The Criterion℠ Teaching Guide

Using the Criterion℠ Online Writing Evaluation Service for Differentiated Instruction in the College Classroom:
A Guide For Faculty and Administrators

ETS
Rosedale Road
Princeton, NJ 08541
tel 877.909.6442
tax 609.497.6074
website www.ets.org/criterion
e-mail criterionsupport@ets.org

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September 20, 2007
The Purpose of This Guide

With this first edition of *Using the Criterion*<sup>SM</sup> Online Writing Evaluation Service for Differentiated Instruction in the College Classroom, Educational Testing Service (ETS) has created a practical guide for helping faculty integrate the *Criterion* service into their programs and use this tool’s powerful features to their best advantage. This guide also supports administrators in engaging faculty and training them to use the *Criterion* service comfortably and effectively.

Philosophically, this guide is firmly grounded in the “Seven Principles for Good Practice in Undergraduate Education” developed by Arthur Chickering and Zelda F. Gamson (1986), and the use of technology consistent with principles expressed in “Implementing the Seven Principles: Technology as Lever” by Arthur Chickering and Stephen C. Ehrmann (1996):

Good practice in undergraduate education:
- Encourages contact between students and faculty
- Develops reciprocity and cooperation among students
- Encourages active learning
- Gives prompt feedback
- Emphasizes time-on-task
- Communicates high expectations
- Respects diverse talents and ways of learning

While each practice can stand alone, when all are present their effects multiply. Together these principles employ six powerful forces in education:

1. Activity
2. Expectations
3. Cooperation
4. Interaction
5. Diversity
6. Responsibility

In the classroom, the *Criterion* service encourages the development of good instructional practice based on the principles of good practice in education outlined by Chickering and Gamson. For example, at Richland College in Dallas, Texas, the *Criterion* service encourages targeted contact between instructors and students. Instructors and writing-lab personnel can work one-on-one with students who need additional guidance and support while allowing those with stronger skills to move forward, guided by *Criterion*-generated feedback. Experienced *Criterion*-trained instructors typically make comments on multiple student papers during class or lab without interrupting students engaged in the
writing process. When a student has difficulty, the instructor can then work individually with that student.

The *Criterion* service supports faculty in teaching according to these principles and creating these powerful forces in their classrooms. It helps faculty and students be successful as they meet their challenging educational roles.
What Is the *Criterion* Service and Why Use It?

The *Criterion* service is a web-based, instructor-driven instructional tool that helps students plan, write and revise essays. Instructors can create their own topics or select from the *Criterion* topic library. The system provides annotated diagnostic feedback and a holistic score to both student and instructor within 20 seconds so that students can quickly review, revise and resubmit essays. Instructors can also provide their own feedback within the system, as well as view summary reports of *Criterion* feedback.

This guide stems from real-world experiences with the Criterion service in a major community college’s developmental writing program. Beyond basic skills classes, instructors can use the Criterion service in writing labs and online writing courses, as practice for high-stakes writing, for writing across the curriculum and as a source of information in student placement and assessment. Whatever your department and use, the process for deploying the Criterion service entails planning, training and ongoing support. This guide will help you integrate the Criterion service into your existing program. As you learn to use the Criterion service to its full advantage, this useful tool will change the way you think about and practice writing instruction.

The *Criterion* service benefits students, teachers and administrators alike because it empowers students to improve their writing skills while working independently and receiving immediate, detailed feedback. Students get more writing practice without adding to instructor workload, and instructors can then have more meaningful, one-on-one time with students. Instructors can use the *Criterion* service as a paperless tool for administering assignments, grading essays, commenting on student work and reviewing student portfolios. The *Criterion* service also provides information about students’ writing abilities that instructors can use to tailor instruction. Administrators can use the *Criterion* service to help measure student learning and determine necessary program improvements.

This guide has four major parts. First, you’ll find the philosophy of differentiated instruction and how you can use the *Criterion* service to help achieve it. With a strong grasp of how the *Criterion* service functions in a learning environment, instructors understand the context for using the *Criterion* service effectively. Second, the guide includes the essential information for using the *Criterion* service in the classroom, from course design models and using essential features through implementing lesson plans and exercises with students. Third, the guide explains how faculty and administrators can use the data the *Criterion* service delivers to help assess skills, measure student learning and understand what course and program improvements may be needed. Fourth, the guide offers ideas and approaches to administrators who must engage and train faculty.
Differentiated Instruction Using the *Criterion* Service

**What Is Differentiated Instruction?**

Students have different skills, abilities, interests, backgrounds and ways of taking in and making sense of information and ideas. Differentiated instruction flexibly accommodates these differences so each student has the best chance to learn and succeed. In differentiated instruction, teachers “prescribe” lessons to individual students based on their individual needs. In differentiated classrooms, instructors actively avoid the traditional one-size-fits-all approach to instruction and customize lessons to suit individual learners.

