

OAS Inquiry Grading System

Each of your inquiries will be given a score from 1 to 4. This handout will help you interpret what each number means. Every score above 1 will pass the inquiry. Though there is no substantive difference between a 1+ and a 4 as far as your grade is concerned, we hope that this number system will help you track your progress through the course and situate your inquiry in relation to your fellow students' projects. If you received a grade of 0 or 1 you will be asked to resubmit your inquiry 1 and should contact Brooke about what you will be expected to do to earn a passing mark.

Four: Good You received a four for your inquiry if you showed creative and original thought, substantial effort, and a critical conclusion. You demonstrated critical thinking concerning the planning, execution, and analysis of your project. You seem sincerely interested in and excited about your work. Good job!

Three: Satisfactory You received a three for your inquiry if you were lacking in at least one of the three categories mentioned above: planning, execution, or analysis. Perhaps your idea was good but you lacked the time to complete the inquiry well; perhaps you failed to consider important variables in your experiment design but indicated your failure in your conclusion. You might also have earned a three if your idea was unoriginal but you still took the time to explore an idea new to you. Anyone who earned a three demonstrated interest in his or her project and showed critical thinking at times.

Two: Passing Your inquiry earned a two if it was substantially lacking in one, or partially lacking in two, of the following three categories: planning, execution, or analysis. A grade of two passes the inquiry without resubmission, but only barely. Perhaps the project was well designed, but the assignment showed little effort. Inquiries that earned a grade of two did not demonstrate satisfactory critical thinking. Usually inquiries earning twos were lacking in the planning and analysis stage, since these are the two stages where critical thinking is most important. An inquiry might also earn a two if the project was submitted in an inappropriate format.

One+: Your instructors occasionally gave this grade because even though you should do more work on the inquiry, he or she is on the fence and will simply let you go on to inquiry 2 where you had better do a good job because he or she won't let you get away with this twice.

One: Resubmit Inquiries earning a grade of one will be reworked and resubmitted for credit. A one indicates a dramatic lack of critical thinking during at least one part of the inquiry, a dramatic lack of effort, or an unacceptable format for submission. The most frequent reason for resubmission is a basic misunderstanding of what was required to competently complete the inquiry. If you earned a one please feel free to speak to your UGTA, the TAs, or to come to the office hours of Dr. Laude or Dr. Scala to discuss how to improve your project, but first contact Brooke by e-mail to see if there is something specific you can do to finish the work up quickly.

Zero: Resubmit You didn't even try. Make an appointment with the instructor who graded your inquiry ASAP and get started on turning around your attitude in this course. Think of the difference between a one and a zero is that a zero means you know what you did was really bad and you turned it in anyway.

General Instructor Comments Composed After Grading Last Year's First Inquiry

(Use these hints to avoid having cruel things written about your inquiry)

If you reduce the prompt for inquiry 1 to its essential features, it might look something like this:

1. Inquire (which means to seek information by asking a question)
2. Do something intellectually interesting
3. Having done something, you have to tell us about it.
4. Be original
5. Think critically
6. Show enthusiasm and industry

So when you are handing in your assignment, you might ask yourself, have I done these six things?

Other thoughts on ways that you might fail to achieve these prompts:

1. You are not nearly as interesting as you think you are. Those of you who insisted on self evaluation or were seeking out those most like you, got slammed. Professor Scala and I don't care if you have found a soul mate on campus who likes the same kind of jelly on their PBJ as you.
2. The internet provides access to everybody's opinion about everything. It is not appropriate to begin and end a reference search with a collection of blogs that support a critical argument you are making. If you do your inquiry without leaving your room, you will almost certainly get a giant FAIL.
3. It is wonderful that you felt like writing a poem or a short story or a play and it is reasonable that this effort would satisfy prompts 2, 4 and 6 above. But if you do nothing more than that in your inquiry then you have not answered prompts 1, 3 and 5 and you will be forced to do more work. So write a short story? No. Criticize a story? Maybe. Write and criticize a short story? Sure.
4. College professors spot what you all would call BS a mile away (usually within the first two sentences) and no matter how you much you expand your inquiry with your own unsubstantial meanderings or cut and paste of internet drawings and blurbs, if it looks like BS and smells like BS, it is BS, and you get slammed.
5. Here is a good question to ask yourself after you finish an inquiry: Given a single sentence to describe what was accomplished with my inquiry I can now say: And if you are forced to say something like: "I found out that water is wet" or "I like the Simpsons" or "Thinking critically is hard" then you will know at once the kind of grade you will receive.

Grading Scale: In the end, everyone gets a 0 or a 1. But it is nice to have an idea of how your grade calibrates with others, so used a 0 to 4 scale to sum up our gut sense of the quality of your inquiry. See the other side for details.