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American Public University System

The Ultimate Advantage is an Educated Mind

**School of Science and Technology
Department of Information Technology
ISSC662 : Information Assurance – Capability Maturity and Appraisals
3 Credit Hours
8 Week Course**

Prerequisite(s): None

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Instructor Information

Instructor:
Messages:
E-mail:
Telephone:
Fax:
Office Hours:
Course:
Syllabus Version:

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Course Description (Catalog)

This course examines the phases, processes, standards, the levels, and the process areas of the Information Security Assessment Capability Maturity Model (ISA-CMM). The ISA-CMM minimizes false indications of quality and maturity by relating the ISA-CMM process areas to the Information Security Assessment Methodology (ISAM). This course appraises the principles and methodologies of the ISA-CMM; and applies it to develop an organizational ratings profile to provide a measure of maturity. The ratings profile is used to develop strategies to mature the organizational processes.

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Course Scope

This course is a study of the discipline of Information Security Assurance as it relates to security assessments and evaluations.

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Course Objectives

- Examine the phases, processes, standards, the levels, and the process areas of the Information Security Assessment Capability Maturity Model (ISA-CMM)
- Develop procedures for media disposal, security configurations, system level Information Assurance (IA), TEMPEST product integration, point of contact security, and zoned equipment compliance
- Appraise and conduct a complete threat, vulnerability, impact, and risk assessment; also synthesize risk mitigation strategies based on the analysis of this data
- Evaluate the processes and deliverables of the Information Security Assessment Methodology (ISAM)
- Appraise, analyze, and determine the capability maturity level of an organization

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Course Delivery Method

This M.S. in IT-Information Assurance and Security course delivered via distance learning will enable students to complete academic work in a flexible manner, completely online. Course materials and access to an online learning management system will be made available to each student. **Online assignments are due by the last day of each week assigned.** Assigned faculty will support the students throughout this eight-week course.

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Course Materials

Required Texts

Blackley, J. A., Peltier, J., & Peltier, T. (2003) *Information security fundamentals, 1st Edition*. Boca Raton, FL. Auerbach Publications.

Kouns, J. and Minoli, D. (2010). *Information technology risk management in enterprise environments: A review of industry practices and a practical guide to risk management teams*. Hoboken, NJ. John Wiley & Sons.

Security Horizon, Inc. (2012). *Information security assurance capability maturity model (ISA-CMM), DRAFT version 3.2*. [Copy available in course Resources area].

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Evaluation Procedures

This course has a strong writing component. The goal is to organize, synthesize, and demonstrate your comprehension of core concepts investigated during this course by applying a combination of the terms, concepts, and details you have learned in a systematic way. As important as "the details" that you analyze and arrange in your writing, however, are the conclusions you draw from those details, and your predictions, responses to, and ultimate interpretation of those details.

All work must be original. Please read and understand the University policy on academic dishonesty. You must credit your sources and provide the appropriate references on your assignments. All submitted work will use the APA 6th edition style guide format. Also, there will be a TurnItIn classroom available for your use to check your papers and will be required for all Assignments. Instructions on how to access the TurnItIn class will be published in the course Resources area.

