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Writing Rubric as of May 13, 2010

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Scoring Guide for Writing at Illinois Wesleyan University
Revised 13 May 2010

This guide sets out several dimensions of writing that faculty agree describe “good writing” and that students must develop in order to succeed at writing in their academic work. Academic work includes but is not limited to such activities as argumentation; observation; interpretation; developing proofs, theorems, and case statements; model building; analysis; and creative projects. Faculty in various disciplines are invited to *adapt* this scoring guide to fit the contexts of their disciplines, the courses they teach, and the assignments that they present in those courses.

Each dimension identified below is accompanied by descriptors for a range of performance exhibited in actual student work.

1. Writer recognizes from readings, experience, data, or observation a problem, question, or issue to address.

Emerging		Developing		Mastering	
1	2	3	4	5	6
Does not identify a problem, question, or issue or identifies an inappropriate or insignificant problem, question, or issue. May be confused or represent the problem, question, or issue inaccurately. Writer limits the task to the simplest conception of the task as presented in the assignment.		Identifies a problem, question, or issue and presents it clearly, if simply. Identifies the significance of the topic and the paper’s purpose. May recognize some of the nuances, but does so inconsistently. Writer’s perspective on the issue is clear, though it may be incomplete.		Writer chooses a challenging task. Identifies the main problem, question, or issue, as well as embedded or implicit ones; and identifies them clearly, addressing their relationships to each other. Recognizes the nuances of the problem, question, or issue. Project is coherent and properly limited or circumscribed. Writer fully acknowledges own perspective and takes account of it in developing a complex, sophisticated position that is important to the work.	

2. Writer locates question, problem, or issue in an appropriate context

Emerging		Developing		Mastering	
1	2	3	4	5	6
<p>Writer considers issue, problem, or question in isolation from context(s) or considers context only briefly and inadequately. Topic seems to be considered independent of surrounding contexts.</p>		<p>Writer applies acquired knowledge to a specific problem, question, or issue. Writer attempts to account for events, observations, etc, and their consequences and implications. Writer attempts to account for origins of continuing phenomena. Writer makes connections to writer’s existing knowledge as well as to common knowledge and knowledge gained from source materials.</p>		<p>Writer demonstrates complex sensitivity to context(s) of issue, problem, or question. Important constructs and complex concepts are well articulated. Writer addresses an appropriate variety of contexts: historical, scientific, technological, aesthetic, personal, etc. Writer understands tensions among context(s) and frames project to accommodate those tensions.</p>	

3. Writer develops an organization that accommodates the purpose and audience for the paper.

Emerging		Developing		Mastering	
1	2	3	4	5	6
<p>Text seems to develop at random or may be marked by repetition or redundancy. Information may be presented without an apparent organizing principle, or the organizing principle may work against the reader’s needs.</p>		<p>Writer uses clear logic in structure of argument, building case step by step. Structure of project is clear though perhaps mechanical. Paper demonstrates overall unity and coherence. Focus of each paragraph is relatively discrete, and transitions between paragraphs are almost uniformly present. Organization promotes writer’s ability to communicate the significance of the project. Writer relies on coherent reasoning in developing the work.</p>		<p>Writer develops a consistent organization that grows out of the opportunities, demands, and limitations of the topic. Verbal and conceptual links between paragraphs and sections of the project are artful. Organization supports complex exploration of problem, question, or issue and incorporation of wide-ranging sets of information.</p>	

4. Writer develops a body of evidence that supports the project’s purpose and accommodates its audience’s needs.

Emerging		Developing		Mastering	
1	2	3	4	5	6
<p>Choices of information and evidence seem inappropriate to the task, purpose, and audience. Writer displays little logic or reason in the work and fails to recognize any weaknesses or limitations in it.</p>		<p>Overall, information and evidence seem appropriate to the task, but there may be some inconsistency. Writer provides accurate and consistent interpretations of information. Writer uses a variety of information, including well-chosen quotes, data, primary and secondary materials, where applicable. Writer develops evidence consistently with the internal logic of the project.</p>		<p>Writer has sought widely for information and has made appropriate choices of information and evidence that both support the writer’s perspective and help the audience understand the work. Writer mines difficult sources well, and subtly develops a body of evidence. The project displays and emerging appreciation for what constitutes good scholarship. The writer evaluates and analyzes evidence, considering and addressing its limitations.</p>	