**Using the *Criterion* Service to Achieve Differentiated Instruction**

The *Criterion* service is a flexible tool that educators can use to help achieve differentiated instruction, which can be especially valuable in developmental writing programs. More and more, student populations have become a complex mix of traditional, young-adult, and older-adult students. The *Criterion* service helps instructors accommodate this diverse group of learners by allowing students to advance at their own pace. Stronger writers can forge ahead on their own while those who need more help can get it from the instructor. The *Criterion* service gives students individualized feedback on the fundamentals so instructors can focus more on the content of student essays beyond basic errors.

The *Criterion* service puts more responsibility for learning where it belongs — on the student. With the *Criterion* service, students, not instructors, “paint the picture and choose the colors.” With the *Criterion* service, instructors can assume the role of Lev Vygotsky’s More Knowledgeable Other, that is, a coach for student learning rather than the “sage on the stage.” This approach is critical for colleges and universities that strive to become learner-centered institutions.

**Case Studies**

At Eastfield College in Dallas, Texas, freshman composition students in Professor Robert Cooper’s classes do *Criterion*-based peer-editing work consistent with best practices in differentiated instruction. Professor Cooper’s students track Trait Feedback Analysis results — grammar, usage, mechanics, style and organization and development — on peer-review sheets. Working with classmates, students discuss *Criterion*-generated Trait Feedback Analysis as they look for ways to improve their writing. Professor Cooper then uses the *Criterion* service’s statistics reporting function to plan lessons addressing writing problems that occur most frequently. In this way, he creates individual prescriptions for student writing troubles as part of the peer-editing process. (For more details, see the “Peer Editing” section of this guide under “Using the *Criterion* service in the Classroom: Essential Tools.”)
At Richland College, the process works much the same way at the administrative level in developmental-writing classes. Coordinator Doug Wilson tracks writing problem trends using the Criterion service’s data analysis and reporting functions. Each instructor receives a report on problem areas, such as subject-verb agreement or spelling, and the instructors focus instruction on these key areas. In this way, the Criterion service enables the instructional staff to receive a prescription to help address student writing problems and locate weak instructional areas. (For more details, see the “Student Performance and Program Quality” section of this guide under “Using Data from the Criterion service.”)
Using the *Criterion* Service in the Classroom

Course Design Models

These basic models describe courses that rely on technology to deliver all or part of the content to learners.

- **Web-Enhanced**
  Students report to class just as they do for a traditional lecture course, but web-based resources are used for the delivery of some of the course’s content.

- **Hybrid**
  Some course content is delivered in a traditional classroom-lecture format. Other course content is delivered to students remotely via the Internet.

- **Online**
  All course content is delivered remotely to students via the Internet.

How faculty use the *Criterion* service depends on the course design in which it is used.

**Web-Enhanced Course**

In a web-enhanced instructional model, students attend class in the traditional fashion, but lessons are supplemented with writing work in the *Criterion* service. Because the instructor is regularly present, he or she can readily train students on the system and observe their progress. The instructor guides students through all phases of learning as the More Knowledgeable Other, not the “sage on the stage.” This method of instruction is especially good for Developmental Education programs in which student abilities and computer skills vary widely.

**Hybrid Course**

In the hybrid course model, the familiar classroom and instructor are still there, but most of the student work is done outside the classroom using the *Criterion* service. Students benefit from the presence of the instructor, but at the same time, the *Criterion* service encourages greater student responsibility for learning. As students improve their skills guided by the *Criterion* service’s feedback, their confidence in their own abilities and receptivity to instructor feedback can grow. The combination of traditional teaching methods with the *Criterion* service seems to promote greater interaction between students, instructors and course material. For example, a *Criterion* instructor in a journalism hybrid course could lecture, show a videotape, then assign a reading and a persuasive essay in the *Criterion* service. Hybrid courses let instructors stick with familiar course materials and add *Criterion* assignments to select units.
**Online Course**

In an online course, students and instructor never meet face-to-face. The entire course is delivered via the Internet. The challenge of delivering effective online courses means advanced preparation and training are especially important. For example, Richland College requires all of its online instructors to enroll in a series of four online instructor certification courses known as Thunderbolt Training. Thunderbolt Training emphasizes the Course Management System (CMS). Typical CMS systems are Blackboard and WebCT. In an online course, the instructor should deliver a special unit or module on the *Criterion* service to make sure students understand the basics of how to use it. Your own instructor-designed *Criterion* PowerPoint demonstration or the “Student Quick Access Guide” available online from ETS can work well. Online courses are best implemented by experienced instructors with solid content knowledge and computer skills.

