Summary of 100W Information Literacy

and

Written Communication Assessment Project

Summer 2014

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Method

Sample

Sixty-seven papers were included in this assessment.

Sample papers were solicited from 100W instructors and 100W coordinators in Spring 2014. Using a random number generator, the letters O, T, and G, were selected. Instructors were asked to provide papers from students in their class whose last names started with O, T, or G. If there were not 3 students fitting that criteria, they were asked to choose students whose last name started with a subsequent letter.

Papers were uploaded, with assignment instructions, to a Qualtrics survey or emailed directly to the assessment coordinator. Some instructors sent more than one assignment or assignments from all students in the class. In these cases, inappropriate assignments were not included in the assessment, or student samples were selected from those provided. In several cases, the files could not be opened by the coordinator and those assignments were not included in the assessment. Finally, group projects were excluded from the assessment because the individual ability levels of the students could not be assessed.

Names of students were removed from the assignments digitally or with ink. Then hard copies of samples were read by two readers.

Programs represented in the assessment are listed in Appendix A.

Readers

Instructor were solicited for interest in being a reader of the assignments and AVP Jaehne selected 4 readers, one dropped out because of time constraints, leaving 3 readers.

Two readers were experienced 100W instructors and one reader was a librarian. As part of the training, readers reviewed the scoring rubric, then scored a sample paper. They reviewed their scores, discussed and resolved any ambiguities in the scoring and then completed a second sample paper. Scoring took place over 3 days and the readers were commonly located in the library. After the second day of scoring, scoring discrepancies of more than 2 points on any dimension on the rubric were discussed by the two readers and discrepancies were resolved.

Average ratings by the 2 randomly assigned readers are presented in the Results section.

Interrater reliability was calculated as a correlation between ratings provided by each reader for each dimension on the rubric (aside from presence/absence of a bibliography). Reliability statistics are presented in Appendix B.

Participating readers were Ann Agee, Monica Peck, and Kathryn Kahn.

Scoring Rubric

The rubric consisted of two sub-rubrics: information literacy and written communication. The information literacy rubric items were generated based on the AAC&U VALUE rubric and adapted by a team including the Director of Assessment, Jinny Rhee, librarians Ann Agee and Rebecca Kohn, and Steering Committee Chair, Camille Johnson. The written communication rubric items were derived from the rubrics used in the WST assessment by Jinny Rhee.

The rubric included 8 items, 6 focused on information literacy and 2 focused on written communication. Reliability analysis showed that the information literacy items comprised a highly reliable (alpha = .89) scale.

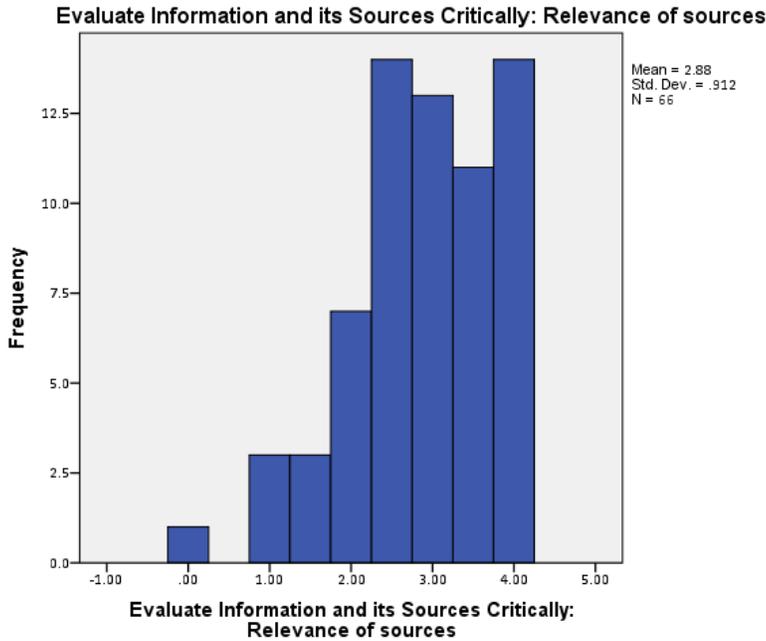The rubric is provided in Appendix C.

