% and 5%, respectively) for Evidence Use (see table 1), which is slightly lower than last year's 44% in the same categories. This number correlates with the committee's assessment of student engagement with the evidence they used in their papers: 45% of papers were found either to have superficial engagement with their sources (25%) or to overly rely on their sources (20%; see table 10). Fifty-three percent of the research essays assessed showed Proficient or Acceptable engagement with their sources (see table 10).

The committee was particularly concerned with students' use of sources for factual evidence (31%; see table 9) or overreliance on those sources rather than setting up their own position (20%; see table 10). Too often, the evidence in student papers seemed to be intended for fact checking and not to help support and deepen their arguments. We noted a lack of student ability to analyze data and identify links between sources: often, papers merely listed supportive data source by source. Instead, students should be able to synthesize sources and explore counterarguments or opposing perspectives in order to ensure writers (and readers) see a problem from multiple perspectives, while articulating their own insight about the positions.

Citation Style
Data for the correct and consistent use of citation styles show modest growth from previous years' numbers. Eighty-five percent of papers used a citation style either professionally or acceptably (2015: 71%; 2016: 81%; 2017: 81%; see table 11). The remaining 15% had problematic citation practices (see table 11).

Holistic Assessment

For the holistic evaluation, readers were asked to assess each portfolio as a whole, including the Reflective Essay, First Seminar Essay, the University Seminar Essay, and the Research Essay. Readers considered the overall effectiveness, impact, and quality of the combined whole as opposed to taking a simple average or sum of the individual parts.

Nearly all (98%) portfolios were standard (i.e., did not contain substitutions from non-SAGES classes), and this number has remained consistent since 2015. The majority of portfolios (79%) were submitted by May 2018 or earlier graduates.

Reflective Essay
As a preface to their portfolios, students are asked to submit a reflective essay that follows this prompt:

> Reflecting on the essays included in your portfolio, discuss how your writing has developed across your First-year and University SAGES seminars. Provide evidence and examples from your essays and/or your writing process to demonstrate your development. (2-3 pages)
>
> Portfolio readers are genuinely interested in your own thinking about the writing you did in SAGES as well as the writing you do or plan to do outside of SAGES. They are most interested in what you have learned about the relation of writing to ideas and to your own critical thinking. (sages.case.edu)

While it is the case that students sometimes air their complaints and critiques of SAGES in their reflective essay, such essays are in the minority, and those students tend to give specific reasons for their complaints (i.e., not receiving feedback on their work, not being interested in the course topic, etc.). Readers were keen for the wider university community to know that the overwhelming majority of essays are positive about the student's experiences in SAGES, sometimes noting that even if they dreaded the curriculum in the beginning, they often had excellent experiences in small classes with attentive seminar leaders and engaging topics. As has been the case in previous years, many students expressed gratitude for the exposure to different ideas and experiences that allowed for personal growth and the exploration of diverse disciplinary topics, and they appreciated the role of their seminar leaders and writing instructors in furthering that development. The committee encourages SAGES to leverage these comments as positive feedback supporting the program and its role in students' writing development.

Perception of Improvement

As has been in the case since the first year of portfolio assessment (2009), this year nearly all students (93%) acknowledged strong or some improvement in writing, and the clear majority of faculty readers saw strong or some improvement in students' writing across the portfolios (86%; see tables 12 and 13). As in previous years, more students (43%) saw "strong improvement" in writing skills than did readers (21%) (see tables 12 and 13). The committee speculated that the discrepancy of these data points not only indicates that students might respond to the prompt with an overly positive representation of their writing improvement, but also logically results from the process (i.e. students are not expected to assess their writing with the same rubric nor possess the same expertise as faculty reviewers). Students also have greater context for their own writing, including their high school writing development, which readers cannot take into consideration. Therefore, readers report that judging improvement is not always easy; however, these data have been consistent since the questions about improvement have been asked.

This year readers were asked to identify whether students reported improvement in three particular areas: research and evidence use, writing process, and argument. Respectively, improvement was reported fairly evenly across the three areas (52%, 61%, and 49%; see table 16), with only 14% of students not commenting on one of these areas. The higher report of writing process growth could be explained by the prompt, which offers writing process as a potential area for students to discuss. It's also easier to describe a writing process than to connect critical thinking to the writing students have completed in their seminars. However, 58% of students did connect their writing skill development to higher-order skills such as critical thinking and idea formation (see table 15).

Overall Holistic Evaluation Results

Readers evaluated each portfolio according to the 2015 revised holistic rubric (see appendix 2). The holistic scores represent readers' assessments of the entire portfolio. The holistic scoring results for 2018 continue to indicate that a majority (69%) of portfolios were assessed at the Proficient (18%) or Acceptable (51%) level (see table 17).

These results, as in previous years, suggest strong positive programmatic influence on student writing, but continue to show students' lowest scoring Proficient scores as Argument and Evidence (see table 17). Of concern to the committee this year is the higher than usual percentage of portfolios assessed at the Developing level (30%; see table 17), even while the Unacceptable levels in all categories are very low (1-3%; see table 17).

As has been the case historically, the majority of students are Proficient or Acceptable in terms of the readability category. This year readability was assessed at 77% in these two categories (see table 17).

ESL Holistic Scoring

For the second year, readers were not asked to identify portfolios written by students who had been enrolled in ESL first seminars in order to minimize potential bias in assessment. The coordinator extracted the ESL holistic data after the committee concluded its work.

This year, readers evaluated 100 portfolios from students enrolled in a first seminar for non-native speakers of English. While last year's data recorded 66% of portfolios at the Proficient or Acceptable levels, this year, that percentage (46%; see table 18) is in line with years previous (43% in 2016, 45% in 2015). As was the case with all portfolios, there is an increase in the Developing category that warrants further oversight (52%; see table 18), though that number is in line with 2016 percentages, when 51% were assessed as Developing.

