

University of South Florida  
 ENV 4417  
 Water Quality and Treatment  
 Student Writing Assessment Rubric (rev. October 2015)

The first five categories or traits included in this rubric are five of the seven suggested as essential elements of the “Written Language Skills” competency under USF’s “Foundations of Knowledge and Learning Core Curriculum” (also known as the General Education or Gen Ed curriculum). The final three categories or traits were included as other components of high-quality writing.

	<b>5. Exceptional (A+)</b>	<b>4. Very Good (A-/B+)</b>	<b>3. Good (B-)</b>	<b>2. Fair (C/C-)</b>	<b>1. Poor (D)</b>	<b>0. Unacceptable (F)</b>
<b>1. Appropriate consideration of audience</b>	The paper goes above and beyond the stated requirements or parameters, but does so without diverging from the main topic. The writer exhibits a keen or insightful awareness of the audience’s needs and expectations.	The paper addresses all of the stated requirements or parameters of the assignment. The writer exhibits a proper awareness of the audience’s needs and expectations.	The paper addresses most of the stated requirements or parameters of the assignment. The writer generally exhibits awareness of the audience’s needs and expectations, but this may be inconsistent throughout the paper. At times the paper may “go off on a tangent” or include extraneous topics.	The paper fails to address at least some critical requirements or parameters of the assignment, perhaps addressing a topic or question other than that which was assigned. The writer often does not meet the needs and expectations of the audience. The paper frequently digresses to extraneous topics.	The writer shifts between multiple and/or inappropriate audiences because of a lack of reader awareness. The paper is off-topic and/or does not meet the assignment.	The writer exhibits a lack of respect to the reading audience, perhaps through the use of disrespectful and/or harsh personal comments. The paper has little or nothing to do with the given assignment.
<b>2. Systematic organization</b>	Opening of paper clearly and effectively introduces the main idea of the paper. Coherence devices (transitional words, phrases, sentences) are present, appropriate, and enhance the reader’s understanding. Ideas are organized in a meaningful way and are tightly stitched together. Paragraphs logically and coherently build upon each other. The closing synthesizes ideas from throughout the paper to produce a coherent, convincing, effective argument.	Opening of the paper clearly introduces main idea of the paper. Coherence devices are present and are used appropriately. Paragraphs generally build upon each other in a logical order. The closing is effective but is based principally on a re-statement of ideas already presented, rather than a synthesis of ideas.	Opening is present but the main idea of the paper is not fully clear. Transitional words, phrases, or sentences are generally present. Order of paragraphs is usually, but not always, logical; paragraphs may lack unity. Closing is present, but is likely to merely re-state points from throughout the paper, and does not otherwise strengthen the main idea.	Opening is present but the main idea is unclear. Transitional words, phrases, and sentences are not used effectively. Paragraphs lack unity or do not follow in a logical order. Closing is present but is not effective at supporting the paper’s main idea.	Opening is not present and/or the opening lacks a main idea. Transitional words, phrases, or sentences are absent or inappropriate. Order of paragraphs is confusing and/or does not support paper’s main idea. Paper may resemble “free association.” Closing is not present or does not support the paper’s main idea.	The paper has no main idea or purpose. The paper lacks any sense of organization. Order of paragraphs or ideas appears random.