Scoring Plagiarism

All assignments were uploaded into Turnitin.com to check plagiarism. Turnitin.com provides an option to add papers to a general repository. These samples were not added to any general repository. Some instructors sent photocopies or scanned versions of papers that could not be read by Turnitin.com.

In addition to Turnitin.com scores (which were adjusted to take into account the fact that the paper may have been submitted by a student originally), readers noted symptoms of plagiarism in their notes.

Results

Criteria 1: Presence of a Bibliography

All but 2 assignments included a formal bibliography or reference section.

Evaluate Information and its Sources Critically: Relevance of sources
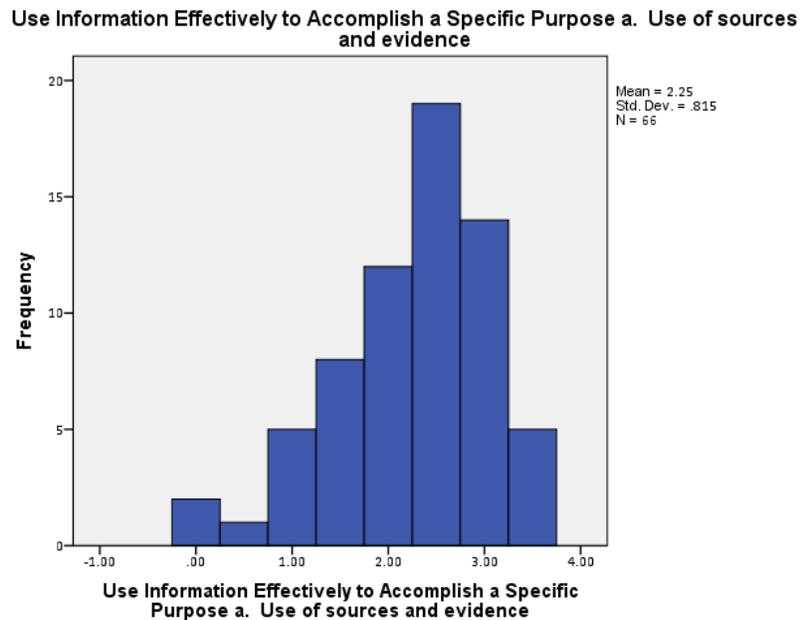

Mean = 2.88
Std. Dev. = .912
N = 66

Criteria 2: Evaluation of Information and its Sources Critically: Relevance of Sources

Readers found that students were successful in selecting and using relevant sources in their writing. The modal, or most frequently given average score was 2.5 and 58% of students scored a 3 or above.

Criteria 3a: Use Information Effectively to Accomplish a Specific Purpose
  a.   Use of sources and evidence

Readers found that student mastery of using sources and evidence was only "emerging." The modal score was 2.5 and only 38% of students scored a 3 or above.

Use Information Effectively to Accomplish a Specific Purpose a. Use of sources and evidence