- 1. Weekly Forum Discussion Assignments:** There are eight (8) discussion board assignments during the course. The forum assignments will count as 24% of the final grade. Each discussion activity will consist of one or more threads/topics. The assignments may involve discussion or debate. The questions are designed to allow you to apply what you have learned in each week's readings to real-world scenarios or hypothetical, but realistic, situations. Post your answers to the questions in each thread prior to **11:59 p.m. ET on Thursday**. Please do not be late with this post because your classmates will be relying on you to post on time to give them a post to respond to later in the week. A discussion period will then ensue from Thursday through Sunday. Read your classmates' posts and post at least **two (2)** follow-up messages to your classmates' posts in **each** thread prior to **11:59 p.m. ET on Sunday**. Some threads may require you to post more than two replies, so make sure you read the directions carefully. Of course, you may always post more than the required number of replies and you are encouraged to continue participating in the discussion even after you have met the minimum number of posts required. Your discussion board participation will be considered at the end of the semester if your grade is on the borderline. Borderline grades will only be rounded up if you have exceeded the minimum requirements on the discussion board and shown insight and critical thinking in all of your posts and replies. Your follow-up posts must contain substance and should add additional insight to your classmates' opinions or challenge their opinions. It is never sufficient to simply say, "I agree with what you wrote" or "I really liked your post." You must use your follow-up posts as a way to continue the discussion at a high level of discourse. Be sure to read the follow-up posts to your own posts and reply to any questions or requests for clarification, including questions posted by your professor. You will be expected to log into the classroom several times each week to participate in the class discussion. Discussion board postings are a large part of your grade and I will be looking for quality and depth in your postings. I will also expect you to list your references at the end of each post. References should be in APA citation format.
- 2. Research Paper Topic:** You must submit a Research Paper Topic in Week 2 of the course. Your topic must be related to Information Security Assurance Capability Maturity and Appraisals and the course objectives. Your topic proposal should include several sentences to explain what your topic is and how it relates to the course material. Use of a thesis statement or brief abstract is very helpful to convey your thoughts and plans for your proposed topic. That topic must be reviewed and approved by the course Professor prior to pursuing the next steps in the Research Paper process. See the Writing Expectations contained in the Policies section of the Syllabus for specific focus areas / guidance. There is also an exemplar provided with the Assignment instructions for your review.

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- 3. Research Paper Outline:** You must submit a Research Paper Outline by the end of Week 3 of the course. Your outline will use the topic approved by the professor in Week 2. Your outline should include the standard sections outlined in APA 6th edition style guide (Cover Page, body of outline). Your outline should have standard section headings (Introduction, Discussion, Analysis, Conclusion) and your outline should lay out a thesis / theme statement as part of your Introduction. The outline should also lay out the key points you will use to support your thesis / theme statement as part of your Discussion / Analysis, providing a key point underpinned by 3-4 brief bullets / sentences that describe the point you will be making. Your Conclusion section should list the key summary points that you will make. The intent of the Outline assignment is to organize your key thoughts so that you can write a coherent, supportive, and linked paper that carries the thesis / theme statement through a critical analysis of your topic. Your Research Paper References will be submitted in a separate assignment. See the Writing Expectations contained in the Policies section of the Syllabus for additional guidance. There is also an exemplar provided with the Assignment instructions for your review.
- 4. Research Paper Annotated References:** You must submit a Research Paper Annotated References by the end of Week 3 of the course. You must use a minimum of five (5) sources, not including the textbooks for the course. These sources should be from industry articles, journals, academic and professional textbooks, and case studies – seek to use primary or peer reviewed sources in your research. The list of references should be presented in a standard paper structure (cover page, annotated references, reference page) and each reference that you will use in your Research Paper should be briefly summarized in terms of its content, main thoughts, and relevance to Information Assurance Capability Maturity and Appraisals, as well as the thesis / theme of your approved topic. You may not use Wikipedia or Webopedia or any 'pedias' as a reference. Your references must be formatted according to APA Guidelines. There is also an exemplar provided with the Assignment instructions for your review. Also, conform to the Writing Expectations contained in the Policies section of the Syllabus.
- 5. Draft & Final Research Paper:** The Research Paper will be submitted as both a draft (due by the end of Week 5) and a final version for grading (due by the end of Week 7). The Draft paper is intended to allow for interaction with the professor to ensure the approved topic and outlined ideas are fully developed into a coherent and scholarly research paper. The Final Research Paper is due in week 7 of the course (containing 8 – 10 pages of text, plus a Cover Page, plus a References Page, all APA 6th edition Style Guide formatted). The paper structure will follow a conventional scholarly research paper format (introduction, discussion / analysis, conclusion, references). Review additional writing instructions in the Policies section of the syllabus as well as the APA 6th edition style guidelines. There is a TurnItIn requirement with the final research paper; please see the log in instructions for TurnItIn in the Resources section. Please establish an account for this course using those procedures so that you are prepared to access TurnItIn when your paper is ready for submission. A similarity score of 15% or below is the objective for your paper.
- 6. Applied Case Study:** The applied case study assignment will use the Information Security Assurance Capability Maturity Model (ISA-CMM), Draft Version 3.2 as a basis for selecting a case study topic and approach.

