



## **University of Michigan Library Undergraduate Research Award**

### **Evaluation Criteria**

#### **Personal Essay (25 points)**

##### *Accomplished (17---25 points)*

An "accomplished" project will have a topic that is sophisticated and that responds to the process of research itself. Search strategies will be thoroughly described, and will explicitly acknowledge and respond to dead---ends and gaps in information. The "accomplished" project will have clearly articulated criteria for evaluating the authority or quality of sources, and a thorough and even creative use of all available finding aids appropriate to the topic. The researcher will use real people as a source, consulting and sharing resources with reference librarians and subject specialists, in addition to professors and peers. Overall, the project will be flexible and dynamic, reflecting changes in vocabularies and a willingness to re---conceive parts or all of the project in light of the research.

##### *Proficient (8---16 points)*

The process of a "proficient" project uses fundamental research techniques, but is now beginning to show some further sophistication, although it may not utilize some of the most advanced research techniques, nor the elasticity of the most sophisticated projects. A "proficient" project may have a good topic, but deserve more refinement and development in light of the resources available. Search strategies may now be somewhat more sophisticated, but the way those strategies shape the topic and further research may not be articulated; or, the criteria by which sources are evaluated may be present, but unclear or under---developed. Many fundamental resources, such as librarians and reference sources, may be used, but others that might be appropriate at a given point may not. The essay may not acknowledge difficulties or dead---ends and the ways in which those can prompt new search strategies or re---conception of the topic. Overall, a "proficient" project is adept at using library resources, but may not yet have a full repertoire of those resources; the research process may be more fully developed, but some opportunities for growth may still go unused.

##### *Developing (1---7 points)*

At this level, the process reflects some of the most important research techniques, but does so at a fairly basic level. The topic may merely follow the specific directions of a prompt or, if the topic was not assigned, the rationale and process that helped the researcher to formulate the topic is not clear. Likewise, the criteria by which information sources are evaluated might be unclear.

Search strategies may be very general, such as using only keyword searches, and may not be appropriate to the project and its discipline, and library services may not be used, or used only cursorily. Overall, the project reflects a basic understanding of library research, but does not reflect a more sophisticated understanding of the relationship between research and exploration and discovery. The project tends to rely on a small repertoire of techniques and aids, but does not seem to grow in response to the research process.

### ***Creative Projects***

Essays relating to creative projects should address the intersection of research and the creative process. The essay should describe other creative works or people who influenced the project. Likewise, what background information was necessary to produce the project and what was the process for tracking it down? An accomplished essay is clear about the authority and quality of the sources used for the project.

### **Research Project (15 points)**

#### *Accomplished (11---15 points)*

An accomplished project addresses a significant question posed by the research and the existing body of thought on its topic; it then resolves or recasts that question in new, unexpected, and elegant ways. Sources are used appropriately throughout, and the original context of a quotation or citation is always conveyed clearly, but also concisely. Ideas are mutable, but always relevant and always engaged with the central question of the project. Complexity, including other interpretations of the evidence, is acknowledged and spurs the argument to new insights. The presence of alternate views and unresolved questions and problems becomes a strength of the project because it opens the project's topic to hitherto unconsidered angles of approach and intellectual contexts; those angles and contexts are not the result of mere intellectual cleverness, but seem, in retrospect, at once unexpected and inevitable. The ways in which the evidence both supports and shapes the thesis are clearly articulated; there is a sense of dialectic between the author's ideas and what the author has found in his or her research, with claims being clearly shaped by a full consideration of the evidence, including the evidence's gaps and uncertainties.

#### *Proficient (6---10 points)*

A proficient project puts its research to the work of supporting a clearly articulated thesis, but may not yet take into account the full complexity of a given topic. For example, sources in support of the project's findings may be emphasized, while sources that would complicate those findings are ignored or downplayed. The argument may be clear, but may not address a clear problem or question prompted by the research; what's at stake may not be entirely clear or compelling. There may be a greater range of sources in a proficient project, but that range may still be limited compared with the possibilities. Citation and formatting are formally correct, and the presentation of the project is good to polished, but the intellectual content may not yet confront the reader with an unexpected and elegant insight. Overall, the project demonstrates a clear

scholarly "voice," but it may be a voice that, as yet, has not embraced all the intellectual possibilities offered by nuance and complexity.

*Developing (1---5 points)*

The "developing" project may not have a clear thesis. Alternatively, it may use its research to support a pro--- or con--- side of an issue or to support the findings of another source. The project may simply give a running summary of other sources' claims, and distinctions between primary, secondary, and tertiary sources may not be acknowledged; the corresponding levels of discourse may be confused. Sources are under---utilized or not always clearly understood or represented—they may be poorly paraphrased or used out of context. Distinctions between evidence and claims may not be clear, and secondary sources may be used to articulate what should be the project's own claims. Claims may frequently be unsupported. Citations may be inconsistent in format or may be incomplete, and the handling of outside sources may be uncertain: for example, the project may fail to correctly cite its summaries of other sources or to clearly distinguish between the work of an outside source and its own argument. Overall, a "developing" project will not have a voice of its own, relying instead on the arguments of others, and so will not marshal its research in support of an original, clear thesis.

***Creative Projects.*** We recognize that creative projects may not resemble traditional research papers, but are nevertheless influenced by research. We are committed to considering creative projects and to judging them on their own merit. Accomplished creative projects will both show the influence of sources while maintaining an original point of view. Any additional questions should be directed to the committee.

**Bibliography (10 points)\***

\*The criteria for research and creative projects is the same in regard to the bibliography.\*

*Accomplished (8---10 points)*

Sources are both broad and deep in their reach. Citations are consistently correct, and sources can be readily located. Sources may reflect some extra "digging" in other disciplines, languages, and/or in libraries and archives other than those of U of M. A scholar on the subject will find the list both solid and representative, but will also find him--- or herself directed to new sources.

*Proficient (4---7 points)*

A "proficient" bibliography will reflect a wider range of sources and a more nearly full overview of the topic. Citations will have correct format, and will consistently provide adequate information so that a reader could locate the sources for him or herself. Some sources may lack rigor, and the list overall may lack some breadth or depth. A scholar on the subject will find the list solid and representative, but also familiar.

*Developing (1---3 points)*

Basic sources such as books, websites, and articles are cited, but citation format is inconsistent or incorrect. Sources cited tend to be predominantly of one type (e.g.: secondary sources only, or web pages) or inappropriately limited in their date range (e.g.: sources are older than they should be, or all drawn from a narrow range of dates) or not up to scholarly standards. Bibliography provides an incomplete or inadequate overview of the topic, and does not give sufficient information for a reader to readily find the sources cited.