Mean = 2.25
Std. Dev. = .815
N = 66

Use Information Effectively to Accomplish a Specific Purpose b. Purpose achieved

Mean = 2.59
Std. Dev. = .717
N = 66

Frequency

Use Information Effectively to Accomplish a Specific Purpose b. Purpose achieved
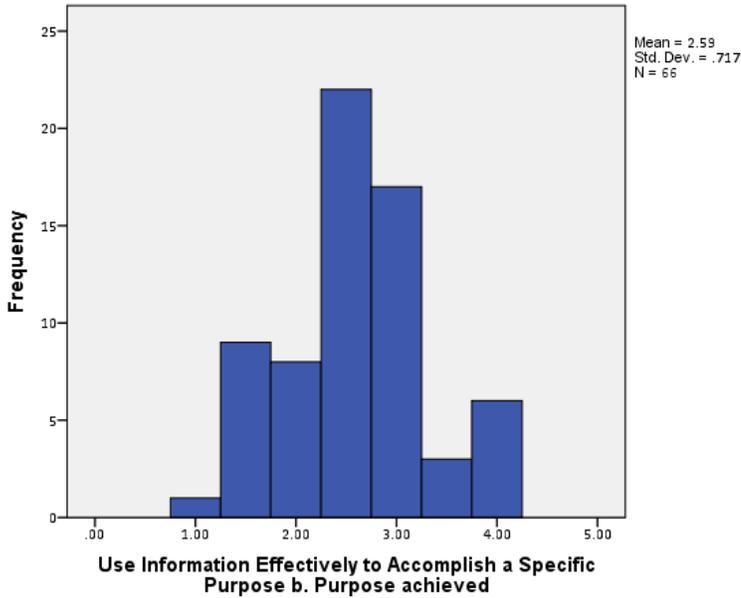
Criteria 3b: Use Information Effectively to Accomplish a Specific Purpose
a. Purpose achieved

Readers found that student mastery of using sources and evidence was "developed." The modal score was 2.5 and 39.4% of students scored 3 or above.

Criteria 4a: Access and Use Information Ethically and Legally
a.   In-text citations and format

Readers found that student mastery of citations and format was "emerging." The modal score was 1.5 and only 15.2% of students scored 3 or above.

**Access and Use Information Ethically and Legally   a. In-text citations and format**

Mean = 1.94
Std. Dev. = .736
N = 66

Frequency

Access and Use Information Ethically and Legally   a. In-text citations and format
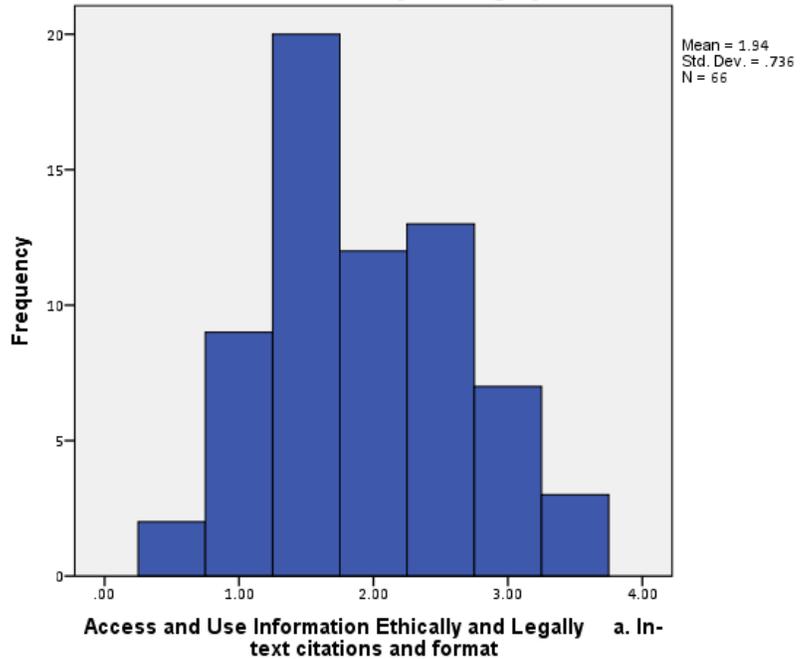
Criteria 4b: Access and Use Information Ethically and Legally
 *b.Paraphrasing, summary, and quoting*

Readers found that student mastery of citations and format was "emerging." The modal score was 2 and 31.8% of students scored 3 or above.

Readers noted instances of what appeared to be cutting and pasting from websites and similar sentences and paragraphs in different papers.