In all course designs, and no matter the level of skills, instructors can rely on dozens of Criterion writing prompts. Selecting writing prompts is key to the smooth integration of the *Criterion* service into a course. Instructors can make assignments based on what’s happening in a course — or in the world — at a given moment. For example, an assignment on what it means to be an adult could be tied to a relevant local news event. This flexibility to make assignments and score them automatically is one of the *Criterion* service’s greatest advantages. Administrators can also choose the assignments if more control over the delivery of course content is required, such as in a writing lab.

In all courses, instructors need to help students get comfortable using the *Criterion* service, which may take place over several class sessions. In settings where computers are unavailable, instructors can use a display device to project the *Criterion* service onto a screen large enough for all students to see. This presentation should occur early in a course as a group learning experience. Time spent explaining the system early, especially when computer resources are limited, will pay dividends later when students are working individually. What instructors put into helping students use the *Criterion* service effectively greatly enhances what students get out of it.

**Getting Started**


**Essential Criterion Tools**

The *Criterion* service offers a collection of easy-to-use tools that can help develop and improve writing skills.
Prewriting Tools

Good writing begins with the writing process, and the first step in that process is prewriting. The Criterion service’s prewriting tools include eight planning templates: Outline, List, Idea Tree, Free Write, Idea Web, Compare & Contrast, Cause & Effect, and Persuasive. Students can automatically transfer anything they write using prewriting templates to the essay itself. This efficient tool encourages students to follow the proper steps for writing a paper, and it also creates a mechanism for instructors to observe and comment as students plan and build an essay.

How-To: Prewriting Tools

The following images show examples of using the Criterion service’s prewriting templates.

When you create a new assignment on the Create Assignment page, students automatically have access to prewriting templates unless you uncheck “Allow Students to Make a Plan.”

This gives students access to Criterion’s planning tools.
This image shows the screen students see when their instructor has enabled the “Make a Plan” option.
This image shows the screen students see when they click “Make a Plan.”
By moving the cursor over a prewriting template, students get information about that prewriting technique.
This image shows an example of a *Persuasive* prewriting template chosen by a student.

Students fill out the template, then can save the plan and/or transfer it immediately into a blank *Criterion* essay-writing page by clicking the “Continue to Essay” button.

For more information on the *Criterion* service’s prewriting templates, see the “*Criterion* User Manual” or students can look at the “Prewriting Tools Supplement”.
Trait Feedback Analysis: Automated Feedback on Grammar, Usage, Mechanics, Style and Organization and Development

The Trait Feedback Analysis Menu provides instructors and students access to statistical and color-coded feedback on student writing, including grammar, usage, mechanics, style and organization and development. Every feedback screen also offers roll-over messages and links to relevant sections of Criterion’s Writer’s Handbook for additional instruction. The Organization & Development tab is perhaps the most important tool. When you click this tab, Criterion color-codes the entire piece of student writing. In the example below of a persuasive essay, introductory material highlights in blue; thesis statements, red; topic sentences and main ideas, green; supporting ideas, forest green; and conclusion, yellow.

This tool is especially useful in learning labs where instructors need to assess student writing quickly and explain problems to students.

The other tabs open bar graphs that show problems with student writing by number and type of error. By clicking on the bold-face error, students bring up the essay with the particular error highlighted in the text. Rolling over the highlighted text with the cursor will display a message identifying the error and offering advice for correcting it.
This image shows an example of trait feedback analysis on grammar. In this example, the report shows one fragment or missing comma and one subject-verb agreement error.

Summary of Grammar Errors:
One fragment or missing comma and one subject-verb-agreement error.
This image shows a roll-over message for Grammar (Fragment or Missing Comma).
This image shows an example of trait feedback analysis on usage errors. In this example, the report shows one missing or extra article and three confused words.
This image shows a roll-over message for Usage (Missing or Extra Article).
This image shows an example of trait feedback analysis on mechanics. In this example, the report shows that the student made at least two spelling errors in the essay, omitted a comma and made one compound-word error.

Summary of Mechanics Errors:
At least two misspelled words, one missing comma, and one compound-word error.
This image shows a roll-over message for Mechanics (Spelling).
This image shows an example of trait feedback analysis on style. In this example, the report shows the repetitious use of words.

Summary of Style Comments: Numerous repetitious words.

This image shows a roll-over message for Style (Repetition of Words).
Instructor Pop-Up Comments

Instructors may embed pop-ups with their comments inside a piece of student writing. Students who review their instructor’s comments find small boxes with the letter “I” placed directly beside a problem area. By rolling over the embedded “I” with the cursor, the student can read the instructor’s comments as a “thought bubble.” The effect created is similar to that of an instructor giving suggestions and comments while the student revises a piece of writing. This cognitive tool is an “embedded scaffold” that can help students advance what they can do on their own to the next level.

