

# INFORMATION LITERACY IN STUDENT WRITING: CODER'S MANUAL

## INTRODUCTION

The Information Literacy in Student Writing (ILSW) rubric is meant to help scorers identify characteristics of information literacy habits of mind as they appear in student writing. We look for the cues students leave in their rhetoric about how they conceive of their research strategy and how they marshal and deploy evidence in service of their goals.

This rubric is **not** meant to help us evaluate:

- The student's competence within a field of study
- How well the student met the requirements of a particular assignment or professor
- The fine details of any citation style
- The actual value of the sources students marshal while supporting or contextualizing claims

For Carleton's ILSW Project, we select our sample of papers from the across the Sophomore Writing Portfolio, which means that we can assume that papers were written for or revised to accommodate a general, educated reader. Papers receiving the highest scores would be comparable to high quality informative/persuasive writing for an educated reader, such as that published by the New Yorker or Atlantic, but unlike the New Yorker or the Atlantic the writing here is usually in academic genres complete with the writing conventions associated with those genres.

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### Suggested Citation:

Gould Library Reference and Instruction Department. "Information Literacy in Student Writing: Coder's Manual." Northfield, MN: Carleton College. 2018. <http://go.carleton.edu/ilsw>

## GUIDING QUESTIONS FOR EACH DIMENSION

Not all questions can be answered for any given paper, but these questions can guide your thinking as you match a paper's strengths and weaknesses to the rubric's four dimensions.

### STRATEGIC INQUIRY

- How well does the paper set up an investigable topic and scope of inquiry, and then match those goals with appropriate evidence to use while investigating that topic?
- Is there evidence of intellectual engagement or curiosity in the selection and definition of the research question?
- Does the student demonstrate awareness that they can and should set the scene – set the paper's scope and approach?
- Does the paper make its genre and goals clear (through language, formatting, and rhetorical style, for example) and then follow through on that promise, leading the reader through the claims and their evidence in clear and useful ways?
- Does the paper draw reasonable conclusions based on the evidence on hand, and does the paper set the reader up to believe those conclusion?
- Does the paper maintain a consistent set of claims throughout, appropriate in scope and supported by evidence?

### USE OF EVIDENCE:

#### CONTEXTUALIZATION, SYNTHESIS, AND INTEGRATION OF EVIDENCE

- How well does the student synthesize, present, and engage with evidence in service of the paper's rhetorical goals?
- Are all claims appropriately supported or contextualized by evidence?
- Is all evidenced used ethically – avoiding misleading or cherry-picked evidence, or evidence obtained in an unethical manner?
- How well does the student integrate their own ideas with the ideas of others, avoiding patch writing and under/over citation?
- Are non-textual elements of the paper appropriately labeled and clearly discussed in and relevant to the prose of the paper?
- Does the student contextualize sources appropriately for the genre, steering away from things like "The World Bank says..." that signal misunderstandings about the sources or authors?

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### ATTRIBUTION OF EVIDENCE:

#### HELPING THE READER UNDERSTAND WHERE FACTS AND IDEAS COME FROM

- How well and consistently does the student give attribution when using the words and ideas of others?
- Is it always clear which ideas are the student's and which are the ideas of others?
- Is it clear where the student found the original sources, including non-textual and unpublished sources?
- Is the citation style consistent throughout the paper and appropriate to the genre?
- Does the student demonstrate an understanding of the basic function of citation as an aid to the reader, helping the reader understand and trust the evidence at hand and follow through to the original sources?
- Does the student take all appropriate opportunities to give attribution to others' voices and ideas?

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### EVALUATION OF SOURCES:

#### SELECTING SOURCES THAT SUPPORT RHETORICAL GOALS

- How appropriate are the sources selected for use in the paper, matching well with the genre, intended audience, and the paper's claims?
- Does the student provide appropriate contextual cues for the reader to understand why any non-standard sources are appropriate?
- Did the student avoid sources collected purely out of convenience?
- If a range of source types is appropriate, does the paper reveal evidence of critical exploration and knowledge of the field?
- Does the student refrain from inappropriate or abundant secondary citation, such as relying on summaries or quotations contained in a source rather than following through to the original evidence/scholarship?
- Particularly good habits here may include things like introducing an author as "a prominent scholar in the field," especially in cases where authors come from outside the field of study at hand. These clues help the reader see that careful evaluation has occurred.