5. Writer is clearly intellectually or imaginatively engaged with the project

Emerging		Developing		Mastering	
1	2	3	4	5	6
<p>Writer demonstrates little engagement with the work. The treatment remains shallow, over-simplified, and limited in focus and usefulness. Treatment is over-simplified</p>		<p>Writer displays ambition in engaging the task, in places pushing her treatment to greater depth and complexity, approaching it with a spirit of exploration, or expanding the focus as needed in order to do the task justice. Treatment is complex in some parts but not in others, or the level of complexity throughout is adequate but in need of development.</p>		<p>Student is fully engaged in the work, pushing to achieve full depth and complexity, fully exploring and where necessary expanding the boundaries of the task. Treatment is complex, sophisticated, nuanced. Writer grapples with significant issues.</p>	

6. Writer follows citation conventions appropriate to the project.

Emerging		Developing		Mastering	
1	2	3	4	5	6
Student fails to acknowledge intellectual debt and does not cite sources, or cites them inconsistently, inadequately, or incorrectly.		Writer engages with sources, using outside materials ethically, acknowledging intellectual debts, and citing sources adequately.		Writer's engagement with outside knowledge is full, complex, and evident in accurate acknowledgement and citation. Writer smoothly integrates sources into text, making sophisticated use of quotation, paraphrase, summary, etc, as needed.	

7. Writer follows language conventions and conveys style appropriate to the rhetorical situation.

Emerging		Developing		Mastering	
1	2	3	4	5	6
Student may misrepresent evidence, information, or other source material. Control of style and syntax is weak or inconsistent. Errors of grammar and mechanics are distracting or confusing to the reader.		Writer demonstrates clear control of appropriate levels of discourse and of context. Control of language conventions is secure, though writer may make some errors that do not detract from the paper's meaning. The writing is well formed and follows the conventions of Standard American English.		Writer reaches for a more sophisticated level of diction, syntax, semantics, and rhythm. Language elegantly and/or energetically conveys the main idea and rhetorical strategy of the essay.	

8. Audience

Emerging		Developing		Mastering	
1	2	3	4	5	6
Writer seems unaware of perspectives other than her own or may not make an effort to address them seriously. Work may be incompatible with the audience, failing to connect with or alienating reader.		Essay accommodates a range of readers. Writer takes steps to engage readers whose perspectives may be in conflict with the writer's. Writer evokes reader's interest in the project.		Writer fully engages with alternative perspectives and with the needs of readers whose points of view may differ with the writer's. Project teaches reader something valuable. Writer seems to engage reader in conversation about topic. Writer takes time to explain or elucidate new or difficult issues.	

9. Writer considers conclusions, implications, and consequences that flow from the paper.

Emerging		Developing		Mastering	
1	2	3	4	5	6
Conclusion may be missing, unclear, or insufficiently connected to the rest of the essay.		Conclusion is clear and provides closure to essay. Conclusion is thoughtful and honest, and it is connected to the line of reasoning developed in the essay. Conclusion brings the “So what?” question to a resolution.		Conclusion provides closure to the essay, and at the same time extends the essay to a natural conclusion or establishes an outward movement, raising possibilities for further consideration. Writer fully considers implications and consequences, as appropriate to task and content.	

10. Writer’s essay responds to the objectives and expectations of the assignment

Emerging		Developing		Mastering	
1	2	3	4	5	6
Writer fails to address or only addresses tangentially the objectives, requirements, expectations, and topic(s) of the assignment.		Writer addresses some of the objectives and requirements of the assignment. The focus of the paper is mostly on the assigned topic(s), but may cover unrelated or loosely related topics.		Writer fulfills all the objectives, requirements, and expectations of the assignment. The essay concentrates appropriately on the assigned topic(s), or, if the topic was the student’s choice, that topic was appropriate to the general subject area of the assignment.	

11. Holistic Impression

Emerging		Developing		Mastering	
1	2	3	4	5	6