

Revised: 9 January 2013

GRADES ON ESSAYS AND THE MID-YEAR TEST: for ECO 301Y and 303Y

The following criteria explain letter grades above an acceptable pass of C- (60%).

A: (A- to A+): 80 - 100: (A-: 80-84; A: 85-89; A+: 90-100)

A means 'excellent'. A student who produces an A paper will thus stress analysis rather than mere recitation of facts, and will demonstrate some **originality** in interpretation. In particular, using both inductive and deductive logic, the student will explain **WHAT, WHEN, WHY, HOW, IN WHAT MANNER, and WITH WHAT CONSEQUENCES**. If economic analysis is employed, the student will demonstrate some mathematical rigour (and, in an essay, may use some graphs and/or equations). Those writing an A paper, furthermore, will also explain cogently both the economic and historical **significance** of the problem under analysis in a broader context. With such qualities, even papers with some factual errors may receive an A grade.

B: (B- to B+): 70 - 79: (B-: 70-72; B: 73-76; B+: 77-79)

B means 'good'. Such B papers are traditionally the most common. The grade is a reflection of high entrance standards at the University of Toronto, and not of my own generosity. B grades may indicate that the answer is basically well organized and presented, reasonably correct and complete, but still lacking the analytic skills and originality that immediately stand out in an A paper. Most B papers are thus much more narrative and descriptive than truly analytical. Some papers that are strongly analytical in focus nevertheless may receive a B grade because of significant faults in analysis: i.e., deficiencies in logic, economic theory, organization, or presentation of the factual evidence.

C: (C- to C+): 60 - 69 (C-: 60-62; C = 63-66; C+: 67-69)

C means 'acceptable', according to university standards, despite often serious faults. C papers are even **more deficient in analysis** than B papers, and/or **deficient also** in one or more of the following: organization, factual presentation, English grammar, and written style. If such defects seriously outweigh any merits, then the assigned grade will be **D or E**, depending upon how really bad (or atrocious) the answer really is. On essay questions, I very rarely assign such bad grades as D (50 - 59) or E (35 - 49), let alone F (below 35).

Nobody writes a perfect paper -- certainly not in a first draft; and in writing an examination answer you have no real opportunity to produce a second draft. If it is any consolation to you, virtually everyone commits at least some of the following faults in writing an essay or an exam: a list of common faults that I have compiled from many years of grading both essays and examinations. I myself committed several of these faults when I was a university student. So do not despair: you are not alone! You learn by trial and error and by constant practice; and learning is always labourious. In the following list, I have checked off those that may apply to your paper, either wholly or, more usually, just in part.

A LIST OF THE MOST COMMON FAULTS ON STUDENT ESSAYS & EXAMINATIONS: those checked off apply either wholly or partially to the answer given in your paper.

1. Your answer is partly/seriously/wholly deficient in analysis, economic and historical.

You do not effectively explain **WHAT HAPPENED, WHEN, WHERE, HOW, WHY, IN WHAT MANNER, AND WITH WHAT CONSEQUENCES**. Furthermore, you do not adequately explain the **significance** of the events and changes discussed, in terms of the focus of this course: namely, the processes, forms, and mechanisms of European economic development; the nature of economic growth and decline. How does your answer contribute to a better understanding of those processes; and what is the particular historical importance of the topic you have analysed?

2. Your presentation is partly/seriously faulty in one or more of the following categories:

a) Your answer is excessively detailed and too long-winded; and/or it contains too much irrelevant and

- extraneous information, i.e., unrelated to the question posed.
- b) It contains some/many factual errors and/or distortions.
- c) It lacks important facts necessary to sustain your argument(s); and/or it omits too many of the basic arguments concerning this question.
- d) It suffers from some/ many logical lapses, too many *non sequiturs*.
- e) It contains some serious errors in economic analysis: e.g.
 - i) a failure to distinguish between changes in nominal and real prices; between changes in price levels and in *relative* prices;
 - ii) other analytical errors as noted in comments on your text (in the margins).
- f) It contains some serious errors in historical analysis, confusing cause and effect relationships.
- g) Too often, if not always, it fails to specify economic or social changes by **time** (or era) and/or **place**: i.e., **when** and **where** they occurred. Economic history is defined by particulars of time and space.

3. Your answer, while indeed containing some valid explanations, does not merit a higher grade because:

- a) It is sometimes/often/generally more narrative or descriptive than analytical, as explained above.
- b) It is too brief, general, and/or superficial: in both factual presentation and analysis.
- c) Insufficient research: It is too closely based on my lecture notes or on just a very few published sources; and (thus) it also lacks originality in concepts.
- d) It lacks precision, clarity, and rigour in economic analysis.
- e) Your written exposition lacks coherence and/or clarity.
- f) It suffers from some of the major faults listed below.

4. You did not read the question carefully, because your answer:

- a) is not directed to the question *as posed*.
- b) fails to answer the *entire* question posed.

5. Although you have a basic understanding of this question, and of the subject areas of this course, nevertheless the omissions and/or misstatements in your answer indicate to me that:

- a) You missed the lectures on this topic, or did not pay close enough attention;
- b) You did not do or did not properly understand the assigned readings for this topic;
- c) You ignored the **statistical** evidence made available to you in tables, graphs, charts, etc. in the lectures, readings, and handouts.