	<b>5. Exceptional (A+)</b>	<b>4. Very Good (A-/B+)</b>	<b>3. Good (B-)</b>	<b>2. Fair (C/C-)</b>	<b>1. Poor (D)</b>	<b>0. Unacceptable (F)</b>
<b>3. Demonstration of reasoning skills</b>	Exhibits an analysis or logical progression of sophisticated ideas that supports the focus of the paper. Makes new or significant insights. Identifies and insightfully analyzes relevant information. Develops ideas cogently, organizes them logically, and connects them with clear transitions.	Exhibits an analysis or logical progression of ideas that supports the focus of the paper. Errors in logic or understanding are rare or absent. Conclusions or inferences follow logically from evidence provided. Identifies most or all important information, and analyzes it in a generally thoughtful way. Develops ideas clearly, organizes them logically, and connects them with appropriate transitions.	The progression of ideas is generally sound, but is in some places interrupted by contradictions or errors in logic or understanding. Conclusions or inferences usually, but not always, follow logically from evidence provided. Identifies and analyzes most important information. Analysis is present but may miss one or more key elements. Develops and organizes ideas satisfactorily, but may not connect them with transitions.	Progression of ideas is noticeably interrupted by contradictions or by errors in logic or understanding. Conclusions or inferences frequently do not follow logically from evidence provided. Does not sufficiently identify or analyze the most important information, although some analysis may be present. Devotes too much space to analyzing tangential or irrelevant issues. Limited in the logical development and organization of ideas.	Little or no progression of ideas is exhibited, and the demonstrated progression of ideas is marked by frequent contradictions or errors in logic and understanding. Conclusions or inferences are not supported by the evidence provided. Does not present a logical analysis, but may instead present the writer's pre-conceived views on the subject without adequate substantiation. Does not develop ideas and/or is disorganized.	Ideas presented are unrelated to the topic and/or represent no logical progression. The paper may appear to reflect the writer's "stream of consciousness." Provides little evidence of the ability to understand, construct, or analyze information.
<b>4. Effective use of detail</b>	All points are supported by a sufficient number of details. Details help to develop each element of the text, and to provide supporting evidence, examples, or statements necessary to explain effectively. Seamlessly incorporates and explains data, evidence, and/or visuals (e.g., graphs or tables).	All points are developed, but some may need additional details. Details support the elements of the text with sufficient clarity, depth, and accuracy. Incorporates and examines data, evidence, and/or visuals (e.g., graphs or tables).	Additional details are needed to develop some points. Details are related to the elements of the text, but inconsistently support those elements with sufficient clarity, depth, or accuracy. Incorporates data, evidence, or visuals, but may require additional explanation of those elements.	Additional details are needed to develop most points. Details which are provided are only loosely related to the elements of the text, and may be lacking in clarity, depth, and/or accuracy. Little use of data, evidence, or visuals.	Virtually no details are present. The details which are provided do not develop the elements of the text.	Paper merely presents an opinion that is not substantiated. No evidence is provided to substantiate claims. Paper may lack a discernible argument or viewpoint.
<b>5. Language use appropriate to discipline and audience</b>	The writing is clear and language use is precise. The paper demonstrates an ease in using discourse and language appropriate for the particular discipline and/or genre. Selects sophisticated word choice and masters accurate use of vocabulary of the field. Tone is mature, consistent, and suitable for topic and audience. Uses specialized terms accurately and consistently.	The paper mostly uses discourse and language appropriate for the particular discipline and/or genre. Demonstrates good use of appropriate word choice and vocabulary of the field. Tone and vocabulary level are usually appropriate. Specialized terms are used, usually correctly and consistently.	The paper sometimes uses discourse and language appropriate for the particular discipline and/or genre. Attempts and sometimes succeeds to use vocabulary specific to the field. Vocabulary or sentence construction are generally accurate but may be simplistic. Tone may have some inconsistencies in tense and/or person and may lapse at times to colloquial discourse. Specialized terms are used, but superficially.	The paper uses minimal discourse or language appropriate to the particular discipline and/or genre. Inconsistently uses vocabulary of the field, including some inappropriate word choices. Words are used incorrectly or inappropriately in many places. Specialized terms are used inappropriately or out of context.	Paper's use of discourse or language appropriate to the discipline and/or genre is weak. Does not use appropriate vocabulary for the field. Paper consists largely of slang, colloquialism, or other vocabulary inappropriate to the assignment.	Paper demonstrates no awareness of the language, style, discourse, or conventions of the field.

	<b>5. Exceptional (A+)</b>	<b>4. Very Good (A-/B+)</b>	<b>3. Good (B-)</b>	<b>2. Fair (C/C-)</b>	<b>1. Poor (D)</b>	<b>0. Unacceptable (F)</b>
<b>6. Sentence structure, grammar, spelling, and mechanics</b>	Sentences are varied and convincing. Transitional words, phrases, sentences and paragraphs (coherence devices) smoothly connect the paper's elements, ideas and/or details, allowing the reader to follow the writer's points effortlessly. Sentences are grammatically and mechanically correct, with no discernible errors.	Sentences are generally varied and convincing but may have minor construction errors intermingled. Coherence devices are present through most of the paper and assist the reader's understanding. Infrequent sentence-level errors in grammar, spelling, or mechanics. One or two patterns of error may be present. Errors do not impede comprehension.	Sentences are not always varied or convincing, and/or may have construction errors. Coherence devices appear throughout the paper, but additional and appropriate connectors would enhance the flow. May contain several consistent patterns of errors in grammar, spelling, or mechanics, but these usually do not impede comprehension.	Sentence construction shows little variation, and contains frequent errors which distract the reader and/or detract from meaning. Tone has inconsistencies in both tense and person. On occasion there are lapses into colloquial vernacular. Many sentences exhibit grammatical, spelling, and/or mechanical errors, sometimes obstructing meaning, frequent enough to distract the reader.	Sentence construction is overly simplistic and/or construction errors obscure the writer's meaning. Paper is dominated by constructions or language patterns inappropriate for the assignment. Words are frequently used incorrectly, obscuring meaning. Most sentences exhibit grammatical, spelling, and/or mechanical errors. Reader must expend significant additional effort to discern meaning.	Meaning is difficult or impossible to discern because of ubiquitous errors in word use, sentence construction, grammar, and/or spelling.
<b>7. Use of required style or format</b>	Demonstrates accurate ability to use discipline-specific style (e.g., APA, MLA, etc.). Correctly formats in-text citations and references. Includes all elements or sections required and follows guidelines for organization. Font, punctuation, section headers, and other elements are all used correctly.	Demonstrates competence in following discipline-specific style (e.g., APA, MLA, etc.). Citations and references mostly adhere to required format. Most required sections or elements are present and in proper locations. Font, punctuation, section headers, etc., mostly adhere to required format.	Demonstrates acceptable ability to follow discipline-specific style. Citations and references attempt to follow requirements but may contain some errors. Required sections or elements are mostly present, but may not be organized properly. May fail to use required fonts, punctuation, section headers, or similar.	Makes errors in using discipline-specific style guide for documentation. Errors may include one or more of the following: citations and references do not adhere to required format; one or more required sections or elements are absent; paper does not adhere to proper guidelines for font, punctuation, section headers, or other mechanics.	Paper contains multiple deficiencies in following specific style, including at least two of the following: citations and references do not adhere to required format; one or more required sections or elements are absent; paper does not adhere to proper guidelines for font, punctuation, section headers, or other mechanics.	Does not adhere to any recognizable format or style.