This image shows an example of a student’s view of an instructor’s pop-up comments.

“i” indicates a pop-up containing comments from the instructor.

Narrative Comments and Optional Dialogue with Students

As instructors read a piece of student writing, they can write narrative comments in the Comments field at the bottom of the page on the larger issues such as voice, theme or content. This tool is effective for summaries of student writing. In addition, students may also comment on what the instructor says by responding with their own narrative on the writing. This electronic dialogue generates even more student writing, so time-on-task increases.
This image shows an example of the *Narrative Comments* screen. The student’s paper appears at the top, and the comments from the instructor or another student (as in this example) appear below.

**Peer Editing**

The *Criterion* service is an excellent tool for encouraging peer editing and for use in peer-editing workshops. Bob Cooper at Eastfield College in Dallas, Texas, has developed an especially effective system for peer editing in a freshman English lab setting, and his approach is described here. Instructors should design a peer-review worksheet to assist students in improving their essays. Here is a sample for an expository essay from Professor Cooper, which you can also [download as a template](http://example.com).

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*Student essay*

*Instructor or peer comments*
Peer-Editing Worksheet for Expository Essay

R. W. Cooper, Instructor

1. Have your partner read your paper out loud to you. If he or she (or you!) cannot understand what is being said, change the paper at this time so that your message is clear. Correct grammar errors that you notice at this time. Then repeat the process with your partner’s paper.

2. Does this essay have a clearly stated thesis? Write the thesis statement.

_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________

3. Does this essay use several examples to support the thesis? List the examples (a word or two will suffice).

A._______________________________________________
B._______________________________________________
C._______________________________________________
D._______________________________________________

4. Are there any of the three major errors: sentence fragments, run-on sentences, subject/verb agreement problems? ________

5. Are there spelling or punctuation errors? ________

6. Are there any parallel-structure errors? ________

7. Are there any split-infinitive errors? ________

8. Are there any pronoun-reference errors? ________

9. What is the total word count? ________

10. Based on your evaluation, what number grade would you assess? ________

11. Comments: ________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________

Peer Editor’s Signature: ___________________________________________
Professor Cooper argues that peer editing should be an essential component in the development of all essays. Here’s an outline of his approach:

_Instructors:_

1. Write an assignment or use one of the many available in the _Criterion_ service.
2. Schedule a day in the computer lab. **(Note:** If you have only one computer in your classroom, use it as a demonstration tool.)
3. Read and comment on all drafts before starting the peer-editing exercise.
4. Distribute two peer-editing worksheets to pairs of students to complete as they read each other’s papers aloud.

_Students:_

1. Print hard copies of essays written in the _Criterion_ service as you begin the peer-editing process.
2. Use the Trait Feedback Analysis screen to record items on the Peer-Editing Worksheet.
3. Review each tab, look at the problems, and discuss suggested ways to correct mistakes.
4. Attach the Peer-Editing Worksheets to the printed drafts.
5. Submit them to the instructor.

At this point, the instructor should tally the recurring problems in the student essays. Next, the instructor can plan future lessons to address the problems that occur most frequently. In addition, the instructor should write individual prescriptions for students to get extra help and plan lessons around areas where students are having problems.
Score Reports and Printouts

You can access score reports and printouts with a click. This gives students and instructors hard copy of each comment and critique of a student’s writing progress. Instructors can use Criterion-generated reports in combination with their own rubrics to evaluate student performance. You need to base your approach on what works best for you and your students.

This image shows the screen where you can determine what trait feedback categories you want to include in your report.
**Criterion-Based Assignments, Lesson Plans and Exercises**

The *Criterion* service provides a way to create interactive and engaging experiences for learners. You can modify the lesson plan and exercises outlined here to suit your personal teaching style. You can also modify any of the more than 180 *Criterion* higher education writing prompts and use them as instructor-generated prompts in these exercises. Instructors can generate topics — scored and unscored — for each and every assignment if necessary.

It’s important for faculty to evaluate the appropriateness of scores assigned to instructor-generated or modified prompts. This can be done by having faculty read a sample of essays based on instructor-generated or modified prompts to make sure that the *Criterion* scores seem reasonable. Note that it’s very important to assign the same amount of time for writing the essay from instructor-generated and modified prompts as is required by the standard higher education prompts.

Typically, instructors assign the same number of writings as they do in a traditional course without the *Criterion* service; however, the efficiencies created by the *Criterion* service can give you more time, and many instructors assign more writings using *Criterion*-scored prompts. You can expect your students to write more, not less, with the *Criterion* service.
Using Your Own Assignments

The Criterion service readily accommodates the assignments you already use.