## APPLYING THE RUBRIC TO SPECIFIC TYPES OF EVIDENCE FOUND IN STUDENT WRITING

Any paper could have any combination of these evidence types, or it could have none of them. This cheat sheet is simply meant to give you some pointers to key criteria for each type of specialized evidence.

	<b>Charts &amp; Graphs</b>	<b>Data &amp; Statistics</b>	<b>Literary &amp; Artistic</b>	<b>Non-scholarly sources</b>
<b>Strategic Inquiry</b>	Any visualizations should match well with the inquiry at hand and with the rhetorical strategy of the paper	Inquiry and claims that <i>should</i> include data-supported arguments do so, and all evidence matches the topic, scope, and rhetorical strategy of the paper.	These sources should be analyzed to produce insight rather than simply described or superficially compared.	The inquiry is set up such that these sources are appropriate.
<b>Use of Evidence</b>	All charts and graphs should be clearly titled and labeled, and should be used to move the student's analysis along or support/contextualize claims. Information should be used ethically.	Any data (numerical, linguistic, etc) should be analyzed, synthesized, contextualized, and integrated well into the paper, used ethically, and clearly advance the student's rhetorical goals and claims.	Any descriptions and quotations should be present in order to support or contextualize claims, leaving simple description to a minimum.	Sources are contextualized, framed, and integrated well into the paper. These sources often work best when used as primary sources.
<b>Attribution of Evidence</b>	There should be citations or other attribution for the data from which the chart or graphs was created, or it should be clear that the student collected their own data.	The original author/source of the data should be transparent so that the reader can evaluate and/or find the data.	The reader should be able to figure out exactly what the student was seeing or hearing when describing, quoting, analyzing, or summarizing material.	All sources should be cited as fully as possible (not just a URL, for example).
<b>Evaluation of Sources</b>	Figures should be derived from appropriate data sources and/or match well with the paper's claims. Ideally the paper should demonstrate conscious choice of good sources, including whether or not to reuse vs create a figure.	For statistics and data (quantitative, linguistic, etc), sources should be appropriate and authoritative. Where this may not be obvious, the student helps the reader understand credibility.	There should be a clear and compelling match between the source(s) selected for analysis and the claim(s) made in the paper.	There should be cues in the rhetoric or set-up to show that the student selected these sources knowingly and appropriately rather than misunderstanding the differences between scholarly and non-scholarly sources.

## SCORING RESEARCH PAPERS AND LITERATURE REVIEWS (ALWAYS EVALUATE FOR INFORMATION LITERACY)

### Genre Description:

These are papers that make claims supported by at least one secondary source but usually by a variety of sources and source types. These papers rely on the student engaging with a set of sources (either located by the student or provided as part of the course) in order to draw conclusions, make claims, and/or describe the landscape of the scholarship/discussion on a topic. The amount and exact framing of quotations and paraphrases from sources will vary by discipline, but in all cases the sources should match well with the student's claims and rhetorical goals.

### STRATEGIC INQUIRY

Look for intellectually rigorous goals and appropriate scope. Straight comparison or “everything I know about this topic” is rarely sufficiently rigorous to warrant a high score in this dimension.

- How well does the paper set up an investigable topic and scope of inquiry, and then match those goals with appropriate evidence to use while investigating that topic?
- Is there evidence of intellectual engagement or curiosity in the selection and definition of the research question?
- Does the student demonstrate awareness that they can and should set the scene – set the paper's scope and approach?
- Does the paper make its genre and goals clear (through language, formatting, and rhetorical style, for example) and then follow through on that promise, leading the reader through the claims and their evidence in clear and useful ways?
- Does the paper draw reasonable conclusions based on the evidence on hand, and does the paper set the reader up to believe those conclusion?
- Does the paper maintain a consistent set of claims throughout, appropriate in scope and supported by evidence?

