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American Public University System

The Ultimate Advantage is an Educated Mind

School of Science and Technology
Department of Information Technology
ISSC661: Information Assurance – Assessment & Evaluation
Credit Hours: 3
Length of Course: 8 Weeks
Prerequisite(s): None

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Instructor Information

Instructor:

Messages:

E-mail:

Telephone:

Fax:

Office Hours:

Course:

Syllabus Version:

Course Description (Catalog)

This course is an advanced study of the principles, practices, procedures, and methodologies to assure the protection and availability of vital digital information systems assets. It examines information assurance, incident management and response, and security standards; and it appraises the convergence between information security, information systems security, and information warfare. This course appraises organizational, legal, technical, and ethical issues related to securing vital digital assets. Topics include: the role of the corporate security officer, corporate cybercrime, electronic commerce, cryptography, and international standards, policies, and security acts.

Course Scope

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

Course Objectives

A successful student will fulfill the following learning objectives:

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1. Assess organizational networks, systems, and information storage solutions to recommend an information assurance security plan that protects the organization by decreasing risk and mitigating vulnerabilities.
2. Examine the business case for information security; also define roles and responsibilities
3. Evaluate and develop strategic metrics to help determine information security outcomes
4. Assess security governance objectives and risk management objectives
5. Develop a cost-effective security strategy and synthesize meaningful security program metrics
6. Design relevant information security management metrics by analyzing incident management and response data

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. Resources 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 faculty will support the students throughout this eight-week course.

Resources

Required Texts

Blackley, J. A., Peltier, J., & Peltier, T. (2003). *Information security fundamentals, 1st Edition*. Boca Raton, FL. Auerbach Publications. ISBN: 0849319579/9780849319570

Brotby, W. K. (2009) *Information security management metrics: A definitive guide to effective security monitoring and measurement*, Boca Raton, FL. Auerbach Publications. ISBN: 1420052853/9781420052855

Landoll, D. J. (2011) *The security risk assessment handbook: A complete guide for performing security risk assessments, 2nd ed.*, Boca Raton, FL. Auerbach Publications. ISBN: 1439821488/9781439821480

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. Complementing the critical thinking aspect of these writing assignments is the application of the standard academic style guidelines in the APA 6th Edition style guide, the standard for APU writing, as well as the writing expectations contained in this Syllabus. **Ensure you fully understand the Writing Expectations for each writing activity as laid out later in the Syllabus.**

Forum Assignments: There will be eight Forum assignments during the course. The assignments will count as 24% of the final grade. Students should expect to post an initial response to Forum topics / questions by Wednesday of each week; commenting on other student postings by Friday, and seeking to engage in a dialogue on the topics offered with their peers. Forum postings should express complete responses / thoughts, documented by academic resources that offer support for anecdotal views and personal exemplars. The objective is to provide an understanding of the topic under discussion and to engage in a scholarly dialogue with other members of the class to expand overall understanding and knowledge of the topic.

Research Paper Topic: You must submit a Research Paper Topic in Week 2 of the course. Your topic must be related to IA Assessments and Evaluations and course objectives as outlined. That topic must

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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. Please be aware that this is a progressive research development process that will carry the same approved topic throughout the research paper development process and related assignments.

Research Paper Outline: You must submit a Research Paper Outline by the end of Week 3 of the course. Your topic must be related to IA Assessments and Evaluations and course objectives as outlined, using the approved topic submitted during Week 2. Your initial Research Paper References should be included and references must be formatted according to APA 6th Edition style guidelines. See the Writing Expectations contained in the Policies section of the Syllabus for specific focus areas / guidance.

Research Paper Annotated References: You must use a minimum of five (5) sources **beyond** the course textbooks in Week 4. These sources should be from industry articles, journals, academic and professional books, and case studies. You may **not** use Wikipedia or Webopedia or any of the 'pedias' as a reference. Your references must be formatted according to APA 6th Edition style guidelines. See the Writing Expectations contained in the Policies section of the Syllabus for specific focus areas / guidance.

Draft & Final Research Paper: The Draft Research Paper is due at the end of Week 5 and the Final Research Paper is due in week 7 of the course (8 – 10 pages not including the Cover Page or the References listing – APA 6th Edition formatting). The draft will count as 15% of the final grade and the final will count as 25% of the final grade. The paper 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 as well as conforming with APA 6th edition style guidelines.