Students will select one of the following approaches to complete this assignment:

- a. Conduct an ISA assessment of an organization's IT systems (no identifying information of the organization) and scoped to a section / server farm / basic IT structure and not an enterprise sort of assessment.
- b. Conduct an ISA CMM assessment on one specific area of an IA assessment on an organization.

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- c. Conduct an ISA CMM assessment using a specific publication or standard and relate that publication or standard to the ISA CMM.
- d. Conduct an ISA CMM assessment identifying the differences of specific standards with security implications or contrasts between those publications, using the ISA CMM as the basis of comparison.
- e. Conduct an ISA CMM assessment with a focus on a specific part of an information system, breaking it down into different types of networks and requirements meeting legal standards, such different classifications of networks, relating them to the specific sections Of the ISA CMM.

This case study will be due at the end of Week 8. The paper should be between 7-8 pages long (not counting the Cover and Reference pages) and will follow a conventional paper format (Cover page, Body of Paper with introduction, discussion / analysis / argument / body, conclusion, and references pages). See the Writing Expectations contained in the Policies section of the Syllabus for specific focus areas / guidance. There is a TurnItIn requirement with the final research paper; please see the log in instructions for TurnItIn in the Resources section. Please establish an account for this course using those procedures so that you are prepared to access TurnItIn when your paper is ready for submission. A similarity score of 15% or below is the objective for your paper.

See **Appendix A – Grading Rubric** for the Grading Criteria that will be used to assess assignments listed above.

Grade Instruments	Points Possible	% of Final Grade
Discussion Board Assignments	24	24%
Research Paper Topic	1	1%
Research Paper Outline	15	15%
Research Paper Annotated References	10	10%
Research Paper Rough Draft	10	10%
Research Paper Final	25	25%
Applied Case Study	15	15%
TOTAL	100 Points	100%

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Grading Scale

Please see the [student handbook](#) to reference the [University’s grading scale](#).

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Course Outline

<u>Week</u>	<u>Topic(s)</u>	<u>Learning Objective(s)</u>	<u>Assignment(s)</u>
1	<p>Textbook: <i>Information Security Assurance Capability Maturity Model (ISA-CMM) Draft Version 3.2, February 2012</i> Section 1: Introduction Section 2: ISA-CMM Overview</p> <p>Textbook: <i>Information Security Fundamentals, 1st Edition</i> Chapter 8: Risk Analysis & Risk Management</p>	<p>CO – 1</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explain the Role of Information Assurance • Identify ISATRP, and Explain the Importance of Information Assurance Training and Rating Program • Comprehend and Differentiate Between the ISAM, IEM, and ISA-CMM • Explain Process Improvement as it relates to Information Assurance • Understand the Components of the ISA-CMM Architecture • Understand the ISA-CMM Model, Practices, and Process Areas • Identify the ISA-CMM Capability Levels • Understand ISA Risk Analysis and Management main thoughts 	<p>Forum Questions for Week 1</p> <p>A. Discussion Question 1: Personal Introductions</p> <p>B. Discussion Question 2: Describe the role of information assurance and how it relates to the ISA-CMM.</p>