Access and Use Information Ethically and Legally   b. Paraphrasing, summary, and quoting

Mean = 2.47
Std. Dev. = .673
N = 66

Access and Use Information Ethically and Legally   b. Paraphrasing, summary, and quoting

Usage and Mechanics

Mean = 1.97
Std. Dev. = .749
N = 66
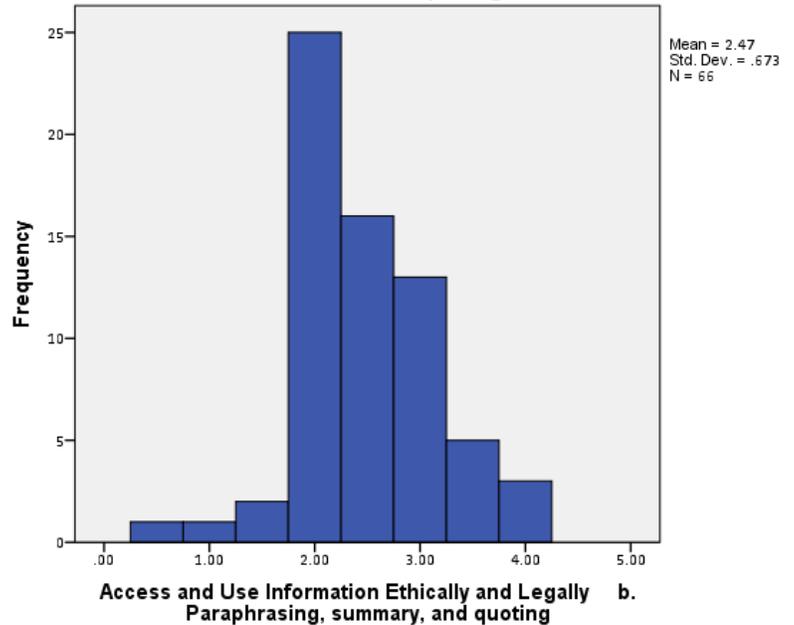
Usage and Mechanics
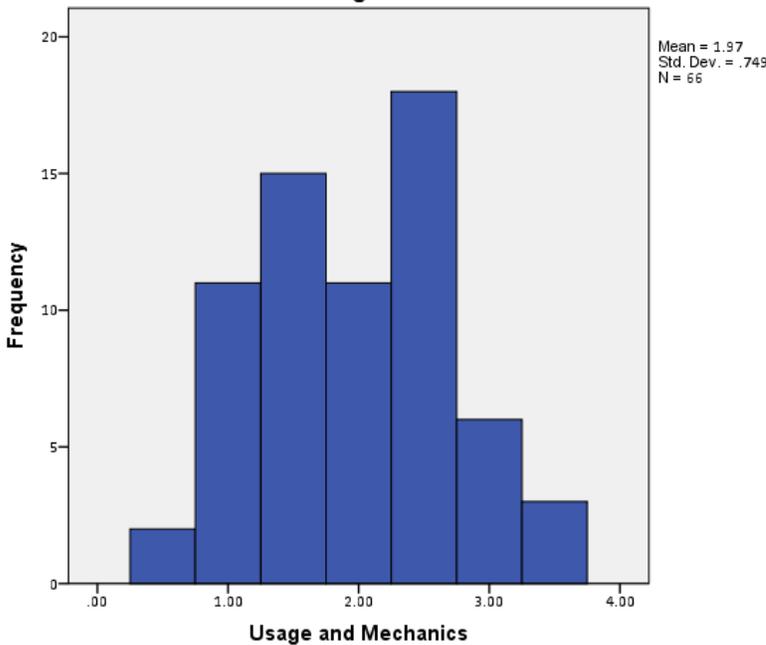
Criteria 5: Usage and Mechanics

Readers found that student usage and mastery of writing mechanics was "emerging." The modal score was 2.5 and 13.6% of students scored 3 or above.