**Using Your Own Assignments**

1. To use your own writing assignment, go to the Main Menu and click the box for your course. Next, click “Assignment Options.”

![Criterion Interface](http://criterion.ets.org/)
2. At the Assignments Menu, click “Create Assignment.”

You can create your own assignments.
3. At the “Create Assignment” screen, use the drop-down menu to select a course level.
4. Select a Topic Mode from the drop-down menu.
5. Select an Essay Topic from the last three choices on the bottom drop-down menu: College 1 Scored Instructor Topic — Expository; College 1 Scored Instructor Topic — Persuasive; or Instructor Topic — Unscored.
6. The *Criterion* service in the Expository or Persuasive modes can score instructor topics or they can remain unscored. First, you cut and paste the assignment into the white box and fill in the “Assignment Name” box. Fill in the remaining boxes on the “Create Assignment” screen and then save your information. Note that if you plan to score the assignment, it’s very important for you to assign the *same amount of time* for writing the essay from instructor-generated prompts as is required by the standard higher education prompts.

Lesson Plans and Exercises

1. Quotes and Critical Thinking (Warm-Up Exercise/Developmental Writing/Freshman English)

This mini-lesson is valuable especially at the beginning of the semester when students using the *Criterion* service are still learning the system.

Process:

a. In this lesson, students do a focused 15-minute free writing in the *Criterion* service. The prompt for this assignment is a noteworthy quote or perhaps a song verse. In
addition, you can project a photograph, cartoon or other image onto a big screen and ask the writers to free-write whatever comes to mind based on the image.

b. At the conclusion of the writing period, students submit papers to the Criterion service, but the feedback function is turned off. To turn off feedback, uncheck each feedback option on the Create Assignment page.

Note: The goal is for students to identify elements of their writing that could be the source for future papers. Therefore, students should print out their work and underline the parts of their writing that are meaningful to them. Because students save their writing in the Criterion Service, instructors have an excellent opportunity to comment on the learner’s approach to critical thinking and the writing process.

2. Writing Workshop Day (Writing Lab Assignment)
This assignment works well in computer writing labs.

Process:

a. As students work on assignments in the Criterion service, the lab instructor must regularly walk around the room to observe students at work. During the observation period, the instructor offers students positive reinforcement through body language, hand signals like the “okay” sign or verbal encouragement. This approach is supported by motivational theory. The instructor should not interrupt students but rather serve as a “scaffold” to help learners extend through the Zone of Proximal Development, as described in the writings of Lev Vygotsky.

b. When learners have been writing for a time, the instructor simply calls out to the student by name and asks him or her to save work in the Criterion service. The instructor can immediately observe what the student is doing in real time and make pop-up comments. Students save their work and then continue where they left off.

Note: The lab instructor can review learner output via the Criterion service and make comments as students write or visit one-on-one with students who need more face-to-face interaction.
3. Writing to Learn (Writing Lab/Developmental Writing Courses/Narrative Writing)

This exercise is useful for teaching students how to review and critique various sources of information.

Process:

a. Students visit instructor-approved websites, such as SportsIllustrated.com, Forbes.com, Amnestyusa.org or BBC.com, to select essays or news stories to summarize in 300 to 600 words.

b. Students must create introductions that identify sources and explain the reasons why they selected a particular website.

c. Students then look for sources apart from the Internet that support or negate the information they have found.

Note: For the best learning experience, instructors will want to select websites with interactive content such as videos and MP3 files that provide “electronic scaffolds” for all learners. In addition, this is an ideal time to discuss how one determines legitimate websites and evaluates information.

4. The Song/Record Assignment (Writing Description)

For this lesson, instructors need headphones, various music CDs, and a basic knowledge of collaborative learning. This assignment can work in a traditional classroom setting or in a writing lab. At the conclusion of the assignment, learners will craft a well-organized descriptive record review based on their critique of musical selections played in class.

Process:

a. Begin the lesson with a brief discussion of music and the words used to describe it. Ask students to list their favorite artists on a sheet of paper. The instructor should then ask students about the artists on their lists. What type of music is it? What sounds make it distinctive? List the descriptions on the board.

b. After all students have had an opportunity to contribute, distribute a record review or send them online to the *Rolling Stone* website, a good source of well-written record reviews. Ask students to select a record review and read it, describing on a sheet of paper what they like and dislike. Students should list the various words used to describe a piece of music.

c. Next, assign students to small groups of three or four. Each student will serve as a music critic and as a *Criterion* writer. Using CDs hidden in colorful Grammy-style
envelopes, groups select envelopes you have brought to class. Using a computer or a small CD player, groups listen to music selections. As they listen, learners describe the musical selection for the writer, who is inputting the descriptions into the Criterion service.

d. The instructor walks around to each group and makes supportive comments. Students alternate until everyone has a chance to critique a passage of music and write. In the Criterion service, each student in the group completes his or her own record review for homework.

e. Using the Criterion service’s collaborate feature, students peer-review the completed record reviews written by classmates.

