

Accounting Writing Assessment Tip Sheet

This tip sheet offers advice and information for students taking the Department of Accounting's Writing Admission Assessment. For the assessment, you will receive a newspaper article on a general business topic.

You will have 75 minutes to write an essay in which you should summarize the article's content and offer an argument about a relevant issue pertaining to the article. For full instructions, refer to the Writing Skills Assessment General Instruction Sheet at the beginning of the assessment quiz on ICON.

If you have questions prior to the assessment or encounter technical difficulties during the assessment, contact the Writing Program Assistant Director [Barb Wester](mailto:barbara-wester@uiowa.edu) (barbara-wester@uiowa.edu).

General Advice

- An original argument is the most important element of your essay. The essay should contain more than just summary; it also needs your own argument.
- The assessment is only 75 minutes long, so use your time wisely. Take a few minutes to craft a basic outline of the article you are given and identify an argument you would like to make.
- Save a few minutes at the end of the session to proof-read your essay. If time allows, read the document aloud to catch any errors.

Micro Skills/Grammar

- Pay close attention to correctly using articles (a/an, the) and noun plurals. Mistakes involving these basic language elements are common and cost students a significant number of points.
- Subject/verb agreement ("the company is" instead of "the companies is") and plurals/possessives (companies vs the company's) are problems for most writers at this stage.
- Sentence fragments are an issue for domestic and international students alike. Make sure each sentence has the necessary components to make it complete.
- Thesis and Development
- Essays should contain between 1/4 and 1/3 summary. Include enough summary to provide context, but the essay should never just contain summary.
- The thesis statement is worth as many points as any other single category. Spend a few extra minutes on this one crucial sentence (could also be 2 sentences back-to-back) and make sure it clearly articulates your own position/argument.
- Each paragraph should begin with a claim statement that addresses a portion of your overall argument. For more information on claim statements, see the Frank Center's Effective Claims Tip Sheet.

Writing Clarity

- An original argument requires precise language to convey your intended meaning. Watch out for using the same word too many times in a paragraph and avoid starting multiple sentences in the same way.
- Anytime you use “this”, it must be paired with a noun. Avoid overusing “this” to begin sentences.
- Be precise with your words! If there are too many words in a row that are 1-4 letters long, you can probably eliminate some.

Writing Style

- Avoid beginning paragraphs with “firstly”, “secondly” and “thirdly”.
- Don’t use the generic “you” (as in “brushing your teeth is healthy”) and find another way to express the same idea.