Criteria 6: Organization

Readers found that student mastery of organization of ideas was "emerging." The modal score was 2.5 and 39.4% of students scored 3 or above.
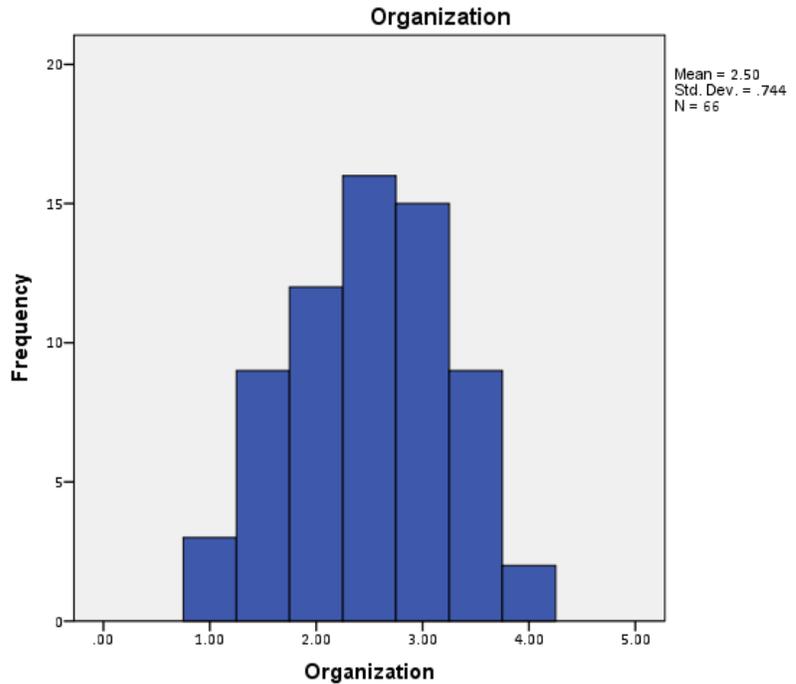
Plagiarism Analysis

There were some difficulties with using Turnitin.com for assessing plagiarism. If students had turned in the assignment to Turnitin.com earlier, then papers would appear to be 90-100% plagiarized. This would account for the high numbers of papers falling in the 75-100% plagiarized category.
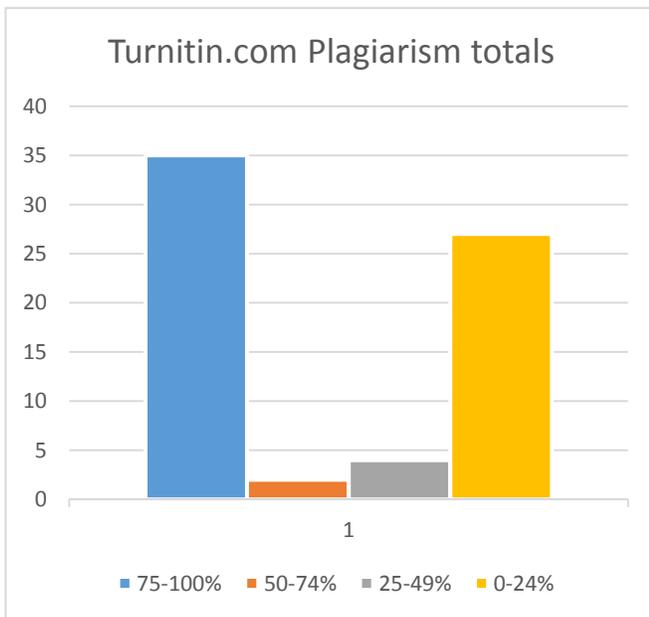
However, there were a number of papers that appeared problematic. These papers showed 15-20% match with up to 8 other papers submitted by SJSU students. This could be because students wrote the papers over the course of the semester and submitted sections as they went along, or it could be because students wrote their papers with partners (although they submitted an individual paper) and were submitting shared sections. Although the instructor for one problematic set of papers was contacted to learn more about the nature of the assignment, no response was received. Impressions of the readers, and observation of the turnitin.com analysis does suggest, however, that students were copying from websites without attribution.

Summary and Conclusions

The readers were not surprised by the results of the assessment process and felt that it accurately reflected their experience as writing instructors on campus. They also felt, as have most participants in campus-wide assessment projects, that exposure to the writing occurring in other programs was beneficial and interesting.

