# Writing a Philosophy Paper-Rubric

Each topic I give you will ask you to “explain and evaluate” a position or idea or argument. There are four elements you must address in your essay (these four will be the elements I am grading).

I will give you a score of 0-5 for each of these four elements. I will then add the scores together to calculate your grade on the essay. If you score a perfect “5” on each element the maximum total score would be 20.

I provide the scale for each element below. With each scale I have included specific directions that will help you score higher on that element. The bold print is what I will use to determine your score. I hope that by reading this you will feel confident that you know how to organize and write the essay.

#1: Describe, identify and explain two or more different philosophical positions and the relevant philosophical concepts.

**As I grade, I will ask myself, “How well did you describe and explain both positions (either two different positions or an argument and counterargument)? How clear and accurate are your explanations and the use of the relevant philosophical terms/concepts?”**

1. Provides clear, accurate and full explanations of each philosophical position.
2. Provides mostly clear, accurate and full explanations of each philosophical position.
3. (a) Provides a clear and accurate explanation of one position and a poor explanation of the second position or (b) provides explanations for both positions that are unclear and/or incomplete and/or inaccurate.

2 (a) Fails to provide an explanation for one of the two theories or (b) provides poor explanations of both positions.

1 (a) Fails to provide an explanation for one of the two theories and (b) provides a poor explanation for the other position.

1. The essay was not on the topic or there was no essay at all

#2: Apply critical thinking skills by analyzing the strengths and weaknesses of philosophical positions or theories and by writing a clear and coherent essay. **As I grade, I will ask myself, “Did you explain the issue to be considered? How well do you analyze the strengths and weaknesses of the theories or positions? And how clear and coherent is your overall presentation?”**

1. Gives coherent and consistent reasoning throughout the essay and a clear and comprehensive explanation of the issue to be considered. Also provides a coherent analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of the positions at issue.
2. Uses generally coherent and consistent reasoning throughout the essay and a clear, but not necessarily comprehensive, explanation of the issue to be considered. Also provides a coherent analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of the positions at issue.
3. Uses some coherent and consistent reasoning that either contains clear weakness in reasoning or fails to explain the issue to be considered. Also fails to provide a coherent analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of the positions at issue.
4. Uses some coherent and consistent reasoning that contains clear weakness in reasoning and fails to explain the issue to be considered. Also, fails to provide a coherent analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of the positions at issue.
5. Uses incoherent and inconsistent reasoning that also fails to explain the issue to be considered. Also fails to provide the strengths and weaknesses of the positions at issue.

0 The essay was not on the topic or there was no essay at all

#3: Create an informed personal response to a philosophical issue by developing and defending a personal opinion to the selected philosophical problem. **As I grade, I will ask myself, “Did you develop a personal opinion? How well did you defend why you believe what you believe? Have you explained a rational, but opposing view? Have you explained the assumptions behind your position (and that of the opposing view)? And how your position impacts your life and society?”**

1. Provides a coherent and well-thought out personal position that is fully defended against a rational, but opposing, position. The assumptions behind your view, and the opposing view, are recognized and analyzed. The impact of your position on your personal life and on your society is explored.
2. Provides a personal position that is coherent and has some support, but needs a little more thought and is mostly defended against a rational, but opposing, position. The assumptions behind your position, and that of the opposing position, are identified but not analyzed. The impact of one’s position on your personal life and on society is explored.
3. Provides a personal position that is coherent but has very little support and needs a lot more depth and is not adequately defended against a rational, but opposing, position. The assumptions behind both views are be identified, but there is no analysis of these assumptions. There is very little attempt to explore the impact of one’s position on one’s life and society.

2 Provides a personal position that is (a) incoherent or has no support and is not defended against a rational, but opposing, position; or (b) does not identify assumptions behind the position or opposing position; or (c) there is no attempt to explore the impact of one’s position on one’s life and society.

1. Provides a personal position that has no support, is not defended against a rational, but opposing view, does not identify the assumptions behind the position, and does not make an attempt to explore the impact of one’s position on one’s own life and society.
2. The essay was not on the topic, there was no personal position or there was no essay at all

#4: Grammar. **As I grade, I will ask myself, “How good is the grammar?”**

1. Demonstrates graceful use of language **by being free from most errors in grammar and mechanics. The essay is well organized and focused. The student uses credible sources to support and inform the content.**
2. Demonstrates reasonable facility in the use of language by **being free from most errors in grammar and mechanics, however the errors do not impede understanding of the content. The essay is mostly organized and focused. The student uses credible sources to support and inform the content.**

3 Demonstrates adequate facility in the use of language by **containing some errors in grammar and/or mechanics, some of which may be serious enough to impede meaning. Also the essay is generally organized and focused with some lapses or the student does not use credible sources to support and inform the content.**

1. Demonstrates limited facility in the use of language by **containing problems with vocabulary and several errors in grammar and mechanics which do impede understanding. The essay is not organized and contains lapses in focus. Additionally, the student did not use credible sources to support and inform the content.**
2. Demonstrates little or no facility in the use of language by **containing problems with vocabulary and an unacceptable number of errors in grammar and mechanics. The errors are clearly an impediment to understanding the essay This essay is poorly organized and demonstrates little or no focus and does not utilize credible sources to support and inform the content.**
3. The essay was not on the topic or there was no essay at all