Foundations Holistic Scoring

For the first year, the coordinator was able to identify portfolios from students who completed a Foundations first seminar after readers had assessed them (i.e., readers were not asked to identify such portfolios as different than others). Foundations courses focus more on writing skills, and students in them have either chosen to take one (as part of a Directed Self Placement process begun in 2016) or have been placed in one because their diagnostic writing sample suggested that they would benefit from more deliberate attention to writing skills and process. As is the case with all portfolios, the majority of student work fell in the Acceptable and Developing categories, with higher percentages in the Developing category. Perhaps of concern is that Argument was scored at 63% Developing or Unacceptable (see table 19). However, 26% of Foundations portfolios were assessed at Proficient for Engagement (see table 19), a percentage in line with all portfolios (25%; see table 17).

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations for Seminar Leaders

As has been the case since we started reading research essays in depth, this year's recommendations for writing instruction primarily focus on strengthening instruction in argumentative writing with a specific emphasis on counterargument, evidence use, and reasoning. In order to emphasize these skills, students should be creating arguments that engage the deep ideas in the course topic and field.

Importantly, the committee wishes to stress that ***SAGES seminars must be treated as writing courses*** that are meant to teach writing skills deliberately; sometimes students reported in their reflective essays that they did not receive enough writing instruction and that feedback on their written work was lacking.

The committee identified the following best practices as continued recommendations from previous years' reports: inclusion of SAGES learning outcomes on syllabi and discussion of them with the class, the use of recommended writing texts, sequencing writing assignments

leading to the research essay in University Seminars, giving feedback on papers that helps students become better writers, giving students the chance to revise based on that feedback, and cultivating stronger collaborations with writing instructors, the Writing Resource Center (WRC), and Portfolio Coordinator.

Committee members wish to make the following recommendations to instructors; some of these are repeated from previous years:

1. Instructors should ensure students have practice reading and writing arguments composed of arguable **claims**, supported by a plausible set of **reasons**, which in turn are based on clear and appropriate **evidence** that students must weigh in their reasoning. Instructors should emphasize that claims need to be clearly and precisely articulated, and that reasons and evidence need to be analyzed and synthesized into the argument rather than merely used to provide factual information or insufficiently support a writer's claims.

2. Instructors should help students understand the role of counterclaims, opposing viewpoints, alternative positions, and counterevidence in argumentative writing by showing how such counterarguments are addressed in scholarly works. Assignments in the sequence leading to the research paper, for example, should help students leverage counterarguments as they work to articulate their own point of view. Instructors should remind students that addressing counterarguments does not weaken, but can usefully strengthen their own positions.

3. Instructors should, beginning in First-Year Seminars and continuing in University Seminars, emphasize the concept of transferability, specifically the ways in which the communication and critical thinking skills that students build in SAGES are directly relevant to their work in Departmental Seminars and Capstone Courses, disciplinary courses, post-graduate work, and in the careers they choose. To meet those ends, instructors should devote some classroom time to reviewing the SAGES program outcomes and/or employ its writing rubric in writing assessment in order to help students understand the connectedness of the various classes within the SAGES curriculum and the transferability of skills taught in the seminars.

4. Instructors should encourage students to use campus resources that can help them succeed specifically with writing (the Writing Resource Center's consulting services and its workshops for students) and more generally with academic skills (Educational Services for Students, or its new equivalent).

5. Instructors should mention the portfolio requirement more frequently to their students. Additionally, in teaching the value of reflection and/or other writing skills, such as attention to audience and purpose, instructors should remind students that reflection is more than summarizing the content of the papers or claiming to have improved in critical thinking, but being able to demonstrate such skills to a reader. Instructors can help students chart and reflect on their writing skill development in their classes, which will also help with the transferability of such skills.

SAGES administrators will implement the 2018 recommendations to instructors in various ways: at summer teaching orientations, during weekly SAGES pedagogy sessions, in campus-wide Writing Resource Center workshops for students, at a dedicated UCITE session, at Writing Program All Staff meetings, and in the Guide for Teaching in SAGES (available on Canvas). Committee members encourage this report to be more widely disseminated to relevant members of the university community, listed at the end of this report.

Recommendations to SAGES Administrators

The committee urges SAGES administrators to leverage the often very positive comments in students' reflective essays as administrators continue to develop and promote the work of the program across campus. Even when students make critical comments, they are often nevertheless thoughtful and would provide a lens through which to continue program development.

Committee members wish to introduce the following recommendations; some of these are repeated from previous years:

1. Given the stability of research essay data from the past four years, particularly the consistent weakness in argument, SAGES should consider more proactive strategies for teaching argument writing more effectively, perhaps requiring a more explicitly argument-focused writing text for the program (Under advisement: Director and Associate Director of the Writing Program).

2. SAGES Administrators should find ways to ensure co-teachers work together as a team in terms of their roles in the classrooms and in grading and giving feedback. Identify best practices to ensure students have optimal learning experiences in the classroom from instructors who work well together. Provide incentives for excellent teaching in the program (Under advisement: Director and Associate Director of SAGES and SAGES Instructional Coordinator).

3. SAGES should conduct an audit of instructor syllabi in order to gain additional new insights into the data gathered from reading student essays. Of particular concern to committee members is the genre of essays instructors are assigning, the number of essay assignments, whether they are scaffolding writing assignments, and whether students are asked to reflect on their writing (Under advisement: Director and Associate Director of SAGES and SAGES Instructional Coordinator).

4. All faculty teaching in SAGES should receive e-mail or other information announcing workshops on portfolios or other workshops offered by the Writing Resource Center as well as the availability of classroom visits focused on portfolios and/or SAGES outcomes (Under advisement: Director and Associate Director of SAGES and Director of the Writing Resource Center).