### USE OF EVIDENCE

Look for integrated, synthesized evidence that is well matched to the rhetorical environment of the paper. Patch writing or simple, often chronological “data dump” presentations of evidence rarely warrant high scores in this dimension.

- How well does the student synthesize, present, and engage with evidence in service of the paper's rhetorical goals?
- Are all claims appropriately supported or contextualized by evidence?
- Is all evidenced used ethically – avoiding misleading or cherry-picked evidence, or evidence obtained in an unethical manner?
- How well does the student integrate their own ideas with the ideas of others, avoiding patch writing and under/over citation?

- Are non-textual elements of the paper appropriately labeled and clearly discussed in and relevant to the prose of the paper?
- Does the student contextualize sources appropriately for the genre, steering away from things like “The World Bank says...” that signal misunderstandings about the sources or authors?

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## ATTRIBUTION OF EVIDENCE

Look for clear, consistent attribution throughout. In research papers and literature reviews, this attribution should nearly always come in the form of a consistent academic citation style and should include citation of any non-textual sources.

- Does the student strike an appropriate balance, refraining from both under-citation and over-citation?
- How well and consistently does the student give attribution when using the words and ideas of others?
- Is it always clear which ideas are the student’s and which are the ideas of others?
- Is it clear where the student found the original sources, including non-textual and unpublished sources?
- Is the citation style consistent throughout the paper and appropriate to the genre?
- Does the student demonstrate an understanding of the basic function of citation as an aid to the reader, helping the reader understand and trust the evidence at hand and follow through to the original sources?
- Does the student take all appropriate opportunities to give attribution to others’ voices and ideas?

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## EVALUATION OF SOURCES

In research papers and literature reviews, look for an appropriate variety of sources demonstrating sophisticated and independent exploration on the topic.

- Does the student give the reader cues that signal the credibility and appropriateness of the sources selected, especially if the sources are less expected in the field or genre? For example, scholarly articles are expected and may not need to be carefully framed, but sources from outside of the discipline or outside of the typical publication pattern may need a word or two of contextualization or justification.
- While a few sources may be the most prominent, does the student lean too heavily on one or two sources or on inappropriate sources?
- Does the student provide appropriate sources to support or contextualize all claims?
- Where primary sources are present, is it clear that the student understands the differences between primary and secondary sources and their uses?
- Did the student avoid sources collected purely out of convenience?
- If a range of source types is appropriate, does the paper reveal evidence of critical exploration and knowledge of the field?
- Does the student refrain from inappropriate or abundant secondary citation, such as relying on summaries or quotations contained in a source rather than following through to the original evidence/scholarship?
- Particularly good habits here may include things like introducing an author as “a prominent scholar in the field,” especially in cases where authors come from outside the field of study at hand. These clues help the reader see that careful evaluation has occurred.

## SCORING LAB REPORTS AND DATA ANALYSES (USUALLY EVALUATE FOR INFORMATION LITERACY)

### Genre Description:

Papers in this group describe a scientific experiment or focus primarily on analysis of data (numerical, linguistic, etc), and they offer conclusions based on the results of these experiments and/or analyses. They may or may not use previous scholarship or other sources to support or contextualize their analysis or claims. Common genres in this group include lab reports, linguistic analyses, statistical analyses, and ethnographic/sociological studies. In addition to published scholarship, common sources called upon are lab manuals and datasets.

### STRATEGIC INQUIRY

More than in many other genres, in this genre you may recognize that the research question and rhetorical strategy were defined for the student by an assignment. That's ok! Any paper in the scope of this project, *including analysis write-ups*, should have as a motivation the enlightenment of the reader. Therefore, topic, audience, and evidence should be closely and strategically aligned, and the paper should help make this alignment clear.