Improvements to assessment process

There was relatively low response rate to the request for papers. Some instructors reported not having electronic copies of their papers available and some instructors were not teaching the course in the spring semester. Other instructors simply did not reply to the request for unknown reasons. In addition, not all papers that were submitted were end of the semester culminating work and may not have best represented student ability levels. A broader sample and greater uniformity in the stage of writing mastery expected by the instructor on the assignment would improve the analysis.

Suggestion: Initiate the process at the beginning of the semester, alert faculty to the importance of the project, and provide reminders to faculty to save assignments.

Plagiarism screening

The readers noted numerous instances of copying and pasting of text from other sources. In some cases, no reference was given, whereas in others, a citation was provided and quotation marks were not used. While the readers did not have access to the grades that students received for these assignments, the inability of student to properly paraphrase and use citations was disappointing.

In addition, responses to the call for contributions indicated that not all 100W faculty are using Turnitin.com or Canvas (which has a Turnitin.com utility) for screening papers for plagiarism. Faculty may be using a personal system and more information is needed about other methods to check for plagiarism.

Suggestion: Ask instructors to adopt use of Canvas or Turnitin.com for their assignments. There are options which will not contribute the student papers to the general repository, which should allay intellectual property concerns. In addition, this allows for electronic archiving of assignments and assignment instructions for later retrieval. If instructors choose another method to screen for plagiarism, have them describe that process.

If faculty are using Turnitin.com, they are able to view and download class plagiarism statistics, as well as statistics for any online grading that is used. Future assessments could take advantage of these utilities to get a finer-grained understanding of the extent of intentional and unintentional plagiarism that is occurring.

Scoring rubric

No problems with the scoring rubric were found. There was some discussion of Criteria 3b (Using information to achieve a purpose). The readers had resolved the requirement that they evaluate "clarity and depth" to mean the depth of analysis and thinking and whether the author had brought new ideas to the evidence provided.

Establishing performance benchmarks

With the understanding that 100W is intended to be a course completed after successful passing of the Writing Skills Test (WST) and is a prerequisite for some upper-division courses, the readers believed that SJSU should set the goal of having 80% of students scoring 3 or above, with 20% scoring a 4, on both the information literacy and written communication rubrics by the end of the 100W course.

Implications for 100W and information literacy instruction

The Comm Center offers workshops and other SJSU units, such as EOP, provide information literacy instruction to students. These results indicate that increased instruction in paraphrasing/citation is needed. The Comm Center will hold workshops on paraphrasing in Fall 2014, and 100W instructors will be sent resources for practicing and teaching paraphrasing and citations in their classes this fall.

Previous online measures of information literacy administered by the Library revealed particularly low scores on paraphrasing, but it was unclear whether those low scores were an artifact of poor question quality or actual low abilities. The findings of this assessment suggest that low ability is a meaningful factor. Therefore, the revision of the InfoPower tutorial offered by the Library should emphasize paraphrasing and quoting.

Assessment practice

It was suggested that this assessment be conducted again, and be institutionalized. Specifically, following publication and increased implementation of paraphrasing and citation resource in Fall 2014, papers from Fall 2014 100W courses should be collected and assessed for information literacy. In addition, culminating papers from Spring capstone courses should be collected and assessed.

In addition to assessing for information literacy and written communication, critical thinking could also be included

Appendix A

List of programs that submitted assignments, including those for which assignments were unsuitable or unusable for technical reasons

Art 100W

Chemistry 100W

Communications 100W

Engineering 100W

History 100W

Health Professions 100W

Hospitality 100W

Kinesiology 100W

Psychology 100W

LLD 100WB

Sociology 100W

Chemistry 100W

Computer Science 100W

Appendix B

Interrater Reliability Statistics (Pearson *r* correlation coefficients)