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2	<p>Textbook: <i>Information Security Assurance Capability Maturity Model (ISA-CMM) Draft Version 3.2, February 2012</i></p> <p>Section 3: Process Area Format, ISA-PA01: Provide Training</p>	<p>CO – 2</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understand Information Security Assurance Training • Identify Organizational ISA Training Needs • Distinguish Between the Various Types of Information Security Awareness Training • Identify Methods in Which an Organization can Ensure Availability of Information Security Awareness Training • Identify Information Security Awareness Training Implementation Methods • Comprehend how to Evaluate Information Security Awareness Training Effectiveness 	<p>Forum Questions for Week 2</p> <p>A. Discussion Question 1 What is Information Security Awareness training and how does it relate to ISA training needs?</p> <p>B. Discussion Question 2 Does Information Assurance support or restrict constitutional liberty? Why or why not?</p> <p>Research Paper Topic Must be Selected & Submitted for Approval</p>

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3	<p>Textbook: <i>Information Security Assurance Capability Maturity Model (ISA-CMM) Draft Version 3.2, February 2012</i></p> <p>Section 3: Process Area Format, ISA-PA02: Coordinate with Customer Organization</p> <p>Section 3: Process Area Format, ISA-PA03: Specify Initial Information Security Needs</p> <p>Textbook: <i>Information Technology Risk Management in Enterprise Environments: A Review of Industry Practices and a Practical Guide to Risk Management Teams</i></p> <p>Chapter 9: Identifying Assets and Organization Risk Exposures</p>	<p>CO – 3</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify the five (5) major Coordination Mechanisms • Understanding ISA-CMM Assessment Scoping Limitations and Pitfalls • Identify ISA-CMM Assessment Resource Requirements • Comprehend ISA-CMM Assessment Roles and Responsibilities • Explain the importance of ISA-CMM Assessment Planning • Define the ISA-CMM Assessment Mission, Goals, and Objectives • Understand and Identify Security Pre-Assessment Activities • Understand and Identify Overall Business Mission as it Relates to the Objective of the Security Assessment • Identification and Classification of Information Systems and Assets • Capture High Level Management Objectives 	<p>Forum Questions for Week 3</p> <p>A. Discussion Question 1 Define a Business Impact Analysis (BIA) and explain where it fits in the ISA-CMM.</p> <p>B. Discussion Question 2 What factors are used to determine whether or not an information system is 'critical'? Provide two (2) examples.</p> <p>Research Paper Outline Due</p>

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4	<p>Textbook: <i>Information Security Assurance Capability Maturity Model (ISA-CMM) Draft Version 3.2, February 2012</i></p> <p>Section 3: Process Area Format, ISA-PA09: Manage Information Security Assurance Processes</p> <p>Textbook: <i>Information Technology Risk Management in Enterprise Environments: A Review of Industry Practices and a Practical Guide to Risk Management Teams</i></p> <p>Chapter 6: Risk Management Issues and Organizational Specifics</p>	<p>CO – 4</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify ISA Process Management Structure • Define ISA Process • Maintain Work Product Baselines • Manage ISA Program 	<p>Forum Questions for Week 4</p> <p>A. Discussion Question 1: Your organization is undergoing a ISA-CMM Assessment and you are assigned as the program manager. Identify major program management documents you would use to manage the assessment and explain what each is used for.</p> <p>B. Discussion Question 2: Explain what a 'process description' is and identify how you would assess whether or not a process is repeatable and formally implemented.</p> <p>Annotated References Listing Due</p>

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5	<p>Textbook: <i>Information Security Assurance Capability Maturity Model (ISA-CMM) Draft Version 3.2, February 2012</i></p> <p>Section 3: Process Area Format, ISA-PA04: Assess Threat</p> <p>Textbook: <i>Information Technology Risk Management in Enterprise Environments: A Review of Industry Practices and a Practical Guide to Risk Management Teams</i></p> <p>Chapter 4: A Survey of Available Information Security Risk Management Methods and Tools</p>	<p>CO – 5</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identification and Analysis of Threat Vectors as it Relates to the Critical Information Systems and Assets • Identification of Appropriate Security Controls (Safeguards) as it Relates to the Threat Vectors of the Critical Information Systems and Assets • Distinguish Between the Threat Agent, Threat Impact, and Threat Likelihood. • Identify how the Threat Agent, Threat Impact, and Threat Likelihood affect the Overall Risk 	<p>Forum Questions for Week 5</p> <p>A. Discussion Question 1: What is a vulnerability and how is it exploited? Provide two (2) examples to support your reasoning.</p> <p>B. Discussion Question 2: Identify a high risk threat and explain the relationship between its impact and likelihood.</p> <p>Draft of Research Paper Due</p>

