

Writing Skills Assessment General Instruction Sheet  
Department of Accounting, Tippie College of Business  
June 20, 2012, 1:30 p.m., S207 PBB

The newspaper article accompanying your test booklet appeared recently in the general audience business press (e.g. the *Wall Street Journal* or the *New York Times*). In an essay, briefly **summarize** the article and **analyze** it by identifying a particular issue raised in the article and examining its implications. You are not being assessed for knowledge of current economic issues; however, the narrower the focus of your thesis statement position in the analysis the more effective your essay will be.

Do not use the exact language of the article in your own writing and attribute any direct quotations correctly. Do not label the parts of the essay “summary” and “analysis”—the essay should read as one coherent whole. Your response should have a clearly identifiable thesis position for the analysis and include well-substantiated claims. The summary should not take up more than one-third of your total response.

You have 75 minutes in which to read the article and write your essay. The test administrators will announce the time at the 50-minute mark—the 70-minute mark—and the 75-minute mark, at which time you must put down your pen or receive a points penalty on the grading of your assessment. You must remain in your seat for at least 50 minutes, even if you are finished before then, so as not to disturb those around you. After the 50-minute mark, you may bring your essay and the accompanying article to a test administrator for check-out from the assessment. Students will not be permitted to leave the assessment room and then return to it at any time during the test.

On the front of the test booklet, **print** your name, University of Iowa e-mail address, and the date. Write the essay in full and grammatically correct sentences and paragraphs. Write legibly—you may choose to write on every other line of the test booklet if your handwriting is really bad. Spelling will not be assessed. Students are not permitted to use any form of dictionary or language aid or electronic device of any kind (including cell phones) during the assessment. Take the time to proofread your essay. Go ahead and make revisions in your work. You may cross out words with a single line and replace them with more precise ones, for example. You may also insert additional sentences—just indicate clearly with arrows or asterisks where the additional material should be inserted in the essay.

Essays will be scored on a scale of 20 points, with a maximum of 4 points allotted for each of 5 categories: grammar and usage (micro skills), thesis statement construction, development of summary and analysis paragraphs, clarity of expression (precise word choices), and style. A score of 15.5 or above reflects acceptable writing performance and is the goal of the Department of Accounting for each student to reach upon graduating with a degree in Accounting. A score of 12.5 reflects minimum writing proficiency. A score of 10.0 will be considered a passing score for this assessment.

Students will receive e-mail notification of their having passed or failed the assessment starting the week of July 9. Students who wish to receive a copy of their assessment grade sheet may pick theirs up in the Department of Accounting office (W252 PBB) upon showing their University ID beginning Monday, July 16. Essays remain the property of the Department of Accounting and will not be returned. Students who do not receive a passing score for this assessment may elect to take the Fall 2012 writing assessment for Spring 2013 admission to the accounting major.

**Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) regarding the writing admissions requirement for the Undergraduate Accounting Major:**

**Who must take the assessment?** A successful writing assessment score is required for admission to the Accounting Major. All students who plan to start the Accounting Major in the Fall 2012 semester should take the assessment. Accounting Major courses include all 6A:100-level courses except for 6A:120.

**What if I have passed the Department of Accounting writing assessment in a previous semester?** If you previously passed the Department of Accounting assessment, then you have met this particular requirement for admission to the Accounting Major and do not need to take it again.

**Who is eligible to take the assessment?**

Students must have either completed or be currently enrolled in 6A:2 Managerial Accounting (or course equivalent) to be eligible to take the June writing assessment.

If you failed the February 2012 Department of Accounting admissions writing assessment, then you are not eligible to take the June 2012 assessment. You must wait until the assessment is offered again in the Fall 2012 semester.

**When and where is the assessment?** The assessment will be administered on **Wednesday, June 20, at 1:30 p.m. in S207 Pappajohn Business Building (PBB)**. See the campus map at <http://www.uiowa.edu/~maps/p/pbb1.htm>. Students do not need to sign up in advance for the assessment.

**What if I have a conflict with the June 20 assessment date?** Contact Kevin Den Adel ([Kevin-denadel@uiowa.edu](mailto:Kevin-denadel@uiowa.edu), 319-335-1412) to discuss your particular situation.

**How do I learn more about the assessment?** Contact Kevin Den Adel ([Kevin-denadel@uiowa.edu](mailto:Kevin-denadel@uiowa.edu), 319-335-1412) with additional questions about the assessment.

**Why is this assessment required?** The Department of Accounting has had a writing program and assessments since 1998. Meeting at least minimum writing requirements before starting the Accounting Major will enable students to be competitively positioned for internships and build on the strength of the departmental writing program. Our Accounting graduates possess an advantage relative to students from competing schools because they have the opportunity to develop the writing skills employers demand. Establishing minimum writing competency requirements for admission helps to ensure all undergraduate majors will meet the expectations of future employers with respect to written communication skills.

**What do I need to bring to the assessment?** Students are required to bring their University ID (or other photo ID if not a current student) and a pen.

**What is the format of the assessment?** Students will have 75 minutes in which to read an article from the business press (e.g. *Wall Street Journal*, *New York Times*) and then write a summary of the article and an analysis in which they identify a particular issue raised in the article and develop a position on it. Students will use their pens to write in exam booklets (provided). No dictionaries or electronic devices of any kind are allowed. See the accompanying instruction sheet for additional information.

**What writing skills is the Department of Accounting assessing?** The writing will be assessed in 5 areas: micro skills (grammar/usage), thesis statement (for the analysis), development of the position in the analysis, clarity of expression, and style. Spelling will not be assessed, nor will any kind of accounting knowledge. **See the assessment scoring rubric and skills checklist at the end of this document.**

**How will the assessment be scored?** Each of the 5 areas will be scored on a scale of 1 – 4, for a maximum score of 20 and a minimum score of 5.