	Pair 1 (22 papers)	Pair 2 (19 papers)	Pair 3 (23 papers)	Combined (64 papers)
2. Evaluate Information and its Sources Critically: Relevance of sources	.390	**.701**	**.504**	**.538**
3. Use Information Effectively to Accomplish a Specific Purpose a. Use of sources and evidence	**.527**	**.777**	**.513**	**.587**
b. Purpose achieved	**.448**	**.616**	.248	**.419**
4. Access and Use Information Ethically and Legally a. In-text citations and format	.384	**.798**	.319	**.463**
b. Paraphrasing, summary, and quoting	.325	**.727**	.236	**.470**
5. Usage and Mechanics	.668	.308	**.509**	**.454**
6. Organization	**0.625**	.414	.238	**.441**

Note: Coefficients in bold are statistically significant. However, given the small sample size on which each correlation was calculated, statistical significance testing may not be informative. Reliable estimates of correlations typically require a larger set of pairings with which to test association. Because 64 sets were used to calculate the overall correlation, one would expect to find greater statistical significance.

Appendix C

	0: Does not meet Initial Standards	1: Initial	2: Emerging	3: Developed	4: Highly Developed
5. Bibliography exists	No	Yes			
6. Evaluate Information and its Sources Critically: Relevance of sources	Unclear relevance, or accepts all information found	Some sources are relevant, reliable, and up-to-date	Most sources are relevant, reliable, and up-to-date	All sources are relevant, reliable, and up-to-date.	
7. Use Information Effectively to Accomplish a Specific Purpose	Demonstrates an attempt to use sources to support ideas in writing.	Demonstrates an attempt to use credible, relevant sources to support ideas.	Demonstrates consistent use of credible, relevant sources to support ideas.	Demonstrates skillful use of high-quality, credible, relevant sources to develop ideas, and relevance of context is evaluated when presenting a position.	
a. Use of sources and evidence b. Purpose achieved	No or unclear idea or topic. Communicates information, but does not achieve purpose	An idea or topic. Communicates and organizes information without synthesis; does not achieve purpose.	An idea or topic. Organizes and synthesizes information to achieve purpose	Clear idea or topic. Organizes and synthesizes information to achieve purpose, with clarity and depth	
8. Access and Use Information Ethically and Legally b. In-text citations and format	Inconsistent and incomplete formatting of bibliography and citations, or does not cite sources in bibliography in text	Some inconsistent or incomplete formatting of bibliography and citations, or over-reliance on one source. Use of citations in text and in bibliography.	Largely consistent and complete formatting of bibliography and citations, and balanced use of citations in text and in bibliography, with some errors.	Consistent and complete formatting of bibliography and citations, and balanced use of citations in text and in bibliography with no errors.	
c. Paraphrasing, summary, and quoting	No use of paraphrasing, summarizing, or quoting.	Attempts to use paraphrasing, summary, and/or quoting, but with errors in mechanics or formatting.	Uses paraphrasing, summary, and/or quoting, with minor errors.	Correctly and effectively uses paraphrasing, summary, and/or quoting.	
5. Usage and Mechanics	Contains pervasive errors in mechanics, usage, grammar, or sentence structure. Problems interfere with meaning or distract the reader.	Contains some errors in mechanics, usage, grammar, or sentence structure. Problems may, on occasion, compromise meaning or distract the reader.	Is generally free of errors in mechanics, usage, grammar, or sentence structure. Reads smoothly. Problems do not compromise meaning.	Demonstrates mastery of spelling, punctuation, usage, grammar, sentence structure, and mechanics. May use language and punctuation to enhance meaning.	
6. Organization	Lacks a sense of overall structure; no sense of beginning, middle, or end. Division into paragraphs lacks logic. Lacks transitional words, phrases, and sentences.	Contains an overall sense of beginning, middle, and end, but paragraph sequence may be confusing. Little or inappropriate use of transitions.	Effective structure and arrangement of ideas. Order of paragraphs may, occasionally, appear mechanical or awkward. Transitions present but may be cumbersome or repetitive.	Rational, sensible, and deliberate structure that enhances and clarifies meaning. Transitions show relationships among ideas.	