5. The Executive Summary of this report should be distributed at summer SAGES teaching and advising orientations (Under advisement: Director of the Writing Program).

6. SAGES should provide a list of types of assignments that produce the most successful argumentative writing. The committee feels that such assignments would help seminar leaders move past assigning reports by demonstrating different ways for students to write about course material (Under advisement: Director of the Writing Program, Associate Director of SAGES, and SAGES Instructional Coordinator).

7. The SAGES weekly pedagogy series should offer sessions on the following topics: creating an effective counterargument, how to use *They Say / I Say* in First Seminar, a short list of what writing skills students should learn in their SAGES seminars, and how to write reflection essays. These sessions should make sample materials or workshop/lesson plans available to faculty in order to help them teach these topics (Under advisement: Associate Director of SAGES and SAGES Instructional Coordinator).

8. Coordinators of the SAGES Weekly Pedagogy Seminars should explore making the sessions accessible to more faculty members by utilizing technology (i.e. WebEx) to record and distribute the sessions. Or, short (~10 minute) videos could be posted that covered topics that would be of use to program faculty (Under advisement: Director and Associate Director of SAGES and SAGES Instructional Coordinator).

9. Administrators should discuss the possibility of dynamic portfolios where students upload work as they finish classes and reflect on their growth over time after (or while) finishing their capstone. They should also explore the possibility of adding to the portfolio submission page a brief survey asking students to identify the areas in which they felt they improved (argument, evidence use, writing process, etc.), rather than asking readers to infer that information from reflective essays (Under advisement: SAGES / Writing Program Leadership Committee).

Last year's (2017) recommendations to administrators were implemented as follows:

The Teaching in SAGES summer orientation should be required for all faculty teaching for the first time in SAGES (both seminar leaders and writing instructors) in order to assure more consistency in promoting and teaching SAGES learning outcomes and communication among all faculty constituents working in the program.
  - **Action**: Faculty teaching in SAGES for the first time are strongly urged by the Director of SAGES to attend the teaching orientation.

Coordinators of the SAGES Weekly Pedagogy Seminars should explore making the sessions accessible to more faculty members by utilizing technology (i.e. WebEx) to record and distribute the sessions.
  - **Action**: Decisions about this recommendation have not been made.

SAGES should consider conducting an audit of instructor syllabi in order to gain additional new insights into the data gathered from reading student essays. Of particular concern to committee

members is the genre of essays instructors are assigning, the number of essay assignments, whether they are scaffolding writing assignments, and whether students are asked to reflect on their writing. SAGES administrators might also consider collecting (from faculty) the prompts for the major writing assignments used in First-Year Seminars and University Seminars.

- **Action**: The Director of the Writing Program has solicited FSEM assignments from instructors.

SAGES and the Writing Program should consider establishing performance benchmarks for student writing given that the data has been consistent across the past three annual review sessions. Benchmarks could be developed by examining national multi-university surveys and/or current practices and reports from peer or aspirational universities. However, administrators should strongly consider the extent to which benchmarking may interfere with readers' reliability in assessment and/or become overly prescriptive and/or create standardized goals that do not measure our students' meaningful progress.

- **Action**: Benchmarks have not been created yet; the 2018 Portfolio Assessment Committee did not repeat this recommendation because they were concerned that benchmarks would constrain the freedom of instructors to follow through on innovative approaches to teaching and/or affect portfolio readers' perception of standards and expectations.

The Portfolio Coordinator should continue to visit more classes and offer more workshops in collaboration with the Writing Resource Center to promote the timely submission of portfolios.

- **Action**: The Portfolio Coordinator has continued to offer workshops and classes in order to promote student understanding of what the portfolio contains and when to turn it in.

All faculty teaching in SAGES should receive e-mail or other information announcing workshops on portfolios or other workshops focused on portfolio findings as offered by the Writing Resource Center as well as the availability of classroom visits focused on portfolios and/or SAGES outcomes.

- **Action**: E-mails announcing portfolio workshops were circulated to USEM seminar leaders; those e-mails contained the Portfolio Coordinator's contact information and availability to visit classrooms to discuss the portfolio requirement.

2018 SAGES Portfolio Report Distribution List:

All CWRU Deans and Department Chairs
Fall 2018 SAGES Instructors
CEP
FSCUE
UGA

TABLES

I. Research Essay Data Tables

Table 1. Overall Assessment of Research Essays

	Proficient (3)	Acceptable (2)	Developing (1)	Unacceptable (0)
Engagement				
Content/Ideas	26%	40%	28%	6%
Purpose, Context, and Audience	24%	41%	31%	4%
Argument				
Thesis Statement	26%	31%	31%	11%
Reasoning/Development	18%	36%	37%	9%
Evidence				
Quality	30%	38%	25%	7%
Use	21%	39%	35%	5%
Readability				
Arrangement/Organization	19%	48%	29%	4%
Correctness and Style	26%	52%	18%	4%
Overall				
	20%	43%	33%	4%

Table 2. Research Essay Genre

Argument/Analysis	76%
Exposition/Report	18%
Personal Narrative	2%
Proposal for Research Study	4%
Other	1%

Table 3. Shortcomings in paper's argument. Readers were able to check more than one statement for each essay. Thus, the percentages in this table reflect the fraction of research papers that were assessed in a particular category, regardless of whether the research paper was also assessed in additional categories.