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6	<p>Textbook: <i>Information Security Assurance Capability Maturity Model (ISA-CMM) Draft Version 3.2, February 2012</i></p> <p>Section 3: Process Area Format, ISA-PA05: Assess Vulnerability</p> <p>Section 3: Process Area Format, ISA-PA09: Manage Information Security Assurance Processes</p> <p>Section 4: Generic Processes</p>	<p>CO – 6</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understand the Information Security Assessment Methodology (ISAM) and how it is Implemented throughout the Assessment • Differentiate between Interviews, Documentation Review, and System Configuration Review • Understand Document Identification and Collection • Comprehend how Vulnerabilities are Identified • Understand the Exploitability of Vulnerabilities • Categorization and Classification of Vulnerabilities in accordance with the Capability Levels • Vulnerability Review and Monitoring Activities 	<p>Forum Questions for Week 6</p> <p>A. Discussion Question 1: Are all security concerns ‘vulnerabilities’? Explain why or why not and provide two (2) examples to support your reasoning.</p> <p>B. Discussion Question 2: Identify five (5) important documentation types necessary for the assessment and explain why they are important.</p>

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7	<p>Textbook: <i>Information Security Assurance Capability Maturity Model (ISA-CMM) Draft Version 3.2, February 2012</i></p> <p>Section 3: Process Area Format, ISA-PA06: Assess Impact</p> <p>Section 3: Process Area Format, ISA-PA07: Assess Information Risk</p>	<p>CO – 7</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understand How to Analyze Capabilities • Identify Potential Impacts • Understand how Impacts and Risks are Monitored • Explain how to determine Threat / Vulnerability / Impact 'Triples' • Assess Risk Associated with Exploitations • Identify Potential Countermeasures 	<p>Forum Questions for Week 7</p> <p>A. Discussion Question 1: Differentiate between an 'exploitable' vulnerability and a 'non-exploitable' vulnerability. Provide two (2) examples to support your reasoning.</p> <p>B. Discussion Question 2: A critical information system within your organization contains PII. During the course of the ISA-CMM, it is discovered that the access controls implemented on the information system are 'by passable'. What is the impact of this vulnerability and how would you rate the risk?</p> <p>Final Research Paper Due!</p>

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8	<p>Textbook: <i>Information Security Assurance Capability Maturity Model (ISA-CMM) Draft Version 3.2, February 2012</i></p> <p>Section 3: Process Area Format, ISA-PA08: Provide Analysis and Results</p> <p>Textbook: <i>Information Technology Risk Management in Enterprise Environments: A Review of Industry Practices and a Practical Guide to Risk Management Teams</i></p> <p>Chapter 10: Remediation Planning and Compliance Reporting</p>	<p>CO – 8</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consolidating and Correlating Assessment Information • Findings Analysis • Determine Customer’s Security Posture • Provide Findings and Recommendations • Determining the Audience for the Closeout Meeting • Conducting the Organization Closeout Meeting • Understand how to Address Customer Concerns and Constraints • Customer Follow-up • Lessons Learned 	<p>Forum Questions for Week 8</p> <p>A. Discussion Question 1 Identify the overall goal of the organization closeout meeting for the ISA-CMM Assessment? Explain elements should the closeout meeting include? Answer: Students’ answers will vary. Students should understand that increased awareness of security can help make computer systems harder to breach.</p> <p>B. Discussion Question 2 Provide your course observations with an eye to improvements, adjustments and the like which can help elevate the overall course value.</p> <p>Applied Case Study Due</p>

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Policies

Please see the [student handbook](#) to reference all University policies. Quick links to frequently asked question about policies are listed below.