Risk Assessment Case Study: The Risk Assessment case study will use NIST Special Publication 800-30 (available at <http://csrc.nist.gov/publications/drafts/800-30-rev1/SP800-30-Rev1-ipd.pdf> or in the Course Resources area) as the basis for performing a risk assessment of a selected computing system. The selected computing system can be your personal home network (e.g., from ISP appliance to connections within your home location), a work oriented network, or a public network (e.g., public library, commercial venue, free Wifi hotspot). Intent of the case study will be to create and populate an adversarial and a non-adversarial risk assessment patterned after Table I-5 and Table I-7 in NIST SP 800-30 – this means that you should fill out those two templates as a minimum as part of your assessment – and provide discussion and analysis from that assessment. This case study will count for 20% of the final grade. 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), include the populated tables, and will follow a conventional paper format (Cover page, Body of Paper with introduction, risk assessment / 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 as well as conforming with APA 6th edition style guidelines.

See **Appendix A – Grading Rubric** for Grading Criteria on assignments listed above.

Grade Instruments	Points Possible	% of Final Grade
Forum Assignments (8)	24	24%
Research Paper Topic	1	1%
Research Paper Outline	5	5%
Research Paper Annotated References	10	10%
Research Paper Draft	15	15%
Research Paper Final	25	25%
Risk Assessment Case Study	20	20%
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>The Security Risk Assessment Handbook - Landoll</i></p> <p>Chapter 1: Introduction</p> <p>Chapter 2: Information Security Risk Assessment Basics</p> <p>Textbook: <i>Information Security Fundamentals, 1st Edition – Peltier et al</i></p> <p>Chapter 8: Risk Analysis and Risk Management</p>	<p>CO – 1</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explain the purpose of a Security Risk Assessment • Explain when a Security Risk Assessment should be conducted • Identify who should conduct a Security Risk Assessment • Understand the various activities which could be involved in a Security Risk Assessment • Understand threat agents and threats 	<p style="background-color: yellow;">Forum postings for Week 1</p> <p>A. Discussion Question 1 Introduce yourself to the class providing a short biography with your degree program, profession, location, and hobbies.</p> <p>B. Discussion Question 2 Define the purpose of a Risk Analysis and describe how you would determine the type(s) of Security Risk Assessment(s) an organization would require and why (e.g. Gap Assessment, Compliance Audit, Security Audit, Vulnerability Scanning, Penetration Testing, Ad Hoc Testing, Social Engineering, Wardialing, etc.).</p>

