

Honors Application Writing Sample Guidelines/Evaluation Rubric

The writing sample is used by the Honors Steering Committee to evaluate each applicant's writing proficiency and critical thinking ability. Therefore, applicants should choose an essay that exhibits excellence in both of these areas.

Collaborative essays are not allowed. All elements of the writing sample, with the exception of cited quotations and/or paraphrases, must be completely the work of the applicant.

A researched argument is strongly preferred. However, other types of essays that showcase the applicant's abilities in both writing proficiency and critical thinking may be submitted instead. Such examples include, but are not limited to: position papers, lab reports, explications of literary works, technical writing assignments, and personal narratives.

NOTE 1: Please attach a brief description of the writing assignment from the course or class from which it was assigned. This will give the committee the context of the assignment. This is a required piece of the writing sample.

Evaluation Criteria:

Clarity of Purpose – Positions are clear, thesis/claim/intent is obvious; multiple viewpoints are expressed/accommodated; clear sense of audience.

Quality of Thought – Unified and strong control of content; opinions and/or claims are well-supported; evidence is provided.

Organization of Content – Ideas are well connected through structural and linguistic transitions; structure complements content.

Synthesis and Integration of Sources – Sources are presented clearly and concisely so as to support/examine/compare/evaluate various opinions and/or claims.

Attribution and Documentation – The audience can clearly identify purposeful use of sources and can track source material. Each source is identified in the text and on the work cited/references page.

Language and Style – Diction and syntax are well-chosen to express ideas.

Grammar and Usage – Grammatical structures are well-chosen and correct.

NOTE 2: All of the above criteria need not apply to every writing sample (for example, a personal narrative will not include outside sources, so the two research-based criteria will not be used in the evaluation). However, applicants should keep the above rubric in mind when selecting essays for submission.

NOTE 3: Students who do not have a previously written essay that fits the above criteria may instead write an essay of between 250 and 500 words in response to a prompt. Prompts will be provided by the Honors Steering Committee upon request.