Remember that we understand "argument" as a thesis or an overriding claim plus the development of that thesis (in the body of the essay). Please indicate the statement that most accurately describes the argument of the Research Essay (select the ones that apply):	
The overall argument is proficient: clearly stated, focused, and fully developed.	24%
The overall argument is acceptable: it has an identifiable thesis statement and some development of ideas.	41%
The development of the argument is unfocused.	15%
The argument is too technical for a non-disciplinary audience.	1%
The argument contains gaps in logic.	12%
The thesis statement does not match what the body of the paper argues.	5%
The essay has an argumentative thesis or overriding claim but the body of the essay is a report (i.e., mostly factual information without persuasive elements).	13%
The essay lacks an argument (i.e., there is no argumentative thesis or overriding claim, and the body only reports facts/summary of evidence).	11%
Other	3%

Table 4. Counterargument

Did the Research Essay acknowledge a perspective different from the author's own position (i.e., did the paper address a counterargument or an opposing viewpoint?	
Yes	35%
Yes, poorly	17%
No	48%

Table 5. Types of Sources in the Research Essay

Which description best fits the type of sources used in the paper?	
The majority of sources are scholarly (from a peer-reviewed journal or academic/scholarly press)	50%
The majority of sources are from popular sources, like newspapers or magazines, or non-academic press material	21%
The majority of sources are from websites ending in .gov, .edu, or .org	10%
The majority of sources are from websites ending in .com	5%
The majority of sources are primary ones (film, literature, art works, archival material)	7%
Other	7%

Table 6. Appropriateness of Sources

Are the types of sources appropriate for the type of paper?	
Yes	79%
Not sure	10%
No	11%

Table 7. Number of Sources in Research Essay

Were enough sources used to support and develop the writer's argument?	
Yes, there were enough sources used that supported and developed the author's argument	63%
There were too many to be effectively incorporated into the paper's argument	3%
There were too few to effectively develop the argument	34%

Table 8. Scholarly Sources

Should the author have used additional scholarly sources (i.e., would additional scholarly sources have improved the essay)?	
Yes	45%
Not sure	16%
No	39%

Table 9. Primary Use of Sources

Please indicate the primary use of the Source(s) in the essay (choose one):	
To provide evidence to support and/or enhance the claims of the writer	58%
To provide a review of previous sources or scholarship (i.e., as a literature review)	8%
To provide factual information (i.e., examples, statistics, terms, etc.)	31%
As "filler" or without clear purpose	2%
Other	1%

Table 10. Overall Engagement with Sources

Please indicate the most accurate description of the Research Essay's engagement with its sources	
Proficient or acceptable engagement with sources (effective use of evidence to develop the writer's own argument)	53%
Superficial engagement with evidence (cursory reference to sources, and/or mostly opinion or speculation from the writer with little evidence)	25%
Over-reliance on sources (summary of facts with little analysis from the writer)	20%
Other	2%

Table 11. Correct and Consistent use of Citation Style

Does the writer use an appropriate citation style correctly?	
Professionally (journal-ready)	16%
Acceptable (typical college student paper)	69%
Problematic (either missing citations or consistently incorrect use)	15%

II. Holistic Data Tables

Table 12.   Student Perception of Development

	Strong improvement in writing skills	Some improvement in writing skills	No change in writing skills	Regression in writing skills	Does not address writing skills
Student perception of development in his/her writing skills across SAGES	43%	50%	5%	.18%	2%

Table 13.   Reader Perception of Student Development

	Strong improvement in writing skills	Some improvement in writing skills	No change in writing skills	Regression in writing skills
Reader perception of development in student's writing skills across SAGES	21%	65%	11%	3%

Assessing Student Responses to the Reflective Essay Prompt

Table 14. Does the student use evidence and examples effectively in order to demonstrate their development?

Yes	74%
No	26%

Table 15. Does the student connect their writing skill development to higher-order skills (critical thinking, idea formation, etc.)?

Yes	58%
No	29%
Student discusses mostly lower-order skills (grammar, mechanics)	13%

Table 16. Please indicate the areas in which the writer reports improvement. Readers were able to select multiple categories for each reflective essay.

Research and evidence use (i.e., finding, evaluating, and/or incorporating sources in their own research work)	52%
Writing process (e.g., forming ideas, outlining, drafting, revising, incorporating feedback, etc.)	61%
Argument (e.g., having a claim they support and develop in their writing)	49%
Does not address these areas	14%

Table 17. Results of Holistic Assessment for all portfolios (1123 portfolios)

	Proficient	**Acceptable**	**Developing**	**Unacceptable**
Engagement	25%	47%	27%	1%
Argument	16%	43%	39%	2%
Evidence	16%	47%	34%	3%
Readability	26%	51%	20%	2%
Overall Assessment	18%	51%	30%	1%

Table 18. Results of Holistic Assessment for ESL portfolios (100 portfolios)

	Proficient	Acceptable	Developing	Unacceptable
Engagement	7%	49%	42%	2%
Argument	3%	39%	57%	1%
Evidence	6%	43%	44%	7%
Readability	5%	33%	50%	12%
Overall Assessment	4%	42%	52%	2%

Table 19. Results of Holistic Assessment for Foundations Sections (19 portfolios)

	Proficient	Acceptable	Developing	Unacceptable
Engagement	26%	26%	37%	11%
Argument	5%	32%	47%	16%
Evidence	0%	47%	47%	5%
Readability	11%	42%	42%	5%
Overall Assessment	5%	42%	48%	5%