[Drop/Withdrawal Policy](#)

[Plagiarism Policy](#)

[Extension Process and Policy](#)

WRITING EXPECTATIONS

All written submissions (All Assignments, Papers, and Case Study writing products) will be submitted in compliance with APA 6th Edition style guidelines. It is recommended that students try to adhere to a consistent format, which is described below.

- All Assignments, Papers, and Case Study writing products should be submitted inside the electronic classroom (unless classroom access is not possible and other arrangements have been approved by the professor).
- All Assignments, Papers, and Case Study writing products should contain a Cover Page with paper title, course identifier, student name, professor name, and date of paper.
- All Assignments, Papers, and Case Study writing products should be typewritten in Word format (deviations from Word need prior professor approval) in double-spaced format (ensure your auto spacing is turned off or set to zero in your paragraph settings) with a Times New Roman 12 pitch font.
- All Assignments, Papers, and Case Study writing products should have 1" margins all around; 0.5" paragraph indentation; running header and page numbers appropriately placed.
- All Assignments, Papers, and Case Study writing products should employ a running header and page numbers, appropriately placed.
- All Assignments, Papers, and Case Study writing products should use standard section headings is encouraged (e.g., Introduction, Discussion, Conclusion).
- All Assignments, Papers, and Case Study writing products citation formatting (both in text and in the References page) should conform to APA 6th edition style guidelines.

CITATION AND REFERENCE STYLE

Assignments completed in a narrative essay or composition format must follow APA 6th Edition style guidelines. This course will require students to use the citation and reference style established by the American Psychological Association (APA), in which case students should follow the guidelines set forth in *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* (6th ed.). Washington, D.C.: American Psychological Association.

LATE ASSIGNMENTS

Students are expected to submit classroom assignments by the posted due date and to complete the course according to the published class schedule. As adults, students, and working professionals, I understand you must manage competing demands on your time. Should you need additional time to complete an assignment please contact me before the due date so we can discuss the situation and determine an acceptable resolution. Routine submission of late assignments is unacceptable and will result in points deducted from your final course grade. Assignments submitted late without a prearranged extension will be subject to a 10% late penalty subtracted from the assessed grade of that particular assignment. **No late assignments will be accepted after the last day of the course.**

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The Online Library Resource Center is available to enrolled students and faculty from inside the electronic campus. This is your starting point for access to online books, subscription periodicals, and Web resources that are designed to support your classes and generally not available through search engines on the open Web. In addition, the Center provides access to special learning resources, which the University has contracted to assist with your studies. Questions can be directed to orc@apus.edu.

- **Charles Town Library and Inter Library Loan:** The University maintains a special library with a limited number of supporting volumes, collection of our professors' publication, and services to search and borrow research books and articles from other libraries.
- **Electronic Books:** You can use the online library to uncover and download over 50,000 titles, which have been scanned and made available in electronic format.
- **Electronic Journals:** The University provides access to over 12,000 journals, which are available in electronic form and only through limited subscription services.
- **Turnitin.com:** [Turnitin.com](http://turnitin.com) is a tool to improve student research skills that also detect plagiarism. Turnitin.com provides resources on developing topics and assignments that encourage and guide students in producing papers that are intellectually honest, original in thought, and clear in expression. This tool helps ensure a culture of adherence to the University's standards for intellectual honesty. Turnitin.com also reviews students' papers for matches with Internet materials and with thousands of student papers in its database, and returns an Originality Report to instructors and/or students.
- **Tutorial & Student Study Center** (<http://www.apus.edu/Online-Library/tutorials/index.htm>) . There is a full range of services that are aimed at providing support to a student's success in APUS courses. For example, students have access to 10 free hours of tutoring service per year through Tutor.com (accessible via the link above). **Tutor.com** is an award-winning online homework help and learning service that connects students to a certified tutor for one-on-one help. Get help with homework, studying, projects, essay writing, and test prep in every subject, including algebra, statistics, chemistry, physics, social studies, and English. There are thousands of academic and career services resources—worksheets, practice problems, videos in every subject, as well as financial literacy tips. They are available 24/7 so you can access them whenever you need extra help. Other services are available as well – take a look at the link to see the support that is available to you as part of attending APUS.
- **Science & Technology Help.** In addition to these on-line services, a student can also reach out to science_tech@apus.com to obtain guidance and direction on IT related courses. This is one more resource that is available to students should they seek more insight into the field and the tools with which to succeed.

