**Virginia Board of Education Guidelines for the Use of Local   
Performance Assessments to Verify Credits in Writing:   
Implementation Support**

On September 20, 2018, the Virginia Board of Education approved [*Guidelines for the Use of Local Performance Assessments to Verify Credits in Writing*](https://www.doe.virginia.gov/home/showpublisheddocument/32322/638047186913170000), as announced in [Superintendent’s Memo #266-18](https://www.doe.virginia.gov/home/showpublisheddocument/37945/638060879330300000). Based on questions received on implementation, additional guidance for administering and scoring the local performance assessments used to verify credits in writing has been developed to assist school divisions that have chosen this option. This document is intended to be used in conjunction with the *Guidelines*.

This document replaces the [*Virginia Board of Education Guidelines for the Use of Local Performance Assessments to Verify Credits in Writing: Implementation Support for 2018-2019*](https://www.doe.virginia.gov/home/showpublisheddocument/32326/638047186922070000). The information in this document applies to students who were enrolled in Grade 10 English or below in the 2018-2019 school year, and it supports the full implementation of the 2017 *English Standards of Learning* (SOL).\*

# Standards of Learning (SOL) Coverage:

Beginning fall 2019, any body of evidence evaluated for verified credit must include at least one persuasive, one analytic, and one argumentative writing sample that, in total, cover the writing and research strands included in the 2017 English SOL for grades 9-11.

# Evaluation of Performance Tasks:

Tasks developed to elicit student writing samples that will contribute to bodies of evidence used to award verified credit must be evaluated using the [*Virginia Quality Criteria Review Tool for Performance Assessments*](https://www.doe.virginia.gov/home/showpublisheddocument/20630/638043629410830000). To ensure students have access to high-quality writing tasks for the body of evidence, local staff should develop or modify writing tasks based on the Quality Criteria Review Tool. [Sample writing tasks](https://www.doe.virginia.gov/home/showpublisheddocument/32332/638047186940830000) that could be modified for use are available on the VDOE website. The prompts included in the list of EOC Writing Prompts, available on the VDOE website, were developed for the short-paper component of the EOC Writing SOL test rather than a local performance assessment; these prompts would require modification based on the Quality Criteria Review Tool in order to be appropriate tasks for the local performance assessment.

# Completion of Writing Samples:

Any writing sample included in a student’s body of evidence to be scored for a verified credit must have been completed independently by the student while in the school environment. Students should not be provided with assistance from any person or material that would prevent them from independently demonstrating proficiency. Composing a draft prior to the performance assessment and using written teacher/peer feedback while completing the performance assessment are examples of assistance that prevent students from independently demonstrating proficiency.

## Testing Conditions:

School divisions must determine the processes and procedures they will use to ensure that the *Guidelines* and expectations for the local performance assessments used to verify credits in writing are followed with fidelity, including that students are not being provided assistance or working outside the school environment.

Testing conditions for the performance assessment will vary, and conditions will be different than traditional, standardized Standards of Learning (SOL) testing conditions. For instance, it is not expected that students complete each writing sample within a single class period; however, the school division and individual school staff will determine what conditions will best ensure that students complete their writing samples independently while at school and under the supervision of school personnel.

## Appropriate Ancillary Materials:

During completion of the writing sample, students should be provided with their writing task and any ancillary materials that are necessary and appropriate for completing the task. For example, students may have access to previously completed research or annotated reading passages as well as the VDOE [writer’s checklist](https://www.doe.virginia.gov/home/showpublisheddocument/3876/637994640238400000), common and/or scoring rubrics, dictionaries, or spellcheck.

Using ancillary materials that provide inappropriate assistance is not permitted and may prevent a student from independently demonstrating proficiency. Examples of ancillary materials that provide inappropriate assistance include, but are not limited to, drafts, written teacher feedback on student notes or research, handouts that describe how to structure specific sentences or organize papers, etc.\*\*

## Research:

The research process is not evaluated using the writing rubrics, so it may be completed in a collaborative setting or with teacher guidance. However, if students are demonstrating their ability to effectively apply research for this assessment, they must independently embed into their writing the information gathered during the research process.

# Scoring Student Writing Samples:

Each writing sample to be included in the body of evidence used to verify a credit in writing must be scored by a trained and qualified scorer using the [High School Writing Scoring Rubrics (2017)](https://www.doe.virginia.gov/home/showpublisheddocument/32324/638047186917570000). The High School Writing Scoring Rubrics support a focused holistic scoring model. Focused holistic scoring is the evaluation of writing proficiency based on specific elements or domains of writing. The writer is judged in each domain independent of the other. Each student response receives two scores, one for each of the writing domains identified: Composing/Written Expression and Usage/Mechanics. Each domain is scored holistically. The score reflects the reader’s overall impression of each of the domains. The scorers weigh the student’s relative strengths or weaknesses in each of the two domains and then assign a score point for each domain that most accurately describes the attributes of the paper. Therefore, each paper receives a separate score for Composing/Written Expression and for Usage/Mechanics.