APPENDIX ONE: SAGES Mission and Student Learning Outcomes

Program Mission	Level Objectives	Course Learning Outcomes (Students will be able to…)
SAGES uses seminar-based instruction to teach students how to use the skills of academic inquiry, to think critically and ethically, to find information, and to communicate their ideas in writing and other media effectively. Its sequence of courses builds core academic skills, introduces discipline-specific concepts and methods, and then culminates in a capstone experience that demonstrates students' ability to apply what they have learned. This mission is achieved through a commitment to five core student learning outcomes: ACADEMIC INQUIRY CRITICAL THINKING AND ETHICAL DELIBERATION RESEARCH AND INFORMATION LITERACY	**(First Seminar)** To enable students to contribute to general academic conversations by establishing facility with core academic skills.	• Participate in an academic conversation by contributing insightful, relevant ideas. • Consider differences in values and assumptions to think critically and deliberate ethically. • Read, summarize, and apply scholarly concepts and information. • Write clearly and persuasively. • Effectively communicate information orally and/or through new media.
	(University Seminar) To enable students to contribute to general academic conversations by establishing expertise with core academic skills, including the ability to do independent research.	• Participate in a variety of academic conversations by contributing insightful, relevant ideas. • Consider differences in values and assumptions to think critically, deliberate ethically, and respond articulately to questions/problems. • Research and apply scholarly concepts and information. • Write clear, insightful, persuasive, research-based, and appropriately documented argumentative essays. • Effectively communicate information through oral and/or new media presentations.
	(Departmental Seminar) To enable students to contribute to discipline-specific academic conversations by establishing facility with the specific concepts and methods of their chosen discipline.	• Participate in disciplinary conversations by contributing insightful, relevant ideas. • Consider differences in values and assumptions to think critically, deliberate ethically, and respond articulately to discipline-specific questions/problems. • Research and apply discipline-specific scholarly concepts and information. • Write clear, insightful, persuasive arguments using discipline-appropriate forms and conventions. • Effectively communicate information through discipline-appropriate oral and/or new media presentations.
	(Capstone) To enable students to apply their scholarly skills and knowledge in a capstone experience that contributes to the solution of a pressing question or problem.	• Complete a capstone project that articulates insightful, relevant ideas that contribute to the solution of a vital question or problem within a discipline. • Consider differences in values and assumptions to think critically, deliberate ethically, and respond articulately to a chosen question/problem within a discipline. • Perform original, independent, discipline-appropriate scholarship and apply it to a question/problem within a discipline. • Use a discipline-appropriate form to write a clear, insightful, persuasive, research-based, and appropriately documented argument that responds to a question/problem within a

Definitions of SAGES Student Learning Outcomes

ACADEMIC INQUIRY. **Upon completion of the SAGES program, students should be able to pose a question or problem relevant to an academic discipline and independently use knowledge to answer or solve it.** Academic inquiry is founded on the ability to identify questions and problems that engage others. It includes the ability to apply appropriate theories and methods of investigation, ones capable of producing insightful ideas that help answer a question or solve a problem relevant to an academic discipline. In addition, academic inquiry is attended by certain attitudes: passion for learning, a sense of agency, an appreciation of deep rather than surface knowledge, and a willingness to reflect on and assess one's own learning.

CRITICAL THINKING AND ETHICAL DELIBERATION. **Upon completion of the SAGES program, students should be able to think and act with an awareness of their own values and reasoning, as well as an appreciation of the perspectives of others.** Critical thinking starts with the ability to formulate questions and problems clearly and precisely. It also involves the ability to identify the assumptions that frame our thinking and determine our actions, as well as to gauge the degree to which those assumptions are accurate and valid. Critical thinkers are able to look at ideas and decisions from multiple perspectives, and consider open-mindedly the assumptions, implications, and practical consequences of alternative systems of thought. Based on this information, they derive well-reasoned conclusions and solutions, testing them against relevant criteria and standards. This awareness of one's own values and assumptions, combined with an appreciation of the different perspectives of others, forms the basis of ethical deliberation. By developing a coherent ethical framework and considering the likely consequences of a proposed solution as viewed by different value systems, ethical thinkers can make justified, autonomous choices about matters of the human good, of social justice, or of natural value, and do so with self-awareness and clarity.

RESEARCH AND INFORMATION LITERACY. **Upon completion of the SAGES program, students should be able to independently research and evaluate information to answer a question or solve a problem relevant to an academic discipline.** This ability originates in the determination of the nature and extent of information needed to answer a question or solve a problem. It includes the skills needed to find, access, and evaluate that information critically, as well as to use it effectively and ethically in support of an answer or solution to a question or problem. In disciplines where inquiry depends on the generation and quantitative analysis of raw data, this outcome assumes that all students should understand how to use data once it has been processed into information.

PERSUASIVE WRITING. **Upon completion of the SAGES program, students should be able to write a clear and persuasive argument in support of an answer to a question or a solution to a problem.** In an academic setting, all effective communicators are able to express their ideas in writing. The emphasis that SAGES places on open-ended inquiry and critical thinking requires that students be able to articulate and defend an argument that supports an answer to a question or a solution to a problem. Effective communicators are able to express their ideas with an awareness of purpose, as well as how to engage both discipline-specific and broader audiences. In addition, although there may be variations in disciplinary conventions for writing genres and formats, persuasive academic writing demands that the explanation or defense of a proposed answer or solution use a coherent thesis to govern the structured and clear presentation of a persuasive argument based on reasons and evidence.

ORAL AND NEW MEDIA COMMUNICATION. **Upon completion of the SAGES program, students should be able to communicate information in a clear and coherent formal oral or other media presentation appropriate to an academic discipline.** In addition to being able to write persuasively, effective communicators can express their ideas using a range of disciplinary-appropriate media (e.g., discussion, oral presentations, posters, websites, videos, multimedia presentations, mobile apps) and genres (e.g., technical reports, funding proposals, ethnographies, journal articles, reviews). As with academic writing, effective communicators organize the presentation of ideas with an awareness of purpose and audience, and use their understanding of the medium and genre being used to ensure delivery of a clear central message.