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Appendix A – Grading Rubric

All written assignments will be assessed according to this rubric. Note that a score of 0 may be assigned in any category where your work does not meet the criteria for the beginning level.

APUS Assignment Rubric Graduate Level 600+	EXEMPLARY LEVEL 4	ACCOMPLISHED LEVEL 3	DEVELOPING LEVEL 2	BEGINNING LEVEL 1	TOTAL POINTS
FOCUS/THESIS	Student exhibits a defined and clear understanding of the assignment. Thesis is clearly defined and well constructed to help guide the reader throughout the assignment. Student builds upon the thesis of the assignment with well-documented and exceptional supporting facts, figures, and/or statements.	Establishes a good comprehension of topic and in the building of the thesis. Student demonstrates an effective presentation of thesis, with most support statements helping to support the key focus of assignment.	Student exhibits a basic understanding of the intended assignment, but the thesis is not fully supported throughout the assignment. While thesis helps to guide the development of the assignment, the reader may have some difficulty in seeing linkages between thoughts. While student has included a few supporting facts and statements, this has limited the quality of the assignment.	Exhibits a limited understanding of the assignment. Reader is unable to follow the logic used for the thesis and development of key themes. Introduction of thesis is not clearly evident, and reader must look deeper to discover the focus of the writer. Student's writing is weak in the inclusion of supporting facts or statements.	10
CONTENT/SUBJECT KNOWLEDGE	Student demonstrates proficient command of the subject matter in the assignment. Assignment shows an impressive level of depth of student's ability to relate course content to practical examples and applications. Student provides comprehensive analysis of details, facts, and concepts in a logical sequence.	Student exhibits above average usage of subject matter in assignment. Student provides above average ability in relating course content in examples given. Details and facts presented provide an adequate presentation of student's current level of subject matter knowledge.	The assignment reveals that the student has a general, fundamental understanding of the course material. Whereas, there are areas of some concern in the linkages provided between facts and supporting statements. Student generally explains concepts, but only meets the minimum requirements in this area.	Student tries to explain some concepts, but overlooks critical details. Assignment appears vague or incomplete in various segments. Student presents concepts in isolation, and does not perceive to have a logical sequencing of ideas.	20

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APUS Assignment Rubric Graduate Level 600+	EXEMPLARY LEVEL 4	ACCOMPLISHED LEVEL 3	DEVELOPING LEVEL 2	BEGINNING LEVEL 1	TOTAL POINTS
CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS	Student demonstrates a higher-level of critical thinking necessary for 300-400 level work. Learner provides a strategic approach in presenting examples of problem solving or critical thinking, while drawing logical conclusions which are not immediately obvious. Student provides well-supported ideas and reflection with a variety of current and/or world views in the assignment. Student presents a genuine intellectual development of ideas throughout assignment.	Student exhibits a good command of critical thinking skills in the presentation of material and supporting statements. Assignment demonstrates the student's above average use of relating concepts by using a variety of factors. Overall, student provides adequate conclusions, with 2 or fewer errors.	Student takes a common, conventional approach in guiding the reader through various linkages and connections presented in assignment. However, student presents a limited perspective on key concepts throughout assignment. Student appears to have problems applying information in a problem-solving manner.	Student demonstrates beginning understanding of key concepts, but overlooks critical details. Learner is unable to apply information in a problem-solving fashion. Student presents confusing statements and facts in assignment. No evidence or little semblance of critical thinking skills.	20