Note: This same exercise can also work with reviews of short films.

5. Complaint Box Letter (Business Letters/Persuasive Letter)

In this exercise, learners practice writing and responding to a complaint letter. Complaint letters are a form of written argument, and this exercise gives students an opportunity to use their writing to solve real-life disputes.

Process:

a. Begin the lesson with a discussion. Ask students about problems they’ve faced with businesses or services. What was the issue and how was it resolved?

b. Ask students to list the most-effective and least-effective ways to deal with complaints.

c. Next, show a brief video of a complaint in process. Judge Judy or The People’s Court would provide strong visual models of the complaint process.

d. After the video, the instructor and the learners discuss what happened. What was the problem? What was the argument? How can you turn oral arguments into thesis statements? Students should write down their answers to these questions.

e. Next, create or copy sample consumer complaints. One good source is http://www.businessballs.com because it lists several sample consumer complaint letters and company responses. Show these letters to learners.

f. Next, assign learners into pairs. In this exercise, the pairs function as customer service agents; their assignment requires them to respond to a well-written consumer complaint. Use the Criterion service’s instructor-generated prompt function to create a consumer complaint e-mail.
g. Ask each pair to respond to the complaint prompt by writing a formal e-mail letter to the complainant. The pairs should work together and follow the writing process to craft a solid response to the consumer’s complaint. If one member of the pair writes, the other can edit. You can also assign this exercise to individual students via the Criterion system.

h. At the conclusion of the assignment, the instructor must assess the student’s writing and provide his or her own comments in addition to the feedback generated by the Criterion service. This personal interaction with the Criterion service users is critical to student success.

6. Change the World Through Writing Prompt (Persuasion)

In this persuasive writing assignment, you ask students to form opinions about controversial issues in the news.

Process:

a. You can bring in newspaper or magazine articles or show a video clip from a television program such as 60 Minutes. Websites such as Amnestyusa.org and BBC.com also provide valuable information for students to use in forming their opinions.

b. As a group, the instructor and students should discuss the issues and select one for further exploration.

c. Next, assign students into pairs and ask them to research an issue such as global warming or human rights abuses. Each student must choose a side on the issue.

d. Once students identify sufficient examples, facts, authorities, counter arguments and consequences, they write a persuasive letter on the issue in the Criterion service. They address their letter to a key opinion leader, such as a mayor, member of congress or a foreign dignitary.

e. To bring added realism to the assignment, students can send their letters to the identified dignitaries or leaders. On occasion, some in the U.S. Congress actually write back to the students! This exercise allows students to see how citizens can influence important political and other debates through persuasive writing.
Using Data From the Criterion Service

Student Placement and Assessment of Learning Outcomes (Faculty)

Studies of the Criterion service have focused on its utility within specific school settings (e.g., community colleges) and its impact on student learning. While the use of the Criterion service for placement into writing classes has not been substantiated, it’s recognized that some institutions may want to use the Criterion service for this purpose. When making a placement or any important decision about a student’s performance, it’s essential that a Criterion score be considered only one piece of evidence about a student’s writing ability, and that it be considered together with corroborating information, such as a second scoring by a human, transcripts, and additional tests of writing to ensure that the appropriate decision is made. In addition, faculty should systematically evaluate the appropriateness of using the Criterion service and other measures as part of the placement process (e.g., were the placement decisions appropriate, did students succeed or fail in their assigned class, did the instructors believe the placements were accurate?).

To use the Criterion service to help make placement decisions, faculty may benchmark against similar institutions that are experienced Criterion users and/or identify appropriate scores for their entering students in different writing courses. Richland College, for example, benchmarks against its sister institutions in the Dallas County Community College District and similar institutions that participate in the National Community College Benchmark Project. Either process involves monitoring students’ success on an ongoing basis to make sure they’ve been properly placed, and having procedures in place so students who have been misplaced can move to appropriate courses.

For assessing student learning outcomes, faculty would identify the two or three student learning outcomes they want to measure, then design a Criterion assignment that would allow them to assess those learning outcomes. They would administer the assignment near the end of the course, then would use the information in the aggregate to understand the overall performance of students in the class, course, or program. The anonymous assessment results would not identify any individual instructor or any specific group of students. However, this “big picture” look at student success could be the basis for departmental changes in pedagogy or curriculum.

Notably, the Criterion service can also be used over time to measure the progress of individuals and groups of students.