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2	<p>Textbook: <i>The Security Risk Assessment Handbook Landoll</i></p> <p>Chapter 3: Project Definition</p> <p>Chapter 4: Security Risk Assessment Preparation</p> <p>Textbook: <i>Information Security Metrics: A Definitive Guide to Effective Security Monitoring and Measurement - Brotby</i></p> <p>Chapter 1: Security Metrics Overview</p> <p>Chapter 2: Security Metrics</p>	<p>CO – 2</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluate how long a Security Risk Assessment should take • Understand how the success of a Security Risk Assessment is Measured • Understand what safeguards are and how they are to be used • Understand the importance of establishing a budget • Understand the importance of determining the scope and how to prevent scope crepe • Understand the role of the Statement of Work and what it should contain • Identify the roles within a Security Risk Assessment Team • Identify Critical Systems and understand the roles of Asset and Metrics Classifications 	<p>Forum postings for Week 2</p> <p>A. Discussion Question 1 Explain the steps involved with Security Risk Assessment Preparation.</p> <p>B. Discussion Question 2 Describe what Security Metrics are and how they can be used in a Security Risk Assessment.</p> <p>Research Paper Topic Due</p>
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<p style="text-align: center;">3</p>	<p>Textbook: <i>The Security Risk Assessment Handbook - Landoll</i></p> <p>Chapter 12: Security Risk Assessment Project Management</p>	<p>CO – 3</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Describe the project definition phase • Understand what resources are required for a given Security Risk Assessment • Explain how to establish and implement project tracking tools and techniques • Differentiate between project tracking and project status reporting • Understand how to establish plans and strategies to prevent scope creep 	<p>Forum postings for Week 3</p> <p>A. Discussion Question 1: Explain the role of Project Management as it relates to managing Security Assessments. Also discuss each phase in Project Management.</p> <p>B. Discussion Question 2: Discuss each phase in Project Management as it relates to managing Security Assessments.</p> <p>Research Paper Outline Due</p>
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4	<p>Textbook: <i>The Security Risk Assessment Handbook - Landoll</i></p> <p>Chapter 5: Data Gathering</p> <p>Chapter 6: Administrative Data Gathering</p> <p>Chapter 7: Technical Data Gathering</p> <p>Chapter 8: Physical Data Gathering</p>	<p>CO – 4</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explain the Data Gathering phase at large • Understand the impact of security assessment scoping as it relates to Data Gathering • Comprehend the differences between administrative, technical, and physical data • Differentiate the different data gathering techniques • Understand the importance of establishing sampling objectives • Identify Sampling methodologies • Understand non-technical security processes • Explain the different security control categories and differentiate them. • Explain information control, business continuity, system security, secure architecture, system security components, system security configuration, and data security. 	<p>Forum postings for Week 4</p> <p>A. Discussion Question 1 Differentiate between administrative, technical and physical security controls (safeguards) and give an example of each.</p> <p>B. Discussion Question 2 Identify and explain how to gather data on administrative, technical, and physical security controls (safeguards).</p> <p>Research Paper Annotated References Due</p>
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5	<p>Textbook: <i>The Security Risk Assessment Handbook - Landoll</i></p> <p>Chapter 9: Security Risk Analysis</p> <p>Textbook: <i>Information Security Management Metrics: A Definitive Guide to Effective Security Monitoring and Measurement - Brotby</i></p> <p>Chapter 11: Information Security Risk Management</p>	<p>CO – 5</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understand how to determine Risk • Understand how to establish Risk Statements • Understand how to establish Risk Parameters • Understand how to conduct a security assessment • Apply project management aspects of the security assessment • Comprehend security control evaluation techniques and frameworks • Evaluate administrative, technical and physical controls or lack thereof within the operational context. • Rationalize risks according to industry standards, federal regulations, and organizational operating context 	<p>Forum postings for Week 5</p> <p>A. Discussion Question 1: Imagine you are tasked with evaluating the Administrative Processes involved in hiring new employees within your organization. During a Security Risk Assessment, you identify that your organization does not have a policy which requires conducting background checks on applicants for hire. Determine whether or not this is a risk and explain why or why not.</p> <p>B. Discussion Question 2: Imagine you are asked to provide a Operational Risk Management goal setting exercise. From your perspective, what are the most important 'loss events' that should be addressed and why?</p> <p>Draft of Research Paper Due</p>
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6	<p>Textbook: <i>The Security Risk Assessment Handbook - Landoll</i></p> <p>Chapter 10: Security Risk Mitigation</p>	<p>CO – 6</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understand Security and Organizational Management responses to risks • Explain how to Select Safeguards • Comprehend why sufficient and adequate selection of mitigating security controls (safeguards) is necessary • Identify methods of security controls (safeguards) justification • Establish plans for continuous monitoring and compliance enforcement. 	<p>Forum postings for Week 6</p> <p>A. Discussion Question 1: Assume that your class is the management team of a medium-size business that sells goods to consumers online. You conduct a security assessment, and identify that the information systems are vulnerable to information leakage, and that account and customer information can be stolen. Which controls do you evaluate for improvement and remediation?</p> <p>B. Discussion Question 2: Based on your selected controls, establish a high level action plan.</p>
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<p>7</p>	<p>Textbook: <i>The Security Risk Assessment Handbook - Landoll</i> Chapter 13: Security Risk Assessment Approaches</p> <p>Textbook: <i>Information Security Management Metrics: A Definitive Guide to Effective Security Monitoring and Measurement - Brotby</i> Chapter 3: Current State of Security Metrics</p>	<p>CO – 7</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understand Quantitative Analysis • Understand Qualitative Analysis • Differentiate between Quantitative and Qualitative Analysis • Explain the variant Risk Assessment methods • Explain how to conduct a security controls (safeguards) cost calculation • Comprehend how to conduct a cost-benefit analysis on security controls (safeguards) implementation 	<p>Forum postings for Week 7</p> <p>A. Discussion Question 1: Explain the difference between a Quantitative and Qualitative Analysis and discuss how to calculate the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expected Loss • Single Loss Expectancy • Annualized Loss Expectancy • Safeguard Value <p>B. Discussion Question 2: Describe the differences between the following risk assessment methods: FAA Security Risk Management Process, OCTAVE, FRAP, CRAMM, and NSA IAM.</p> <p>Final Research Paper Due!</p>
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8	<p>Textbook: <i>The Security Risk Assessment Handbook</i></p> <p>Chapter 11: Security Risk Assessment Reporting</p> <p><i>Information Security Risk Analysis, 3rd Edition</i> Appendix A: Sample Risk Assessment Management Summary Report</p>	<p>CO – 6</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Describe security assessment reporting pitfalls • Understand the importance of the security assessment reporting structure • Differentiate between the executive-level report and the base report • Comprehend the importance of placing evidence in the Appendices • Understand the document specification • Understand the elements of a security risk analysis and how it impacts reporting objectives 	<p>Forum postings for Week 8</p> <p>A. Discussion Question 1: If you could, which security reporting methodology would recommend to promote an organizational “security culture,” in which stakeholders is more knowledgeable and proactive about threats to information security? Discuss this question as a group.</p> <p>B. Discussion Question 2: This forum topic is intended to offer you the opportunity to comment on the course structure, content, and setup. I am seeking any input you might have that will help continue to refine this course as well as keep it current and updated. I greatly appreciate any comments you may have. Regards.</p> <p>Risk Assessment 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 black color font.
- All Assignments, Papers, and Case Study writing products should have 1" margins all around; 0.5" paragraph indentation.
- 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 section headings -- standard section heading use 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 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.). (2010). 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 may result in points deducted from your final course grade. Assignments submitted late without a prearranged extension will be subject to a 10% late penalty.