- How well does the paper set up an investigable topic and scope of inquiry, and then match those goals with appropriate evidence to use while investigating that topic? **Regardless of whether these were supplied by the professor, the student should make these things clear in the paper.**
- Is there evidence of intellectual engagement or curiosity in the selection and definition of the research question?
- Does the paper make its genre and goals clear (through language, formatting, and rhetorical style, for example) and then follow through on that promise, leading the reader through the claims and their evidence in clear and useful ways?
- Does the paper draw reasonable conclusions based on the evidence on hand, and does the paper set the reader up to believe those conclusion?
- Does the paper maintain a consistent set of claims throughout, appropriate in scope and supported by evidence?
- Is there evidence of intellectual engagement in something like a "suggested future study" section?
- Does the student organize the introduction, methods, results, and discussion clearly, with appropriate evidence in each section?

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## USE OF EVIDENCE:

Any evidence, primary or secondary, should be used instrumentally toward the paper's rhetorical goals and claims, and these goals should be the clear impetus for presenting evidence rather than allowing the evidence or other scholars' claims take over the paper. Any table or chart should have a clear reason to be there

- Are all figures or graphs labeled clearly and completely?
- Is all evidenced used ethically – avoiding misleading or cherry-picked evidence, or evidence obtained in an unethical manner?
- Are results reported and discussed in the prose of the paper (not just “see graph for results”)? Further, the prose should highlight, analyze, and contextualize the results rather than simply restate a graph in prose form.
- Are all claims appropriately supported or contextualized by evidence?
- Does the paper appropriately contextualize the experiment or analysis at hand, signaling a body of existing literature when appropriate?

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## ATTRIBUTION OF EVIDENCE:

If the student did not bring in any outside sources or data, you may score N/A. Otherwise, look for a clear, consistent, academic citation style for all outside sources, including data and other non-textual sources.

- Does the student take all appropriate opportunities to give attribution to others' voices and ideas?  
**Note:** Data citation is an emerging practice in the disciplines, so specific documentation styles are not consistent or consistently applied. However, there should still be clear attribution of some kind in the paper.
- How well and consistently does the student give attribution when using the words and ideas of others?
- Is it always clear which data or ideas are the student's and which are the produced by others?
- Is it clear where the student found the original sources, including non-textual and unpublished sources?
- Does the student demonstrate an understanding of the basic function of citation as an aid to the reader, helping the reader understand and trust the evidence at hand and follow through to the original sources?
- Particularly good examples will also include an acknowledgments section.

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## EVALUATION OF SOURCES:

If the student did not bring in any outside sources or data, and if this matches well with any claims made in the paper, you may score N/A. Otherwise, look for academic sources or well-contextualized non-academic sources. Expected sources include lab manuals, datasets (pre-existing or student-created), and up-to-date scholarly articles.

- If there are any older or non-scholarly sources, does the student contextualize them appropriately?
- In a data analysis, does the paper include some discussion of why the student chose the data they analyzed, or a clear connection between the data selected and the question at hand?
- Did the student avoid sources collected purely out of convenience?
- Does the student refrain from inappropriate or abundant secondary citation, such as relying on summaries or quotations contained in a source rather than following through to the original evidence/scholarship?

## SCORING PRIMARY SOURCE ANALYSIS PAPERS (USUALLY EVALUATE FOR INFORMATION LITERACY)

### Genre Description:

Papers in this group make claims about the meaning or import of at least one primary source (literary, historical, visual, etc) but **these papers do not support or contextualize those claims using secondary sources**. The claims focus narrowly on the primary source(s) at hand and go beyond description, summary, or personal reaction to engage with the meaning of the source at some depth.

### STRATEGIC INQUIRY

Look for a topic and scope that leads to interesting insight into the meaning or importance of the primary source(s) being analyzed, but that does not require secondary sources in order to succeed.

- How well does the paper set up an investigable topic and scope of inquiry, and then match those goals with appropriate evidence to use while investigating that topic? **In particular, can this topic and scope succeed without requiring secondary sources?**
- Is there evidence of intellectual engagement or curiosity in the selection and definition of the research question?
- Does the student demonstrate awareness that they can and should set the scene – set the paper’s scope and approach?
- Does the paper make its genre and goals clear (through language, formatting, and rhetorical style, for example) and then follow through on that promise, leading the reader through the claims and their evidence in clear and useful ways?
- Does the paper draw reasonable conclusions based on the evidence on hand, and does the paper set the reader up to believe those conclusion?
- Does the paper maintain a consistent set of claims throughout, appropriate in scope and supported by evidence?