Appendix 2: Summer 2018 Portfolio Reading Committee Rubrics

Last summer, the Portfolio Reading Committee pointed out specific areas for improvement in students
argumentative writing:

> The committee found that students more frequently tend to summarize, rather than anal
> sources and use them mostly to provide factual information rather than to form synthesi
> arguments. The committee [also] found a strong correlation between students' evidence
> and the types of sources they cited. Students who cited more peer-reviewed scholarly so
> were more often ranked at the Proficient and Acceptable levels than students who did n
> incorporate peer-reviewed sources in their essays.

As a response to these findings, part one of the committee's work this summer is to gather more specif
information about students' arguments and uses of sources/evidence in their writing. To assess these s
we will conduct a detailed review of a sample of the Research Essays contained in SAGES Writing Por

The Writing Portfolio Submission Guidelines provide the following description of the Research Essay:

> Your portfolio must contain a research essay from one of your two University Seminars. By
> "research essay," SAGES means a sustained engagement with an academic conversation –
> summarizing and critiquing what others have said on your topic – that includes your own nove
> or argument. This paper must do more than catalog the research you have done (i.e., an annota
> bibliography is not sufficient); it should demonstrate your ability to synthesize academic resear
> a specific topic and to offer your own analysis or critical intervention. Such a paper will have a
> controlling idea that represents your own thinking about the topic. A laboratory report, therefo
> not an appropriate substitute, unless it goes well beyond reporting the procedure and results of
> experiment.
>
> The research essay should be approximately 10-12 pages long; the absolute minimum length is
> pages of prose (not counting the bibliography). The research essay must integrate and cite prim
> and/or secondary source material and include a properly formatted bibliography.

Please ensure that you are reading the essay that the student has uploaded as the fourth essay (Research
Essay) on the OrgSync Form. (In many cases, portfolios will contain two or more source-based essays
we are interested in the one students upload as the Research Essay.)

PLEASE NOTE: In rare cases, portfolios contain substitutions (i.e., papers not written for SAGES co
are included because a student doesn't have access to their SAGES papers). If one of your sample por
contains a Research Essay that is *not* from a SAGES course, please select another portfolio from your g
(that does contain a Research Essay from a SAGES course) to read instead for this part of the reading
process.

Part I: Research Essay Evaluation (25 sampled essays)

Student's CWRU Network ID (e.g., abc123): _____

Reviewer's Initials: _____

Overall Assessment

Please characterize the genre of the Research Essay:

Argument/Analysis   Proposal for Research Study

Exposition/Report   Other: _____

Personal/Narrative

The research paper was submitted for a class in which "world"?

Natural and Technological (USNA)

Social (USSO)

Symbolic (USSY)

Please evaluate the Research Essay based on the "Research Argument Rubric" (see Appendix A)

	Unacceptable (1)	Developing (2)	Acceptable (3)	Proficient (4)
Engagement				
Content/Ideas				
Purpose, Context & Audience				
Argument				
Thesis Statement				
Reasoning/Development				
Evidence				
Quality				
Use				
Readability				
Arrangement				
Sentence Level Correctness & Style				
OVERALL				
Overall assessment				

Argument

Remember that we understand "argument" as a thesis or an overriding claim plus the development of that thesis (in the body of the essay). Please indicate the statement that most accurately describes the argument of the Research Essay (select the ones that apply):

The overall argument is proficient: clearly stated, focused, and persuasively developed.

The overall argument is acceptable: it has an identifiable argumentative thesis statement and some development of ideas.

The development of the paper is unfocused.

The argument is too technical for a non-disciplinary audience.

The argument contains gaps in logic.

The thesis statement does not match what the body of the paper argues.

The essay has an argumentative thesis or overriding claim, but the body of the essay is a report (i.e., mostly factual information without persuasive elements).

The essay lacks an argument (i.e., there is no argumentative thesis or overriding claim and the body only reports on facts or summarizes information.

Other: _____

Did the Research Essay acknowledge a perspective different from the author's own position (i.e., did the paper address a counterargument or an opposing viewpoint)?

Yes

Yes, but poorly

No

Use of Sources & Evidence

Which description best fits the type of sources used in the paper?

The majority of the sources are *scholarly* (from a peer-reviewed journal or an academic or scholarly press).

The majority of the sources are from *popular sources*, like newspapers or magazines, or non-academic press material.

The majority of the sources are *websites* ending in .gov, .edu, or .org.

The majority of the sources are *websites* ending in .com.

The majority of the sources are *primary sources* (films, literature, art works, archival material).

Other: _____

Are the types of sources appropriate for the type of paper?

Yes

Not sure

No

Were enough sources used to support and develop the writer's argument?
>   Yes there were enough sources used that supported and developed the author's argument
>   There were too many sources to be effectively incorporated into the paper's argument
>   There were too few sources to effectively develop the argument

Should the author have used additional scholarly sources (i.e., would additional scholarly sources have improved the essay)?
>   Yes
>   Not sure
>   No

Please indicate the main use of the *majority* of sources (as indicated above) in the essay:
>   To provide evidence to support and/or enhance the claims of the writer
>   To provide a review of previous sources or scholarship (i.e., a literature review)
>   To provide factual information (i.e., examples, statistics, terms, etc.)
>   As "filler" or without clear purpose
>   Other: _____

Please indicate the most accurate description of the Research Essay's engagement with its sources:
>   Proficient or acceptable engagement with sources (effective use of evidence to develop the writer's own argument)
>   Superficial engagement with evidence (cursory reference to sources, and/or mostly opinion or speculation from the writer with little evidence)
>   Over-reliance on sources (summary of facts with little analysis from the writer)
>   Other: _____

Citation Practices

Does the writer use an appropriate citation style correctly?
>   Professionally (journal-ready)
>   Acceptable (typical college student paper)
>   Problematic (either missing citations or consistently incorrect use)

Conclusion/Other Comments

Other comments about this essay? (*Optional*) Please use this space to document any other thoughts you have about this Research Essay and to let us know if this essay might be an outstanding or challenging example for classroom/pedagogical use.

