



ASSIGNMENT

The Alter Ego Paper

Four to five pages, double-spaced. The office a student will hold, and the person who holds it. College and high school.

What it is for

The country profile answers what the government wants. This one answers what *this student* can do about it: the powers the office carries, the limits on it, who it has to answer to at home, and how the body it sits in actually decides. It is the assignment that most reliably separates a student who will be useful in the room from one who has simply read a lot.

It also carries the single question that does most of the discriminating in grading, and that question is named in Part I below. Tell students it is there.

Part I: The position

The powers and responsibilities of the office, and an institutional description of how it interacts with others, both at home and inside the body. If the student is a foreign minister, what is the relationship with the head of government, and with the equivalent official at the supranational level? **This is not about personalities. It is about the division of power.** If the student sits in a parliament, what does the seat actually let them do, and what is the committee they sit on for?

The question that decides the grade

Is this office intergovernmentalist or supranationalist, and why? A label is not an answer. The answer is a reason: a small member state has a real interest in a strong Commission, because the alternative is being outweighed by larger states in every bargain. A student who argues both sides from evidence and then makes a call has written the strongest version of this part, and a student who never answers it should not reach the top band however good the rest is.

Every body has its own version of this question, and it is worth choosing one deliberately before the assignment goes out. In a Security Council it is what the veto does to the drafting rather than to the vote. In a legislative committee it is why the procedural vote comes before the substantive one. In a planning board it is whether the criteria in the ordinance bind the board or merely guide it.

Say how the body decides

Name the forum and name its decision rule: qualified majority, unanimity, simple majority, consensus, co-decision with another chamber. Across one recent set of papers almost no student named the voting rule their own body uses, which is why it is worth writing into the prompt as a

required sentence.

Part II: The person, or the party

A profile of the individual the student will model: their background, their interests and what they want out of the body. The point is not biography for its own sake. It is to predict a negotiating posture, so every fact should earn its place by suggesting how this person will behave when pressed.

Where the individual is genuinely obscure, and for junior members of a large assembly they often are, **profile the national party and the political group instead**. That is usually the more informative answer anyway, and it should be stated as a permitted route rather than left for students to discover.

Part III: Conclusions

Two things, and students reliably answer only the second, so number them in the prompt.

1. The student's judgment on the office and the person. Is the office invested with broad powers, or does its holder share authority with others? Does this particular person matter to how the body decides, or are they a seat filled by whoever won last? The answer may lie in the formal distribution of powers, or in the informal political realities of the member state in question.
 2. **The person's position on the specific proposal before the body.** In the officeholder's voice, not the student's own, and on the student's own file rather than a tour of the whole agenda.
-

Where the points usually go

- **No citations in the body.** A paper can carry nine good primary sources on a reference page and attach none of them to a claim.
 - **No headings for the three parts.** The most common structural miss, and the cheapest to fix.
 - **Confusing the head of state with the head of government**, or the equivalent category error in another body: a national minister described as not being a decision-maker at the supranational level, when in council that minister is a co-legislator. Where the same paper gets it right elsewhere, grade it as a slip.
 - **An institutional passage that never connects to the role.** A correct paragraph about the parliament, sitting in a paper about a minister, doing no work.
 - **The student's own view in place of the officeholder's** in Part III.
 - **The subject's name misspelled.** For a paper about one named individual it is the first thing a reader notices.
-

Using this outside a Model EU

Nothing in either assignment depends on the European Union. Both ask the same two questions of any simulated body: what is the entity you speak for, and what is the office you hold inside it. Change the forum and the questions survive.

- **Model United Nations.** The country profile becomes the state's foreign policy and its position on the committee's topic; the alter ego becomes the permanent mission and the instructions a delegate actually operates under.
- **Model Arab League.** The same pair, with the decision rule doing more work, since a majority decision binds only the states that vote for it.
- **Model Congress.** The profile becomes the district and the member's electoral coalition; the alter ego becomes the committee seat, the leadership relationship and the record of votes the member has to defend.
- **A planning board or council.** The profile becomes the municipality and the application before it; the alter ego becomes the seat, what the ordinance permits it to weigh, and who the member answers to at the next election.

Free to print, adapt and hand to a colleague. If you improve on either of these, please say so through the site.

Rubric

Each part is scored out of 100 and weighted. The weighted total is rounded half up, and the four part scores are shown to the student alongside it, so the grade can be explained six weeks later without reconstructing it.

Lateness is taken as a flat deduction from the computed total, not from a part score, and taken once.