No late assignments will be accepted after the last day of the course.

Academic Services

[TOC](#)

ONLINE LIBRARY RESEARCH CENTER & LEARNING RESOURCES

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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://www.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.

Selected Bibliography

Web Resources for Information Assurance: Assessment and Evaluation

1) **Information Security Risk Management**

Risk Management Guide for Information Technology Systems. (2002) Retrieved from <http://csrc.nist.gov/publications/nistpubs/800-30/sp800-30.pdf>

Sound Practices for the Management and Supervision of Operational Risk Management. (2003). Retrieved from <http://www.bis.org/publ/bcbs96.pdf>

The ISO 27001 Directory. Retrieved from <http://www.27000.org/>

2) **Quantitative v/s. Qualitative Risk Assessment**

Data Centric Quantitative Computer Security Risk Assessment. Retrieved from http://www.sans.org/reading_room/whitepapers/auditing/data-centric-quantitative-computer-security-risk-assessment_1209

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Rot, A. (2003). IT Risk Assessment: Quantitative and Qualitative Approach. Retrieved from http://www.iaeng.org/publication/WCECS2008/WCECS2008_pp1073-1078.pdf

3) Security Control Development and Evaluation

The Center for Internet Security. Retrieved from <http://www.cisecurity.org>

US-CERT: United States Computer Emergency Readiness Team. Retrieved from <http://www.us-cert.gov>

4) Business Impact Analysis

ISO 27001 & BS 25999 Business Impact Analysis. Retrieved from <http://blog.iso27001standard.com/tag/business-impact-analysis/>

5) FRAAP

Peltier, T. Effective Risk Analysis. (2000) Retrieved from <http://csrc.nist.gov/nissc/2000/proceedings/papers/304slide.pdf>

6) Risk Assessment Process

Cline, B. (2007). "The Information Security Assessment and Evaluation Methodologies: A DoD Framework for Control Self-assessment." *ISACA Journal, Vol 2*. <http://www.isaca.org/Journal/Past-Issues/2007/Volume-2/Documents/jopdf0702-info-security-request.pdf>

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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 Resource. 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
CRITICAL THINKING	Student demonstrates a	Student exhibits a good	Student takes a common,	Student demonstrates	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
SKILLS	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.	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.	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.	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.	

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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
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

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APUS Assignment Rubric Graduate Level 600+	EXEMPLARY LEVEL 4	ACCOMPLISHED LEVEL 3	DEVELOPING LEVEL 2	BEGINNING LEVEL 1	TOTAL POINTS
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
TOTAL POINTS					100