_____

_____

Part II: Holistic Reading of Portfolios
Reading Dates: May 24-June 5

This reading is intended to assess portfolios holistically based on **University Seminar Outcomes.** The goal of University Seminars in SAGES is "to enable students to contribute to general academic conversations by establishing expertise with core academic skills, including the ability to do independent research." (SAGES Outcomes AY 2014-2015.)

According to the **University Seminar Course Outcomes**, at the completion of each course, students will be able to:

- Participate in a variety of academic conversations by contributing insightful, relevant ideas.
- Consider differences in values and assumptions to think critically, deliberate ethically, and respond articulately to questions/problems.
- Research and apply scholarly concepts and information.
- Write clear, insightful, persuasive, research-based, and appropriately documented argumentative essays.
- Effectively communicate information.

The SAGES Writing Portfolio – Holistic Rubric (Appendix B) is designed to assess students' ability to meet these outcomes based on readers' overall assessment of their Writing Portfolios.

Part II: Holistic Portfolio Assessment

Student's CWRU Network ID (e.g., abc123): ⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯

Reviewer's Initials: ⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯

Student's Expected Graduation Date (5/14 format): ⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯

Does this portfolio contain substitutions/
variations from the standard elements: Yes/No

Reflective Essay

This is the reflective prompt to which students respond when compiling their portfolios:

> Reflecting on the essays included in your portfolio, discuss how your writing has developed across your First-year and University SAGES seminars. Provide evidence and examples from your essays and/or your writing process to demonstrate your development. (2-3 pages)

> Portfolio readers are genuinely interested in your own thinking about the writing you did in SAGES as well as the writing you do or plan to do outside of SAGES. They are most interested in what you have learned about the relation of writing to ideas and to your own critical thinking.

Does the writer use evidence and examples effectively in order to demonstrate their development?
> Yes
> No

Does the writer tie their writing skill development to higher order skills (critical thinking, idea formation, etc.)?
> Yes
> No
> The writer discusses mostly lower-order skills (grammatical or mechanical)

Please indicate the writer's perception of her/his writing development:
> Strong improvement in writing skills
> Some improvement in writing skills
> No change in writing skills
> Regression in writing skills
> Does not address development of writing skills

Please indicate the areas in which the writer reports improvement:
> Research and evidence use (i.e., finding, evaluating, and/or incorporating sources in their own research work)
> Writing process (e.g., forming ideas, outlining, drafting, revising, incorporating feedback, etc.)
> Argument (e.g., having a claim they support and develop in their writing)
> Does not address these areas

Comments on the reflective essay? Please let us know if there are significant concerns raised or important insights described in the reflective essay.

Holistic Assessment

Please evaluate the portfolio based on the "SAGES Writing Portfolio–Holistic Rubric" (see Appendix B).

	Unacceptable (1)	Developing (2)	Acceptable (3)	Proficient (4)
Engagement				
Argument				
Evidence				
Readability				
Overall Assessment				

Conclusion/Other Comments

After reading the portfolio, please indicate your own perception of the student's writing development:
> Strong improvement in writing skills
> Some improvement in writing skills
> No change in writing skills
> Regression in writing skills (i.e., the most recent USEM paper is the weakest)

If you believe that this portfolio should receive additional attention, please indicate your assessment:
> This portfolio is exceptional; it should be recognized as being in the top 2-3% of all portfolios submitted
> This portfolio suggests additional support is needed (not applicable for students who have graduated). This portfolio suggests the writer will struggle to meet expectations in her/his future coursework that requires writing. The writer should be contacted and advised to seek additional writing support
> Not Applicable

Other comments about this portfolio? Please use this space to document any other thoughts you have about this portfolio and to let us know if this portfolio might provide outstanding or challenging examples for classroom/pedagogical use.

Researched Argument Rubric

		Unacceptable (1)	Developing (2)	Acceptable (3)	Proficient (4)
Engagement	**Content/Ideas**	Inadequately engages a question or problem or merely reports what is already known	Partially engages a relevant and somewhat focused question or problem to reveal some insight(s)	Thoroughly engages a relevant and mostly focused question or problem to reveal somewhat important insight(s)	Thoroughly engages a relevant and focused question or problem to reveal significant—perhaps even highly original—insight(s)
	Purpose, Context, and Audience	Little or no attention to purpose, context, and/or audience	Attends to purpose, context, and audience, though often inconsistently or partially	Attends to purpose, context, and audience, though sometimes inconsistently or partially	Thorough and nuanced attention to purpose, context, and audience
Argument	**Thesis Statement**	No thesis statement or thesis statement unrelated to the argument	Thesis statement only partially articulates argument or is too general	Articulates argument through clear thesis statement, though it may be somewhat imprecise or broad in focus	Articulates argument through clear, focused, and precise thesis statement
	Reasoning/ Development	Develops all claims superficially, repeats ideas, or wanders from the argument	Many claims are only moderately developed, or argument contains several minor—or one major—logical inconsistencies	Claims mostly developed, though contains one or two partially developed claims, or minor logical inconsistencies that do not seriously affect overall argument	All parts of the argument (major and sub-claims) are developed thoroughly, deeply, and logically
Evidence	**Quality**	Evidence is missing, irrelevant, unreliable, or undocumented	Uses evidence from somewhat reliable sources documented to ensure retrievability	Mostly uses relevant evidence from reliable and properly documented sources	Always uses relevant evidence from reliable and properly documented sources
	Use	Does not use evidence, merely reports it without explanation, or plagiarizes	Uses some evidence, but may struggle to integrate it logically or smoothly into the argument, or to explain it fully	Mostly integrates and explains evidence to support the primary claim(s)	Consistently integrates and fully explains evidence to support all claims thoroughly and carefully
Readability	**Arrangement**	Does not use transitions, or sentence and paragraph arrangement interferes with logical coherence	Simple transitions limit the coherence and/or complexity of sentences and paragraphs	Mostly uses effective transitions to enhance the coherence of sentences and paragraphs	Consistently uses sophisticated transitions to enhance the coherence of sentences and paragraphs
	Sentence Level Correctness and	Mechanically incorrect or stylistically unclear sentences critically impede	Sentences usually mechanically correct and clear; reader	Sentences almost always mechanically correct and stylistically	Sentences always mechanically correct and stylistically sophisticated;