Student Performance and Program Quality (Administrators)

Group assessments at the beginning, middle and end of courses provide useful data on student performance and program quality. After the assessments, Criterion administrators can compile and distribute the statistical reports. Criterion administrators have the power to differentiate instruction across an entire spectrum of Criterion user groups, directing
energies to problem areas identified by the student performance data that the *Criterion* service can generate.

Generating reports, especially by the administrator, and distributing them to faculty, should be routine. Administrative assignments created for all *Criterion* instructor groups can produce invaluable baseline data. For example, the *Criterion* service gives administrators the power to create assignments for all *Criterion* user groups. With enough lead time, administrators can set up prewriting tests, then mid-term and post-term writing assignments using *Criterion*-generated prompts.

All *Criterion* students in a department write on the same topic at the same time, and the statistical results provided by the *Criterion* service give faculty and administrators a snapshot of how students and programs are performing.

**Note:** Administrator reports can only be generated for assignments created at the administrator level.
How-To: Setting up Pre-Writing, Mid-term and Post-term Assignments at the Administrator Level

1. Go to the “Classes in College X” screen and click “Assignment Options.”
2. Click “Create Assignment.”
3. At the “Create Assignment” screen, use the drop-down menu to select a course level.
4. Select a Topic Mode from the drop-down menu.
5. Select an Essay Topic.
6. Set up the writing prompt.

Note that instructors cannot change options for assignments created at the administrator level.

Once the prompt is established, it must be “assigned” to all the courses. Create a name, such as Admin1 or Admin 2, to your prompt so that faculty can easily recognize it. When they use the Criterion service, instructors will see your prompt in the list of prompts for their course. Each instructor then selects the prompt and “assigns” it to their course.

At Richland College, the administrator’s writing prompt for exit-level Developmental Writing students is always a persuasive essay. All Developmental Writing students must successfully execute a persuasive essay to advance to Freshman English. At the conclusion of the assignment, administrators go to the “All Classes” screen. From the “All Classes” screen, the administrator clicks on the appropriate assignment in the assignment window. Next, the administrator chooses the type of report: Class Roster, Error, Holistic Score Summary, Student Access Information or Students Report.

The Holistic Score Summary is especially useful because all of the statistical information is presented in a color-coded pie chart and bar graph on the percent of essays scoring between one and six, and a bar graph that shows where students are doing well and those areas where students need help.
This image shows an example of a Holistic Score Summary.

This report gives the overall picture of a class’s performance.
This image shows an example of an Errors Report, which uses bar graphs to show writing error trends in grammar, usage, mechanics and style.

You can save the data from these reports to an Excel spreadsheet or as a Word file, then distribute to faculty, with administrative recommendations on how to improve performance, error by error, section by section. Because the data can be downloaded, administrators can compare existing data sets maintained by campus-based institutional research departments. Optimally, this sophisticated approach to data collection and sharing requires no special knowledge or training — the Criterion service does it all when the “assessment” period ends. The Criterion service’s data analysis system makes it much easier for administrators to “coach” faculty on areas that need improvement.
Administrator’s Guide for Engaging and Training Faculty

Communicating the Benefits of the Criterion Service to Faculty

Proper communication and training are essential to faculty acceptance of the Criterion service. Administrators should convey the benefits of the Criterion service to faculty and address their concerns:

1. The Criterion service does not replace the instructor, but it can free up an instructor’s time for more meaningful, one-on-one time with students.
2. Instructors can use the Criterion service as a paperless tool for administering assignments, grading essays, commenting on student work and reviewing student portfolios.
3. Students get more writing practice without adding to instructor workload.
4. The Criterion service provides useful evaluations of students’ writing abilities to help guide instruction in the classroom.
5. Instructors other than writing faculty and English faculty have a useful tool for addressing the basics of student writing so they can focus on subject matter.
6. The Criterion service can be used to help place incoming students in appropriate classes. It can also be used to help identify needed curricular and pedagogical improvements.

Note: You must understand your faculty’s computer knowledge and attitudes toward computer-mediated instruction so you can determine what basics and barriers to acceptance you may need to address.
Developing an Effective Training Program

The *Criterion* service is an excellent tool for developmental writing, English and ESL-ESOL instructors, but faculty need training and ongoing support to maximize its capabilities.

The *Criterion* service is best understood in the context of the current approaches to the use of technology for teaching and learning. How you use the *Criterion* service depends on the course design in which you use it. Before staff training begins, administrators must determine whether the *Criterion* service will be used in a hybrid, online or web-enhanced course design. For more information, see the “Course Design Models” section of this guide under “Using the *Criterion* Service in the Classroom.”

