

Student Writing Assessment Rubric (rev. March 2018)

The first seven categories or traits included in this rubric are based on those 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.

	5. Exceptional (A+)	4. Very Good (A-/B+)	3. Good (B-)	2. Fair (C/C-)	1. Poor (D)	0. Unacceptable (F)
1. Appropriate consideration of audience	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 succeeds at addressing the question posed.	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 mostly succeeds at addressing the question posed.	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, and only partially succeeds at addressing the question posed.	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. It does not successfully address the question posed.	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. It is not apparent what question the paper aims to address.
2. Systematic organization	Opening of paper clearly and effectively introduces the main idea of the paper. Paper adheres to an overall structure that is clear and facilitates the paper’s main idea. Coherence devices (transitional words, phrases, sentences) are present and 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. 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. Paper adheres to an overall structure that is clear and facilitates the paper’s main idea. 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. Overall structure of paper may not be fully clear or may not fully support the paper’s main idea. 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. Overall structure of paper is unclear or ideas appear in an order that does not facilitate the paper’s main idea. 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. Overall structure of the paper is absent or detracts from the paper’s 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.

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3. Demonstration of reasoning skills	Exhibits an analysis or logical progression of sophisticated ideas that supports the focus of the paper and thoroughly answers the question posed. Makes new or significant insights.	Exhibits an analysis or logical progression of ideas that supports the focus of the paper and answers the question posed. Errors in logic are rare or absent. Conclusions or inferences follow logically from evidence provided.	The progression of ideas is generally sound, but is in some places interrupted by contradictions or errors in logic. Conclusions or inferences usually, but not always, follow logically from evidence provided.	Progression of ideas is noticeably interrupted by contradictions or by errors in logic. Conclusions or inferences frequently do not follow logically from evidence provided.	Little or no progression of ideas is exhibited, and the demonstrated progression of ideas is marked by frequent contradictions or errors in logic. Conclusions or inferences are not supported by the evidence provided.	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."
4. Analysis and arguments	Identifies and insightfully analyzes scientific issues relevant to the paper's purpose. Develops ideas cogently, organizes them logically, and connects them with clear transitions. Analysis is insightful, supports the main point of the paper, and fully addresses the question posed. Conclusions and recommendations are fully supported.	Identifies most or all scientific issues relevant to the paper's purpose, and analyzes them in a generally thoughtful way. Develops ideas clearly, organizes them logically, and connects them with appropriate transitions. Analysis supports the main point of the paper and addresses the question posed. Conclusions and recommendations are sufficiently supported.	Identifies and analyzes most scientific issues relevant to the paper's purpose. Analysis is present but may miss one or more key elements. Develops and organizes ideas satisfactorily, but may not connect them with transitions. Analysis generally supports the main point of the paper and partially addresses the question posed. Conclusions and recommendations are partially supported.	Does not sufficiently identify or analyze the scientific issues most important to the paper's purpose, although some analysis may be present. Devotes too much space to analyzing tangential or irrelevant issues. Limited in the logical development of ideas. Offers support of little relevance or value in terms of supporting the paper's main idea. Conclusions and recommendations lack necessary support.	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. Provides little, if any, relevant or reasonable support for the paper's main idea. Conclusions and recommendations may be stated but are not supported by facts or analysis.	Provides little evidence of the ability to understand or analyze scientific issues.
5. Effective use of detail	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 or persuade effectively.	All points are developed, but some may need additional details. Details support the elements of the text with sufficient clarity, depth, and accuracy.	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.	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.	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.
6. Compelling treatment of evidence	Seamlessly incorporates and explains the accuracy and relevance of data, evidence, and/or visuals (e.g., graphs or tables). Offers support or evidence from a variety of sources. Analysis of evidence convincingly supports the paper's main idea and is used convincingly to answer the question posed.	Incorporates and examines data, evidence, and/or visuals (e.g., graphs or tables). Offers support from more than one source. Treatment of evidence generally supports the main idea of the paper and is used to answer the question posed.	Incorporates data, evidence, or visuals, but may require additional explanation of those elements. Sources of evidence are acceptable but may not be the most authoritative or compelling. Treatment of evidence at least partially supports the paper's main idea and partially addresses the question posed.	Little use of data, evidence, or visuals. States an argument or viewpoint, but with little reflection on facts or data. Sources of evidence may be questionable. Treatment of evidence is not effective or convincing at promoting the paper's main idea, nor for answering the question posed.	The writer states an argument or viewpoint, but offers little or no use of evidence or supporting data or facts. Evidence offered may be inappropriate to substantiate the claims attributed to it. Sources of evidence are not appropriate.	No evidence is provided to substantiate claims. Paper may lack a discernible argument or viewpoint.

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7. Language use appropriate to discipline and audience	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.
8. Sentence structure, grammar, spelling, and mechanics	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. Constructions or language patterns are 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.
9. Use of required style or format	Demonstrates accurate ability to use journal-specific style. Correctly formats in-text citations and references. Includes all elements or sections required and follows guidelines for organization. Font, punctuation, section headers, captions, and other elements are all used correctly.	Demonstrates competence in following journal-specific style. Citations and references mostly adhere to required format. Most required sections or elements are present and in proper locations. Font, punctuation, section headers, captions, etc., mostly adhere to required format.	Demonstrates acceptable ability to follow journal-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, captions, or similar.	Makes errors in using journal-specific style. Errors may include: 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, captions, 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, captions, or other mechanics.	Does not adhere to any recognizable format or style.

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10. Proper use of references and citations	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 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 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 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 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 on 9/14/09.