SAGES Writing Rubric – Terminology

Engagement – SAGES pushes students to engage with current research and thinking about a wide range of topics. In each writing assignment, students should thoroughly understand – and be able to explain – the central question, problem, or idea that motivates their written work. At its root, this category assesses how well a paper performs the task(s) laid out in the assignment; but good, persuasive writing should be compelling to a smart reader who may not know the specifics of the assignment prompt. So, a proficient writer will provide necessary context in a compelling and audience-aware way.

- *Content/Ideas* assesses the relevance and significance of the paper's central insight(s). There are many words that can define our expectations for engagement of a problem/question—thorough, careful, creative—but we have found that words like "insightful," "significant," and "original" can be helpful in pushing students to go beyond what they read or discussed in class and their old habits of information retrieval in order to begin doing the kind of independent thinking that characterizes college work.
- *Purpose, Context, and Audience* assesses the writer's ability to engage respectfully with diverse perspectives and to present her/himself as a credible and persuasive voice on the topic. Purpose: Is the writer able to express the motivation for writing? Context: Does the writer frame the essay's ideas such that the reader can locate them in a broader conversation? Audience: Does the writer correctly assume what readers should know and properly introduce what they do not? Does the writer acknowledge other points of view, especially ones that may conflict with the writer's?

Argument – SAGES asks students not only to engage with questions/problems, but also to respond with persuasive and valuable answers and solutions. This category assesses students' abilities to present their contributions in the forms of clearly stated and thoroughly developed arguments. The proficient writer will articulate a strong, precise, and insightful thesis that governs the development of the paper.

- *Thesis Statement* assesses the clarity and precision of the governing statement. It is possible for a student to write a great piece without an explicit thesis statement, but it's so hard for student writers to do so that we encourage them to use one. The thesis is the one-sentence (even if it technically uses more than one) version of the piece. It governs everything that gets said in it, telling the writer (and reader) what should be included (and left out), as well as suggesting the order in which information will be presented.
- *Reasoning/Development* assesses the depth and nuance of the argument throughout the paper. Do the claims made in the body of the piece link back to the thesis? Is each claim logically persuasive (i.e., does the writer establish premises first, then logically build toward reasonable conclusions)? Does the writer push on the ideas presented to go deeper into them, beyond the obvious or superficial? You may note that there is some overlap here with ENGAGEMENT. One way to think about the difference: a writer may ENGAGE an insight through a flash of brilliance, but it is how thoroughly and well the writer *develops* that idea that should determine the grade for ARGUMENT.

Evidence – SAGES introduces students to a range of evidence and teaches them to evaluate and make use of credible, persuasive information in their writing. This category assesses students' abilities to identify appropriate (often scholarly) evidence to support their arguments, as well as their abilities to accommodate and use potentially discrepant data or contradictory ideas.

- *Quality* assesses the relevance and reliability (for researched arguments, the gold standard of reliability is peer-reviewed scholarship) of the evidence used. Evidence refers not only to secondary sources, but also anything that could be used to support a claim, including observational data or personal experience.
- *Use* assesses the way the writer integrates information into her/his argument. Is the evidence presented necessary *and* sufficient to support the claim(s)? How is evidence introduced, analyzed, and incorporated into the writer's text? Typically, the logical relationship between evidence and claim is not self-evident and thus must be stated explicitly through an explanatory sentence (often called a warrant).

Readability – SAGES teaches students to attend to the mechanics and style of their written performances. This category assesses papers on their "surface" features, including mechanical correctness and artful style.

- *Arrangement* assesses the paper's coherence (sometimes called "flow") and its intentional structure and wording. Although arrangement might refer to the order of paragraphs, it also refers to the transitions used between paragraphs, as well as the inclusion and order of sentences within them. So for example, if a paragraph begins with a non-sequitur, but then introduces an evidence-supported claim that logically links back to the thesis, we might say that the point is *argued* logically, but that the paragraph is not yet as readable as it could be.
- *Sentence Level Correctness and Style* assesses the paper's technical consistency. This criterion refers to what many graders call "grammar," but what linguists would refer to as a writer's control of "Standard Edited English." For mechanics and correctness, consider persistent patterns of error and errors that interfere with comprehension to be most serious.

SAGES Writing Portfolio – Holistic Rubric (2016)

	Expectations for SAGES Writing Portfolio, submitted at the end of the First & University Seminar Sequence	Unacceptable (1) (portfolio mostly does not meet expectation)	Developing (2) (portfolio marginally meets and occasionally does not meet expectation)	Acceptable (3) (portfolio mostly meets and occasionally exceeds expectation)	Proficient (4) (portfolio consistently meets and often exceeds expectation)
Engagement	*Responds to complex and compelling questions/problems; Attends flexibly & ethically to the demands of audience, context & purpose.*				
Argument	*Contributes insightful, relevant ideas in the form of independent arguments or controlling ideas that are developed logically and thoroughly.*				
Evidence	*Demonstrates effective use of researched scholarly sources, concepts, and information in support of arguments.*				
Readability	*Demonstrates clear and precise language use, effective sentences and paragraphing, and mastery of standard English conventions.*				
Overall Assessment					