### USE OF EVIDENCE

Any evidence should be used instrumentally toward the student’s rhetorical goals and claims, and these goals should be the clear impetus for presenting evidence rather than allowing excessive description or summary of the evidence take over the paper. Note that in literary primary source analysis, it is common to quote individual words or phrases from the source quite frequently because the words are the “data” here, and are the stuff of analysis. This is appropriate to this genre as long as the quoted words function as evidence rather than mere decoration.

- Are all claims **narrowly focused on the source(s) at hand** rather than opening the door to topics that should really be supported or contextualized by secondary sources?
- Some description or summary of the source(s) is common, but does the paper move appropriately into analysis and interpretation rather than spending too much time on description?
- Is all evidenced used ethically – avoiding misleading or cherry-picked evidence?

- How well does the student synthesize, present, and engage with evidence in service of the paper’s rhetorical goals?
- Are all claims appropriately supported or contextualized by evidence?
- Are non-textual elements of the paper appropriately labeled and clearly discussed in and relevant to the prose of the paper?

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## ATTRIBUTION OF EVIDENCE

Formal citation may be minimal, especially for films or other visual primary source analysis. Literary primary source citation is often simply a line number or page number in parentheses. However, it should always be clear what the student is looking at, and there should always be a clear distinction between the student’s thoughts and the thoughts of others.

- Is it clear where the student found the original sources, including non-textual and unpublished sources?
- Is the citation style consistent throughout the paper and appropriate to the genre?
- Note that evidence from non-textual sources or non-textual elements of sources may be referenced simply by description when that is sufficient for reader understanding. For example, film time stamps are not always necessary, and descriptions of scenes may actually be more useful depending on the circumstances.
- Particularly good habits in this area include providing a bibliographic citation, though if a source is sufficiently clearly identified in the text then the lack of a bibliographic entry may not interfere with the reader’s ability to trace the evidence.

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## EVALUATION OF SOURCES:

You may decide that you cannot make a determination about the student’s ability to select and justify the source(s), in which case, use N/A. This happens most often when there is only one source narrowly analyzed. When there is more than one source, look for a good match of argument and sources, such that it’s clear that the sources are not there together randomly or simply because they were assigned.

- How appropriate are the sources selected for use in the paper, matching well with the genre, intended audience, and the paper’s claims? In this genre, **having an insightful or nuanced claim based on the source indicates good source evaluation and selection.** Students should be selecting primary sources that they are capable of analyzing closely, and where the analysis will lead to insight. For example, papers may trace a metaphor or image through one or more works in order to make a claim about the meaning of the work(s), or analyze camera technique in a film in order to understand some aspect of the film’s message or import.
- When more than one source is analyzed, are the sources clearly put into conversation with each other in order to reveal insights? Simple, superficial comparison indicates less creativity and sophistication in source selection for this genre. “Both paintings depict the Virgin Mary” is quite superficial, while dissecting the purpose or significance of the two depictions or how similarities or differences help to reveal otherwise obscured meanings demonstrate sophisticated source selection with analytical purpose.

## GENRES NOT TO SCORE

### OBSERVATIONAL REPORTS

These papers may be purely descriptive or they may offer opinion and personal reactions. Observations may be about people, books, films, objects, events, linguistic features, etc. These papers **do not make claims that should be supported or contextualized by anything beyond description or personal reaction**. Because of this they are out of the scope of this project.

### CREATIVE WRITING

Novels, poems, short stories, and even creative non-fiction are genres that operate under rhetorical conventions that obscure or shift the cues that other types of writing give us about students' information literacy habits of mind. Additionally, there is often no claim made that should be supported by any evidence beyond the piece itself. Therefore these types of papers are outside the scope of this project.