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APUS Assignment Rubric Graduate Level 600+	EXEMPLARY LEVEL 4	ACCOMPLISHED LEVEL 3	DEVELOPING LEVEL 2	BEGINNING LEVEL 1	TOTAL POINTS
ORGANIZATION OF IDEAS/FORMAT	Student thoroughly understands and excels in explaining all major points. An original, unique, and/or imaginative approach to overall ideas, concepts, and findings is presented. Overall format of assignment includes an appropriate introduction (or abstract), well- developed paragraphs, and conclusion. Finished assignment demonstrates student's ability to plan and organize research in a logical sequence. Student uses at least of 5-7 references in assignment.	Student explains the majority of points and concepts in the assignment. Learner demonstrates a good skill level in formatting and organizing material in assignment. Student presents an above average level of preparedness, with a few formatting errors. Assignment contains less than 5 resources.	Learner applies some points and concepts incorrectly. Student uses a variety of formatting styles, with some inconsistencies throughout the paper. Assignment does not have a continuous pattern of logical sequencing. Student uses less than 3 sources or references.	Assignment reveals formatting errors and a lack of organization. Student presents an incomplete attempt to provide linkages or explanation of key terms. The lack of appropriate references or source materials demonstrates the student's need for additional help or training in this area. Student needs to review and revise the assignment.	20

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APUS Assignment Rubric Graduate Level 600+	EXEMPLARY LEVEL 4	ACCOMPLISHED LEVEL 3	DEVELOPING LEVEL 2	BEGINNING LEVEL 1	TOTAL POINTS
WRITING CONVENTIONS (GRAMMAR & MECHANICS)	Student demonstrates an excellent command of grammar, as well as presents research in a clear and concise writing style. Presents a thorough, extensive understanding of word usage. Student excels in the selection and development of a well-planned research assignment. Assignment is error-free and reflects student's ability to prepare a high-quality academic assignment.	Student provides an effective display of good writing and grammar. Assignment reflects student's ability to select appropriate word usage and present an above average presentation of a given topic or issue. Assignment appears to be well written with no more than 3-5 errors. Student provides a final written product that covers the above-minimal requirements.	Assignment reflects basic writing and grammar, but more than 5 errors. Key terms and concepts are somewhat vague and not completely explained by student. Student uses a basic vocabulary in assignment. Student's writing ability is average, but demonstrates a basic understanding of the subject matter.	Topics, concepts, and ideas are not coherently discussed or expressed in assignments. Student's writing style is weak and needs improvement, along with numerous proofreading errors. Assignment lacks clarity, consistency, and correctness. Student needs to review and revise assignment.	20
USE OF COMPUTER TECHNOLOGY/ APPLICATIONS	Student provides a high-caliber, formatted assignment. Learner exhibits excellent use of computer technology in the development of assignment. Quality and appropriateness of stated references demonstrate the student's ability to use technology to conduct applicable research. Given assignment includes appropriate word processing, spreadsheet and/or other computer applications as part of the final product.	Assignment presents an above-average use of formatting skills, with less than 3 errors. Students has a good command of computer applications to format information and/or figures in an appropriate format. Student uses at least two types of computer applications to produce a quality assignment.	Student demonstrates a basic knowledge of computer applications. Appearance of final assignment demonstrates the student's limited ability to format and present data. Resources used in assignment are limited. Student may need to obtain further help in the use of computer applications and Internet research.	Student needs to develop better formatting skills. The student may need to take additional training or obtain help from the Educator Help Desk while preparing an assignment. Research and resources presented in the assignment are limited. Student needs to expand research scope. The number of formatting errors is not acceptable.	10

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APUS Assignment Rubric Graduate Level 600+	EXEMPLARY LEVEL 4	ACCOMPLISHED LEVEL 3	DEVELOPING LEVEL 2	BEGINNNIG LEVEL 1	TOTAL POINTS
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