**What is a passing score for admission to the Accounting Major?** A minimum total score of 10 is required. Students with score totals below 10 will not be permitted to begin the Accounting Major in the Fall 2012 semester and should make other course selection plans for the semester.

**When will I learn the results of the assessment?** Students will be notified by e-mail starting the week of July 9 if they have met or failed to meet the minimum required score of 10/20.

**What happens if I do not pass the writing assessment?** If you do not pass the writing assessment, and have been admitted into the Tippie College of Business, you can continue to take courses required for your B.B.A. If you are still interested in being an Accounting major, you can take the writing assessment in the Fall 2012 semester for admittance during the Spring 2013 semester. On the other hand, you may want to consider declaring another major (e.g., Economics, Finance, Marketing, Management or Management Information Systems). Plan on talking to your advisor in the Undergraduate Program Office (C140 Pappajohn Business Building) about your options if you do not pass the writing assessment.

**May I retake the assessment?** No, not for admission to the major for the Fall 2012 semester; however students may choose to take the writing assessment in the Fall 2012 semester for admittance during the Spring 2013 semester.

**What can I do to prepare for the assessment?** Make sure to read carefully the general instruction sheet at the start of this document. Read the daily *Wall Street Journal* or *New York Times* to familiarize yourself with business press articles. Writing resources are available at the Department of Accounting website (<http://tippie.uiowa.edu/accounting/writing/index.cfm>). Refer especially to the sections on “Micro Skills” and “Macro Skills.” Writing tip sheets are also available from the Judith R. Frank Business Communications Center website (<http://tippie.uiowa.edu/bizcomm/>).

**What if I require special testing conditions?** Students registered with the Office of Student Disability Services may arrange for their required test modification upon receipt of the appropriate Student Academic Accommodation Request (SAAR) by **Tuesday, June 19 at 5:00 p.m.** to Pamela Bourjaily ([pamela-bourjaily@uiowa.edu](mailto:pamela-bourjaily@uiowa.edu))

**Who can I contact with questions?** Professor Kevin Den Adel ([kevin-denadel@uiowa.edu](mailto:kevin-denadel@uiowa.edu)) is the Department of Accounting contact for questions regarding administration of the writing assessment. Dean Lon Moeller ([lon-moeller@uiowa.edu](mailto:lon-moeller@uiowa.edu)) is the Tippie College contact for those outside of the Tippie College who may have questions regarding the writing assessment admissions requirement. Pamela Bourjaily ([pamela-bourjaily@uiowa.edu](mailto:pamela-bourjaily@uiowa.edu)) is the contact for students requesting special testing arrangements.

	Unacceptable (score of 1-2.5)	Acceptable (score of 3-3.5)	Superior (score of 4)
Micro skills	obvious errors in grammar and usage that impede the ability of the reader to take in information and/or distract from the information presented	minor errors in grammar and usage that do not distract the reader from taking in the necessary information	free of errors in grammar and usage
Thesis statement	For an analytical document: a statement too broad and vague to establish a specific argument.  For an informative document: lacks a statement that indicates to reader why he is reading the document	For an analytical document: a statement adequately establishing a specific argument, but perhaps lacking in a "because" or "why" reason for that argument.  For an informative document: signals intention of document, although perhaps more generally than specifically	For an analytical document: a statement establishing a clear, narrow and specific argument and the primary reason(s) for that holding that position.  For an informative document: signals specific intention of document and why reader of document should be reading it.
Development	Provides insufficient support for the position taken and/or reiterates evidence already established in the document in lieu of providing additional necessary support	Provides sufficient information to support the primary recommendation or argument in a document.	Provides compelling evidence in support of the position taken in the document; anticipates and addresses potential questions/concerns a reader may have about a position taken in the document.
Clarity	Document is difficult to follow because of deficits in organization and/or precision in language. Awareness of writing a document to a specific audience may be lacking.	Document is easy to follow and generally uses precise language. Document takes into account whom it is being written for and what the intended audience needs to know.	Consistent use of precise language and keen awareness of the needs of the specific audience. Superior organization of information so that the readers has very little work to do in terms of negotiating the document and extracting the most important information.

Style	Document lacks appropriate opening/closing. Overuse of descriptive language and/or of passive voice sentence constructions. Little effort made to prune the document of extraneous material.	Generally uses sufficiently transparent language so as not to obscure important information. Mixes active and passive voice sentence constructions. No major repetition of material in the document.	Streamlines sentences and omits repetitive phrasings to be as concise as possible. Varies non-technical language and sentence structures so that distinctions in content are not buried in sentences that all look the same. Information “pops off” the page.
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## Skills Checklist for \_\_\_\_\_

All circled items need work.

## Essay #1

<b>1. Mechanical</b>	<b>2. Correct English</b>	<b>3. Clarity</b>	<b>4. Style</b>
Correct word	Run-on sentences or fragments	Clear thesis/topic sentences	Graceful transitions
Quotations	Subject/verb or tense agreements	Organizing facts	Strong beginning and ending
Plurals vs. possessives	Adverbs vs. adjectives	Logical paragraph breaks	Interesting word choice
Commas	Parallel Structures	Avoiding long or awkward sentences	Varied sentence structure
References	Pronoun agreement	Awareness of Audience: informal lang., jargon, etc.	Use of active voice
Other	Other: unclear antecedent	Precision in language	Other: omit needless words
		Other:	

Comments: