

Self-Assessment for Homework Assignments - Instructions

1. **Goal:** the self-assessment assignment exists for several reasons. First and foremost, it exists because there is impressive evidence that self-assessment improves learning outcomes, gives students a stronger sense of ownership over their own work and education, and promotes general critical thinking skills.¹ Secondly, the assignment exists to make feedback in the course both streamlined and efficient. My implementation intends to streamline feedback, because by default all students receive access to the official answers, plus remarks responding to common confusions, after completing each homework assignment. It makes the provision of further feedback more efficient, because students who want further feedback should be in a better position to understand any remaining gaps in their own learning. Finally, it exists as a way to reward students who do well on the homework while still making the general homework graded for completion. It does this through the inclusion of an extra credit opportunity.
2. **Basic Instructions:** first, I recommend you save a copy of your homework answers, e.g. as a Word document on your computer. This will help in completing the self-assessment, and also is just a generally good idea, e.g. in-case Blackboard has an error. After you submit a given homework assignment, a new document should appear beneath that homework assignment in Blackboard. This document contains the official answers to that homework assignment. It will have a title like “Instructor Answers to [NAME OF THE HOMEWORK ASSIGNMENT AS IT APPEARS IN BLACKBOARD].” Download and open the answer document and also reopen your homework submission. Then go through each homework question and compare your answer to the official answer. Use this as a basis to completing the self-assessment for that question. Once done, move on to the next question and complete its self-assessment. Once you have finished each of these, give yourself a pseudoscore on the whole assignment. This is basically your assessment of what letter grade you think your homework warrants, given your own self-assessment. If you think your work warrants extra credit, say as much in the extra credit space and make an argument for why you think it warrants extra credit. I will review this and make my own determination. If I award extra credit, this will appear as extra credit on your homework assignment, not on the self-assessment. Finally, if you want further feedback on a specific topic or question, please note this in the allocated space. Here is a breakdown of these steps:
 - a. **Step One:** download the official answer document. Open it alongside your homework submission.
 - b. **Step One:** by comparing the official answers to yours, complete the self-assessment for each question on the original homework.
 - c. **Step Two:** assess what letter grade you think your homework warrants.
 - d. **Step Three:** if you think your homework warrants extra credit, note this and make a case for it.
 - e. **Step Four:** if you have any areas where you want further feedback, note these in detail.

¹ If you are curious, here is a pair of studies in support of these claims:

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4979309/>;

<https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/feduc.2019.00087/full>.

3. **Self-Assessment Criteria:** there are generally two kinds of questions that appear on the homework: comprehension questions, and journaling questions. Comprehension questions simply task you with explaining some concept, argument, or giving an example to illustrate your understanding. Journaling questions are open-ended and ask you to reflect on the material. Journaling questions are usually flagged as such in the homework. I do not label comprehension questions. That something is a comprehension question should be obvious from its content and the fact that it is not a journaling question.
- a. **Self-Assessment for Comprehension Questions:** there are two primary things to consider when assessing your answer to a comprehension question: *accuracy* and *thoroughness*. Your answers are *accurate* to the degree that they are in accord with the official course answers, e.g. if you said an argument is a disagreement, this is not accurate, and you will see in the relevant answer document that I explain arguments in the logical sense. Your answers are *thorough* to the degree that you mention all of the key ideas present in the official answers. Note I do not expect you to provide answers that are as long and detailed as my own. Rather, look for whether there are general ideas that are present in the official answer, but entirely absent from your own.
 - i. **Accuracy:** if you note any inaccuracies in your homework, provide a brief—two to three sentences should suffice—summary of what these are and what a more accurate answer might be.
 - ii. **Thoroughness:** if you note any key ideas that were missing from your homework, provide a brief—again, two or three sentences should suffice—summary of what was missing.
 - b. **Self-Assessment for Journaling Questions:** for these, look primarily at whether your reflection is at least 5 sentences in length, and whether you mentioned a specific part of a reading or lecture as the basis of your reflection, e.g. “On page 15, Singer says X. This got me thinking because...” These are the strict requirements for journaling. If you did not satisfy them, you should mark your journaling as unsatisfactory.
4. **Example:** I will now provide an example self-assessment of a comprehension question. Please note that part C is the actual example of what you would need to do. Parts A and B are included for context. With this in mind, on to the relevant background for the example. One of the first homework assignment’s first questions asked you to define “argument,” in the sense of that word relevant to formal logic and our course (all definition questions asked for senses relevant to our course). Suppose I answered this question, and am now completing a self-assessment for it.
- a. **My (imaginary) answer on my homework:** “An argument is when people disagree with each other. Arguments often involve yelling and angry words.”
 - b. **The correct answer from the answer document:** “...an argument is a series of declarative sentences/statements, some of which are supposed to provide logical/evidential support for another. The supporting statement(s) are called premises. The statement the premises are supposed to support is called the conclusion. Here’s an example:
P1.) Persephone is Scott’s cat.

P2.) Persephone is the best cat.

C1.) So, Scott has the best cat.

Above, P1 and P2 are premises that, together, are supposed to provide logical support/evidence for the conclusion that Scott has the best cat.”

- c. **My example self-assessment for this answer:** “My answer was quite inaccurate. I confused ‘argument’ in the sense of a disagreement with arguments in the logical sense. In the logical sense, arguments are premises in support of a conclusion. Because of this confusion, my answer was also not thorough, since I basically entirely misunderstood what an argument in the logical sense is.”
 - i. **Note:** again part C, above, is what constitutes the example of what a self-assessment entry looks like. I provided my imaginary answer and the correct answer from the answer document to provide context. You do not need to restate your original answer and the correct answer when you do your self-assessment (though you’re welcome to copy/paste them in if you want).
5. **Self-Grading:** after you have completed a self-assessment for each question on the homework, you will need to make a judgment about what letter grade you think your homework warrants. Please note this letter grade **cannot** cost you actual points in the course. Nor can it raise your grade (bracketing extra credit, for a moment). Provided you completed the homework on time, your grade on it will be a 100% (and higher if you receive extra credit). The point of self-grading is to encourage “big picture” reflection on how you did on the homework, overall. It is a tool for helping you think about your own learning and progress. When assigning a letter grade, I encourage you to use the following standards, though please do not bother trying to calculate actual percents:
 - a. **A:** 90%+ of your answers were both accurate and thorough. If you think your homework would warrant an A, I encourage you to make a case for extra credit, too.
 - b. **B:** 80% of your answers were accurate and thorough, *or* your answers were all quite accurate, but missed a few key ideas and so had a lower thoroughness score *or vice-versa*.
 - c. **C:** 70% of your answers were accurate and thorough, *or* your answers were all quite accurate, but missed a few key ideas and so had a lower thoroughness score *or vice-versa*. Or, to simplify even more, you think your homework was decent: neither especially well done, nor especially poorly done.
 - d. **D:** 60% of your answers were accurate and thorough.
 - e. **F:** 50% of your answers were accurate and thorough. A grade of F should be really rare. Unless you know you did the homework without any attempt at engaging with the material, and were totally off-base, I suspect you’re being too hard on yourself if you think your material would warrant an F.
6. **Extra Credit:** after self-grading you should ask whether your homework warrants extra credit. If you think it does, note this and make a case for it. I will review your case for extra credit and your original homework and make my own determination about assigning extra credit on your homework. Please note that there may be many reasons why an assignment warrants extra credit. While I noted A level accuracy and thoroughness as an automatic basis for extra credit, *I think there can be good grounds for homework that is thoroughly inaccurate to receive*

extra credit. What might that be? Well, maybe one of your answers was especially insightful or you developed a really strong example, one that made a powerful and illuminating connection between course materials to another course you are in or your career or something else. Or maybe you totally misunderstood the questions, but the answer you provided would have been really stellar to the question you thought you were answering. These are just non exhaustive examples of things that might warrant extra credit on the homework.

7. **Requesting further feedback:** finally, you may request additional feedback on specific questions and/or concepts. The more details you provide me, the better able to help I will be. For example, rather than saying something like “question #3 made no sense to me,” you could say something like “I think question #3 is saying X, but I am not sure, because I don’t understand what the word ‘deontology’ means, and question #3 uses that word. What does it mean?”
8. **Grading for the self-assessment?** The self-assessment is, itself, graded for completion. Basically, if (by your due date) you completed a self-assessment for each question, and each part of the self-assessment, you receive a 100%. If you did these, just say something like “My journal answer met the basic requirements.” If they did not, say which they did not meet, e.g. “My journal answer didn’t cite anything specific from the week’s materials.” Beyond this, you are welcome to note anything that you personally think is impressive about your journaling and that you think would be relevant to extra credit.

Self-Assessment Template

Name:

1. **Question-by-question self-assessment:** for each question on the original homework assignment, please self-assess by comparing your answer to the official answer found within the answer document. For comprehension questions, you should assess the *accuracy* and *thoroughness* of your answer, and flag an item or two where you were off. For journaling questions, you need only note that you satisfied the requirements of length (5+ sentences) and citing a specific part of the material that inspired your reflection (e.g. “on page 15 Singer said X”). Please retain the original numbering system found in the homework, and add numbers as needed.
 - a. #1
2. **Self-Grading**
3. **Extra Credit?**
4. **Further Feedback?**

Question-by-Question Self-Assessment

Instructions: for each question on the original homework assignment, please self-assess by comparing your answer to the official answer found within the answer document. For comprehension questions, you should assess the *accuracy* and *thoroughness* of your answer, and flag an item or two where you were off. For journaling questions, you need only note that you satisfied the requirements of length (5+ sentences) and citing a specific part of the material that inspired your reflection (e.g. “on page 15 Singer said X”).

Numbering: note that I have created a space for fifteen homework questions to be assessed, below. You do not need to use each of these; you only need to use as many entries as there were questions on the original homework. Please retain the original numbering system found in the homework, and add numbers as needed. You may also delete entries if you wish, e.g. because you find the unused ones distracting to look at.

1. Self-Assessment Comment:
2. Self-Assessment Comment:
3. Self-Assessment Comment:
4. Self-Assessment Comment:
5. Self-Assessment Comment:
6. Self-Assessment Comment:
7. Self-Assessment Comment:
8. Self-Assessment Comment:
9. Self-Assessment Comment:
10. Self-Assessment Comment:

11. Self-Assessment Comment:
12. Self-Assessment Comment:
13. Self-Assessment Comment:
14. Self-Assessment Comment:
15. Self-Assessment Comment:

Self-Grading

What traditional letter grade do you think your homework warrants?

Remember that this grade will not affect your actual standing in the course. It's a further tool for self-reflection, not something that can hurt you. Be honest and use the following rules of thumb:

- a. **A:** 90%+ of your answers were both accurate and thorough. If you think your homework would warrant an A, I encourage you to make a case for extra credit, too.
- b. **B:** 80% of your answers were accurate and thorough, *or* your answers were all quite accurate, but missed a few key ideas and so had a lower thoroughness score *or vice-versa*.
- c. **C:** 70% of your answers were accurate and thorough, *or* your answers were all quite accurate, but missed a few key ideas and so had a lower thoroughness score *or vice-versa*. Or, to simplify even more, you think your homework was decent: neither especially well done, nor especially poorly done.
- d. **D:** 60% of your answers were accurate and thorough.
- e. **F:** 50% of your answers were accurate and thorough. A grade of F should be really rare. Unless you know you did the homework without any attempt at engaging with the material, and were totally off-base, I suspect you're being too hard on yourself if you think your material would warrant an F.

Extra Credit?

Do you think your homework warrants extra credit?

If you answered "yes," to the question of whether your homework warrants extra credit, make a case for this.

Further Feedback?

Are there any questions, concepts, arguments, etc. from this homework assignment that you want further feedback on? If there are, please say what they are. A brief statement of why you think you are struggling with this question, concept, argument, etc. could also be helpful.