## NOT SURE YOU CAN EVALUATE FOR INFORMATION LITERACY?

Not all papers can be evaluated for information literacy responsibly. **Two categories of papers, Observational Reports and Creative Writing, should not be scored for information literacy.** On occasion, lab reports, data analyses, primary source analyses and the like also fall outside of the scope of this project because they do not reveal clues about the student's information literacy habits of mind – and not only are those clues not present, but the absence of clues is appropriate and consistent with the paper's genre and rhetorical goals.

Papers that should not be evaluated generally have one or more of the following characteristics:

- Purely descriptive (of a work, an experience, a person, a method, etc)
- Purely personal opinion/reflection
- Creative writing (fiction, creative non-fiction, poetry, script, etc)
- Thought experiments
- Papers that make no claims that should have been supported by evidence from scholarship, history, data, primary sources, or anything beyond the opinions or observations included in the paper.
- Any paper that scored N/A in all rubric dimensions

#### Suggested Citation:

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INFORMATION LITERACY IN STUDENT WRITING: RUBRIC

	<b>Not expected in Genre – N/A</b>	<b>Strong – 4</b>	<b>Weaknesses Do Not Interfere – 3</b>	<b>Weaknesses Interfere – 2</b>	<b>Poor - 1</b>
<b>Strategic Inquiry</b> How well does the student set up a researchable or investigable topic and scope of inquiry and then follow through with those plans?	Does not require a researchable question. (Especially observation or reaction papers.)	Topic and scope of inquiry are clear, intellectually rigorous, and well matched with the genre, discipline, and evidence at hand.	Generally consistent and appropriate topic and scope of inquiry with few tangents. Rarely creates a rhetorical environment in which inquiry and strategy are mismatched.	Inconsistent, facile, or poorly scoped inquiry. Identifiable but poorly executed or poorly chosen rhetorical strategy.	Not intellectually rigorous, no clear genre, scope is badly off, or evidence is mismatched with claims if present at all. Conclusions are often unrelated to evidence and analysis.
<b>Use of Evidence</b> How effectively does the student deploy evidence to support and/or contextualize claims?	Does not include claims that should be supported with evidence beyond description or opinion. (Especially observation or reaction papers.)	Evidence is integrated, synthesized, and contextualized to support claims. Non-textual elements are clearly labeled and discussed in the prose of the paper. Evidence is used responsibly and ethically.	Generally employs evidence to support rhetorical goals, but may present some evidence without context or without integrating it well in the paper.	Frequently fails to put sources into context or to synthesize and integrate evidence to support claims. May exhibit “patch writing.” Evidence may appear without clear purpose.	Evidence does not support the claims, or many claims are completely unsupported. Evidence not used instrumentally in service of claims.
<b>Attribution of Evidence</b> How clearly does the student attribute the work of others in human-readable form?	Does not use or refer to sources created by others. (Especially some lab reports and data analyses)	Sources are documented consistently and completely in keeping with genre conventions.	Good attribution practices with few inconsistencies, though may miss some opportunities to attribute others’ ideas.	Missteps in attribution interfere with reader’s ability to interpret claims or point to misunderstandings about when and how to cite.	Citation is so poor that it is impossible for the reader to know what sources were used or which ideas are the student’s.
<b>Evaluation of Sources</b> How sophisticated are the student’s abilities to select appropriate sources?	Does not call for source evaluation or selection. (Especially some lab reports, data analyses, and primary source analyses)	Sources match rhetorical goals, demonstrating sophisticated thought about source collection, evaluation, and/or selection.	Generally employs appropriate sources, though may miss some obvious avenues for exploration and analysis. May occasionally rely on secondary summaries or quotations rather than consulting the original scholarship.	Misses some obvious avenues of exploration, or employs some sources clearly selected out of convenience. May rely heavily on one or two sources, on inappropriate sources, or on secondary summaries or quotations.	Sources are inappropriate or do not contribute to rhetorical goals. Displays fundamental confusion about source collection, evaluation, and/or selection.