# Core Criteria Descriptions and Guidance Notes

| 1. **Addressing the question** | The relevance of the content of the essay to the question or title set.  
| | • Good essays select relevant material (knowledge, concepts, interpretation, theoretical models, others’ perspectives).  
| | • Better ones make it clear throughout how the material is relevant to the question. |

| 2. **Using evidence** | The use of externally sourced material, such as research findings, facts, quotations, or other forms of information.  
| | • Good essays include information from outside sources that backs up the points made in the essay.  
| | • Better ones explicitly highlight or interpret the evidence to support a more general claim or idea or point being made in the essay. |

| 3. **Developing argument** | The construction of a coherent and convincing set of reasons for holding a particular point of view; the following of an analytical path leading from a starting point to a concluding point.  
| | • Good essays contain expressions of positions on the issues raised by the essay.  
| | • Better ones develop arguments throughout the essay, with each element building on the last. |

| 4. **Critical evaluation** | Determining the value, significance, strengths and/or weaknesses of something (e.g., research findings, theory, methodological approach, policy, another's argument or interpretation).  
| | • Good essays contain evaluative assertions or descriptive points about the strengths and weaknesses of elements referred to in the essay.  
| | • Better ones contain systematic, reasoned explanations for the evaluative points being made. |

| 5. **Structuring** | The formal arrangement of the essay content into paragraphs.  
| | • Good essays have clearly recognisable introductory and concluding paragraphs, and paragraphs in the main body of the essay each have a clear, single concept or point as their main focus.  
| | • Better essays have a paragraph structure that supports the development of ideas within the essay, so that the structure of the essay is linked to the developing argument. |

| 6. **Use of language** | The use of words, grammar, and punctuation to formulate an utterance appropriate to the purpose and context.  
| | • Good essays are free from errors in spelling, punctuation and grammar, and would be acceptable pieces of writing in the wider world.  
| | • Better essays adopt academic styles and conventions, and approximate to the appropriate academic ‘register’.

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Assessment Plus: Using assessment criteria to support student learning  
HEFCE funded consortium project  
http://www.assessmentplus.net