6. Your answer is based upon an uncritical acceptance of the views of one author, or just a few sources, without considering the opposing views.

- a) Although you are not required to agree with views set forth in the lectures or readings, you must acknowledge opposing views **when they have been pointed out to you**, and when the question requires you to analyse opposing views and render your **own** verdict.
- b) Many of these exam questions require you to set forth and discuss opposing arguments. If you fail to do so, I must assume that you did not attend classes or do the required readings.
- c) In using such sources, you have provided an excessive number of direct quotations, most of which serve no useful purpose in this assignment -- especially if they prevent you from thinking about the question. I am interested in your views; not those so quoted from somebody else.
- d) Your answer is *too* close to one or more of the publications consulted for this test; or,
- e) Your answer is so close to such sources/ and or my lecture notes that it verges on plagiarism; but, if I had decided that the plagiarism was deliberate and pervasive, I would have turned this paper over the Associate Chair (Undergraduate) for possible disciplinary action.

7. Your answer is not cohesively and coherently organized.

- a) As a result, your sentences do not flow logically and clearly into the next; and similarly, your ideas do not flow logically and smoothly from one paragraph into the next.
- b) Your presentation is so disjointed, with unrelated paragraphs, that your argument is difficult to follow.
- c) You engage in needless and annoying repetitions, which may be avoided by adhering to the following:
- d) Take proper care in constructing your **TOPIC SENTENCES** for each paragraph, to ensure that: (i)

the topic sentence logically links its paragraph directly with the preceding paragraph; and that (ii) the topic sentence governs every idea in its paragraph. Thus exclude everything not related to your topic sentence (or rewrite the topic sentence).

8. Your written English is deficient in one or more of the following:

Grammar and syntax (e.g., 'run-on' sentences, dangling modifiers), spelling, word usage, punctuation. While the grade is not primarily based on the quality of your English, bad writing nevertheless hinders my understanding of what you are trying to express; and bad writing will almost inevitably produce a lower grade.

SYMBOLS USED TO INDICATE FAULTS IN SYNTAX AND GRAMMAR

Refer to the web-document on 'Common Faults in English Grammar and Syntax', for a further explanation of these terms: <http://www.economics.utoronto.ca/munro5/syntax.pdf>

AS	Improper use of the conjunction 'as' , which should not follow the main verb, when it concerns causation: meaning 'since', 'because', or 'for'.
AT	Abrupt transitions: abrupt change in topics and/or ideas between paragraphs, without proper connectives and in particular without a proper topic sentence to link them.
DM	Dangling modifier: a participial phrase in which the participle (a verbal form with adjectival properties) does not properly modify or relate to the subject of the sentence. For example: 'looking at his watch, the thought occurred to him that he was running late'. Did the 'thought' look at his watch?
DUE	Improper use of the word 'due' , which is an adjective (indicating causation) that follows a copula verb (to be). The proper word to use here is either 'because', a conjunction introducing a subordinate clause, which provides an explanation of causation, or 'because of', a preposition introducing an adverbial phrase explaining causation.
FS	Faulty syntax: other errors, as explained in the web-document.
GE	Grammatical errors: e.g., subject (noun) and verb not in agreement; improper use of personal or relative pronouns; incorrect use of the possessive (its and not it's); improper tenses: e.g., mixing present and past tenses.
GER	Faulty use of the gerund: a gerund is a verbal noun and it must, therefore, be governed by another noun or pronoun in the <i>possessive</i> case. See the web document on Grammar and Syntax. For example: 'Increased productivity led to their achieving rising real incomes'; and not 'to <i>them</i> achieving rising real incomes'. It would be better to restructure the sentence: 'Increased productivity resulted in rising real incomes for most of the peasantry'.
LPS	Lack of parallel structure: see the aforementioned web-document on English grammar. The most common example of this fault is to provide an explanation with a sequence of causes, using both 'because of' (adverbial phrase) and 'because' (conjunction introducing a subordinate clause).
NAS	Not a sentence. A statement that lacks a subject (noun) and/or a proper verb; and is therefore just a phrase or a subordinate clause standing by itself.
NS	Non sequiturs: what you state as a conclusion in this sentence does not logically follow from the arguments and/or evidence that you have previously set forth..
PE	Punctuation errors: especially those involving commas and semi-colons.
PEWT	Punctuation errors involving the use of relative conjunctions: 'which' and 'that' and 'who'.
REP	Repetition: of previous statements. This common error reflect faulty organization.
RO	Run-on sentence: a sentence containing two or more principal clauses (two sentences), without proper conjunctions and punctuation (semi-colon or period). The most common version of this irritating fault is the improper use of 'however' as a conjunction, instead of the proper one, 'but'; and to do so with a comma, rather than with the required semi-colon or period.
SI	Split infinitives: inelegant, indeed often ugly; and rarely justified.

- SP** **Spelling errors:** e.g.: ‘lead’ instead of the proper word: ‘led’, for the past tense of the verb to lead.
- STYLE** **Poor style:** the use of jargon, colloquialisms, contractions (e.g.: isn’t), etc.
- WT** **The wrong tense:** i.e., using the present tense instead of the past tense – especially with constructions involving ‘would’ and ‘could’; and using the past tense instead of the pluperfect – or the reverse of these faults.
- WU** **Improper use of words:** you have used the wrong words or given incorrect meanings. See also ‘style’, above.