It is best practice that all papers are read by two readers, with the student’s score for each domain being the total of the score assigned by both readers. The Composing/Written Expression score is counted twice, and the Usage/Mechanics score is counted once in calculating the total score. Therefore, in the total score of the student’s writing sample, the Composing/Written Expression score counts 2/3 and the Usage/Mechanics score counts 1/3. For example, in the Composing/Written Expression domain, if Reader A scores the student’s paper a 3 and Reader B scores the student’s paper a 2, the student’s weighted score in the Composing/Written Expression domain is 10 (5 points, counted twice).

[Understand Scoring](https://va.scoring.pearsonassessments.com/understandscoring/) is a web-based application that is provided for use by Virginia educators and should be used to train and qualify scorers. See [Superintendent’s Memo #212-19](https://www.doe.virginia.gov/home/showpublisheddocument/10803/638030760518330000) for information about creating or logging on to an account in Understand Scoring.

A teacher may not score work completed by students under his or her supervision or instruction. Teachers who do not qualify as scorers should not be permitted to assign scores independently; if used as scorers, they are to be paired with qualified scorers, or a qualified scorer may check their scores.

School divisions are encouraged to consider incorporating quality control activities throughout the scoring window to prevent scorers from drifting away from the scoring standards established by the training materials within Understand Scoring. These activities are especially important if the scoring event spans multiple days or multiple sessions. For example, if training and qualifying of scorers occurs more than a few days before the scoring window, it is recommended that scorers requalify and/or recalibrate immediately before scoring student samples. Similarly, if a scoring event occurs over multiple days, recalibration at the beginning of each scoring session is best practice to ensure the rubric is applied fairly and consistently to all writing samples.

Divisions should develop a scoring protocol that includes how to resolve nonadjacent scores, when and how often training and qualifying will occur, when and how often calibration of scorers will occur, and when and how often writing tasks will be scored using the High School Writing Scoring Rubrics (2017). It is best practice to train and qualify scorers at a time near the scoring window, and to open the scoring window at a time near the end of the testing window, regardless of the number of testing and scoring windows the division chooses.

The “Learn About Scoring” page within Understand Scoring provides additional details and considerations for local school divisions.

## Use of Instructional Rubric:

As explained earlier, the High School Writing Scoring Rubric supports a holistic scoring model and is used to score writing samples used for verified credit body of evidence. In addition to this rubric, the [Common Rubric for High School Writing Samples](https://www.doe.virginia.gov/home/showpublisheddocument/32320/638047186908170000) is provided as an instructional tool. The Common Rubric for High School Writing Samples rubric may be used during classroom instruction to provide students with constructive feedback as part of the writing process and as *preparation* for completing the writing samples used for verified credit. The format and detail of the Common Rubric for High School Writing Samples provides students with precise, focused feedback on how to improve their writing outside of the performance assessment tasks. For example, in this rubric, composing and written expression are separated to support the provision of more specific feedback to students in these domains.

After the appropriate writing instruction, students complete their performance assessments independently. If a student’s work sample does not meet expectations, a teacher might use that sample alongside the Common Rubric for High School Writing Samples to provide feedback and continued instruction. Any feedback provided that is then used by the student to edit or improve the draft would mean the student is not completing the sample independently; as such, writing samples that have been revised after receiving feedback would not be included in the body of evidence used to verify a credit in writing.

The student may instead complete another task on a similar or different topic. The new task could be related to the research or background work the student completed so the student can utilize previously compiled research or information, but it must not be the original task.

# Determining if a Verified Credit Should Be Awarded:

Although individual writing samples will be scored according to the High School Writing Scoring Rubrics (2017), the student’s final body of evidence is evaluated during a separate process using the 2017 EOC Writing Performance Level Descriptors (PLDs), which describe levels of achievement in high school writing: advanced, proficient, or does not meet the standard (fails). A body of evidence that is judged to be proficient or advanced according to these descriptors should earn the student a verified credit in writing.

The rubric scores on individual writing samples and the PLD determination are independent, as there is no numerical score on the rubric that correlates with a Pass/Proficient or Pass/Advanced performance level from the PLDs.

School divisions should develop a protocol for identifying, training, and qualifying the panel that will evaluate the bodies of evidence. Additionally, it is best practice to determine an appeals process that will be followed, should the need arise.

Students' bodies of evidence should be retained for five years after the end of the academic year in which they were evaluated to determine if verified credit is awarded. The format of these records (e.g., electronic or paper) is up to the locality. At the conclusion of the retention period, confidential destruction is required.

\* Full implementation of the 2017 English Standards of Learning began in the 2019-2020 school year. Requirements for students who were enrolled in Grade 11 or beyond in the 2018-2019 school year are available in the [*Guidelines for the Use of Local Performance Assessments to Verify Credits in Writing*](https://www.doe.virginia.gov/home/showpublisheddocument/32322/638047186913170000).

\*\* Students with disabilities and English learners should be provided additional supports only if the supports specific to the local performance assessment to verify credits in writing are documented as testing accommodations.