At Richland College in Dallas, Texas, winner of the 2005 Malcolm Baldridge Award, the Developmental Writing Department implemented a web-enhanced course model by following several simple but effective steps in its *Criterion* service deployment. Here are some of the steps that Richland College takes in implementing the *Criterion* service and training faculty.

- **Before training begins,** course coordinators/administrators review these requirements for delivering a web-enhanced course using the *Criterion* service.
  - Knowledge of *Criterion* Software
  - PC/Windows knowledge
  - Faculty access to *Criterion* Support: criterionsupport@ets.org or 877-909-6442

- **Rate the staff’s technology knowledge** with a simple questionnaire. You might ask:
  - Do you like computers?
  - Do you use a computer in your course?
  - Would you rate yourself as a technology expert, mid-level user or novice?
  - Have you taught an online course?

- **Review with instructors** the “Seven Principles for Good Practice in Undergraduate Education” developed by Chickering and Gamson (1986):
  - Encourages contact between students and faculty
  - Develops reciprocity and cooperation among students
  - Encourages active learning
  - Gives prompt feedback
  - Emphasizes time-on-task
  - Communicates high expectations
  - Respects diverse talents and ways of learning
• Emphasize to instructors the benefits of a Web-enhanced course using Criterion:
  o Instructor acts as a guide/facilitator of learning.
  o Learning is active and engaging.
  o Environment is familiar and comfortable for students.
  o Content delivery is more efficient.
  o Feedback is immediate.


• Review with instructors the “Higher Education Instructor Quick Access Guide” and Criterion video presentations, which cover the following topics:
  o How to Create an Assignment from the Topics Library
  o How to Use the Grade ‘N’ Scored Instructor Topics Feature
  o How to Access and Work in Student Portfolios
  o How to View/Use Criterion Reports
  o How to Have Students Self-Register

This information is located in the “Resources” tab of the Criterion tool.

• Through ETS, schedule a 90-minute initial online training session conducted by a Certified Criterion Trainer. After using the Criterion service in the classroom for at least one month, you may want to schedule additional advanced online training. ETS also offers a variety of customized on-site training options.

  To schedule trainings, contact your account manager at 877-909-6442.

To make the best use of faculty resources, you might train a small group of instructors and assign these “experts” as mentors to other faculty. Mentors should be well-trained, experienced teachers and Criterion users. They should always partner with inexperienced instructors or those who are uncomfortable teaching with technology. To benefit faculty, coordinators and administrators could create a Criterion user group online to encourage instructors to share their ideas with each other. Finally, the coordinator and administrator must be the biggest cheerleaders for the system.

The Criterion service is a learning tool that works best when instructors know how to use it and receive support and ongoing guidance from administrators. Be sure all faculty members know how to contact the Criterion support team. The Criterion support e-mail address and toll-free number are for faculty and administrator use only. Students will be referred back to their instructor. Here are some important resources:

• Criterion Welcome Page: http://criterion.ets.org
• Criterion Support via e-mail: criterionsupport@ets.org
• Criterion Support via toll-free number: 877-909-6442
• To request the addition of words to the spellchecker/dictionary, e-mail: criteriondictionary@ets.org
For a step-by-step overview on using the administrator features of the Criterion service, see the “Criterion Administrator Supplement.”
Resources

Consider the following websites as resources for using the *Criterion* service and other technology-based tools in teaching and learning.

- *Educause Quarterly* ([www.educause.edu](http://www.educause.edu)), a journal focused on technology and learning.
- Maricopa County Community College Learning Exchange ([http://www.mcli.dist.maricopa.edu/mlx/index.php](http://www.mcli.dist.maricopa.edu/mlx/index.php))
- WNET Channel 13, New York City, *Concept to Classroom, A Series of Workshops* ([http://www.thirteen.org/edonline/concept2class/](http://www.thirteen.org/edonline/concept2class/))
- The National Association of Developmental Educators ([http://www.nade.org](http://www.nade.org))
- Virginia Tech’s *Design Shop: Lessons in Effective Teaching* ([http://www.edtech.vt.edu/edtech/id/](http://www.edtech.vt.edu/edtech/id/))
- *Criterion* website ([http://criterion.ets.org](http://criterion.ets.org)) has valuable manuals and videos for administrators and faculty about the *Criterion* service and how to use it. Additional *Criterion* service information is available from ETS on the *Criterion* pages of ETS.org ([www.ets.org/criterion](http://www.ets.org/criterion)).
- British Broadcasting Corporation’s website ([http://www.bbc.com](http://www.bbc.com)) is a great source of news, online videos and live broadcasts from the BBC for creating stimulating and interactive student writing assignments on government, politics, science, trends and the arts.
- *Sports Illustrated’s* website ([http://www.sportsillustrated.com](http://www.sportsillustrated.com)) is a great resource for well-written essays about sports, society and culture.