Sample Clear Competence Essay
Doing research papers as part of a student’s education is quite common at both the high school and university level. Some people may not see the relevance of writing a research paper on Abraham Lincoln or Kant. They may surmise, “How is this relevant to my education now or my future job?” I would argue that doing research and communicating your findings are a vital part of any student's education.

To begin with professors do not have sufficient time to teach all topics within a class subject such as philosophy, English, engineering, etc. California State University East Bay is currently on a quarter system. A given course only lasts about 10 or 11 weeks plus finals week. During these 10 weeks there are several topics taught. For instance an American History class may cover the American colonists, the American Revolution, early formation of the government, the War of 1812, the Louisiana Purchase, etc. The professor and textbook may not be able to go into depth into the emerging European philosophers and politicians of Locke, Hobbes, Descartes, etc. that are foundational to the ideals of America as espoused in The Declaration of Independence and the U.S. constitution, and the Federalist papers. For the student, writing a research paper provides an opportunity to supplement the formal class work. The student has the opportunity to apply the lessons taught in class to focus their research, but at same time, the student's research may provide a fuller picture what is taught in the class. There is almost a symbiotic relationship between the two.

Another important reason for requiring student research papers is to develop critical, reasoned thought. Professors often give homework assignments to reinforce the lesson plans. These assignments or problems are often fairly rudimentary to make sure the students understand the fundamentals and are relatively straight forward. With research paper, the students are required to not only apply the lessons learned in class, but also gather their own information. In this process students learn where the resources are located at the library, on the Internet, at various government agencies, etc. They collect all this information from different sources that may have conflicting viewpoints. In the process of developing conclusions or action plans in the research, students must critically consider the potential biases the sources may have. More importantly, students learn to communicate their research findings in a logical fashion.

Reasoned, critical thought, and the ability to gather your own information is important in the work force. Problems are rarely as straight forward as homework problems: given the problem type if “x” you do “y.” For instance in a concrete design class you learn how to design concrete beams, columns, and foundations. In order to design a building, you need to find and read the geotechnical reports to determine your soil bearing pressures. You need to be able to read architectural plans and sections to know where to layout your beams and columns. You need to talk with the architect and the mechanical engineering consultant to know what their needs are and what gaps you need to design. You also need to work with the city to determine what the code requirements that prescribe minimum design loads are.
Doing research and being able to communicate your findings is a vital part of a student's education. Research papers supplement the professor's lectures, and provide the student with a much more enriched understanding and appreciation of what is taught in class. Students learn how to collect their own information rather than being spoon fed this information by the professor. Students learn to weigh the differing opinions and moods for the sources and to develop a course of action or conclusion. All the skills provided by research are also important in the workforce.

Analysis:
Overall, this essay exhibits clear control of the task of writing a timed essay that addresses the topic, is well organized, and well developed with appropriate specific examples and logical reasoning. Additionally, the essay has only a few very minor errors in grammar and mechanics.

Strengths:
1. The introduction leads into the issue of the prompt.
2. The essay directly and specifically answers the question in the prompt with a thesis that clearly states the writer's position on the issue of the prompt.
3. The essay stays focused on the issue and stays on task throughout the entire essay.
4. The essay is well organized and has some variety in coherence devices.
5. Each body paragraph begins with a specific topic sentence that sets forth one reason for the writer's position.
6. The body paragraphs all have depth of analysis and numerous concrete, specific examples.
7. The vocabulary shows sophistication.
8. The sentences have variety with both coordination and subordination.
9. The conclusion restates the writer's position.
10. The language and mechanics are well controlled.

Weaknesses:
1. The thesis is a bit weak in that it uses the phrase "I would argue . . ." Furthermore, the thesis does not hint at the writer's reasons for his or her position.
2. Although there are some coherence devices, some paragraphs, especially the conclusion, don't have quite enough transitions.
3. The conclusion is merely a summary of the writer's points with no culminating strategy.
4. The language is a bit too colloquial with many instances of the second person: you, your.
5. There are a few grammar and mechanical errors (mainly comma errors), but these errors are of the type that would easily be remedied on a subsequent draft, and they do not interfere with meaning.