	<b>5. Exceptional (A+)</b>	<b>4. Very Good (A-/B+)</b>	<b>3. Good (B-)</b>	<b>2. Fair (C/C-)</b>	<b>1. Poor (D)</b>	<b>0. Unacceptable (F)</b>
<b>8. Proper use of references and citations</b>	Appropriate references are provided for all claims or statements that warrant citation. Cites sources accurately and consistently, and provides an appropriate and error-free bibliography or list of works cited, formatted in the proper style. In-text citations match reference list. Uses the most appropriate references to support claims or provide evidence. Exhibits a keen or particularly thorough awareness of significant sources of information relevant to the topic at hand.	Appropriate references are provided for nearly all claims or statements that warrant citation. Cites sources accurately and consistently, and provides a bibliography, references, or list of works cited which may contain some errors or flaws. In-text citations and reference list match closely but not exactly. Generally uses appropriate references to support claims or provide evidence. Exhibits a strong awareness of sources of information relevant to the topic.	Appropriate references are provided for most claims or statements that warrant citation. Cites sources but sometimes inaccurately. May neglect to cite some sources altogether, but those cited are done consistent to the required style. In-text citations and reference list may fail to match in some places. References used to support claims or provide evidence are usually, but not always, appropriate. Exhibits a partial awareness of sources of information relevant to the topic.	Appropriate references are missing for a number of claims or statements that warrant citation. References are provided but may be inaccurate, cited inappropriately, or formatted incorrectly in the reference list. In-text citations and reference list may fail to match in several places. References used to support claims or provide evidence are often not appropriate. Exhibits some significant gaps in awareness of sources of information relevant to the topic.	Paper borders on plagiarism because of its lack of proper reference to sources of information. Few citations are provided, and these are likely to be used inappropriately and/or formatted incorrectly in the reference list. Exhibits little or no awareness of appropriate sources of information relevant to the paper assignment.	No in-text citations are utilized, and/or no reference list is provided. Paper may plagiarize via verbatim reproduction of another source without attribution.

**Resources used in constructing this rubric:**

(University of South Florida) CLAQWA Online Building Your Thinking and Writing Skills. Retrieved from <http://uefweb2.edu/assessment/CLAQWA/online/cross/crossdisciplinary.htm> on 2/3/2009.

(Northeast Community College) Northeast Community College Writing Rubric. Retrieved from [www.northeast.edu/AN/Assessment/...Rubrics/Writing\\_Rubric.pdf](http://www.northeast.edu/AN/Assessment/...Rubrics/Writing_Rubric.pdf) on 9/5/2009.

(Bridgewater State College) Core Curriculum Writing Assessment Rubric of Bridgewater State College (August 2007). Retrieved from [www.bridgew.edu/assessmentguidebook/rubrics.cfm](http://www.bridgew.edu/assessmentguidebook/rubrics.cfm) on 9/5/2009.

(Florida Atlantic University) FAU Writing Across the Curriculum Student Writing Assessment Rubric: 4-Point Primary Traits. Retrieved from [www.fau.edu/WAC/assessment/docs/Assessment\\_Rubric.doc](http://www.fau.edu/WAC/assessment/docs/Assessment_Rubric.doc) on 9/2/2009.

CONNECT Writing Outcomes and Rubric. Retrieved from <http://www.connectsemass.org/writing/rubric.htm> on 9/2/2009.

(University of Central Florida) Rubric for Holistic Scoring of Analysis of an Argument. Retrieved from [http://pegasus.cc.ucf.edu/~uwc/Faculty\\_Resources/fac\\_assessing\\_writing\\_pages/fac\\_rubric\\_analysis.htm](http://pegasus.cc.ucf.edu/~uwc/Faculty_Resources/fac_assessing_writing_pages/fac_rubric_analysis.htm) on 9/14/09.

(Auburn-Montgomery) Writing Assessment Rubric and Faculty Rating Submission Template. Retrieved from [http://www.aum.edu/uploadedFiles/Academics/Writing\\_for\\_Success/WAC%20Rubric%20Template.pdf](http://www.aum.edu/uploadedFiles/Academics/Writing_for_Success/WAC%20Rubric%20Template.pdf) on 9/14/09.