University Expository Writing Rubric – Explanation of Traits

Updated February 3, 2011

PURPOSE

• Does the writer address the assignment and write with a purpose that is clear to the reader?
• Is there an identifiable thesis?
• Does the writer understand and meet the audience's expectations?

SYNTHESIS

• Is the paper organized both locally (within paragraphs) and globally (as a whole)?
• Does the organizational strategy best express the purpose?
• Does the writer make connections between (un)related ideas, texts, perspectives, and experiences to construct a cohesive depiction of the topic?

SUPPORT

• Is the thesis fully supported with relevant evidence or does the essay rely on broad and general assertions?
• Is repetition mistaken for development?
• Are there errors in logic?

STYLE

• Does the writer make effective stylistic choices in terms of paragraphing, sentence structure, word choice, tone, introductions, conclusions, etc?

MECHANICS

• Is the essay free of errors - spelling, punctuation, grammar - that consistently impede or even distort meaning?
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Trait</th>
<th>Poor/No Attainment Score =0</th>
<th>Minimal Attainment Score =1</th>
<th>Average Attainment Score =2</th>
<th>Good Attainment Score = 3</th>
<th>Superior Attainment Score =4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Purpose:</strong></td>
<td>Disregards assignment. No discernible focus/thesis. Unaware of audience’s expectations.</td>
<td>Seems aware of the assignment’s goals, but does not consistently meet them. Focus is mentioned, but shifts frequently, making the purpose unclear. Possible inappropriate shifts in audience.</td>
<td>Consistent effort to address assignment. Thesis/focus is generally clear, may be lost at times. Writes with an eye to audience, but some inconsistencies are evident.</td>
<td>The assignment is addressed. Thesis/focus is identifiable throughout the essay, but occasionally strays off topic. Seeks aware of the audience’s expectations and attempts to cater the prose accordingly.</td>
<td>Assignment’s goals are shared by the writer, though the writer does not seem confined by them. Fully controls thesis throughout the essay and consistently meets the audience’s expectations.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Synthesis:</strong></td>
<td>No attempt to synthesize texts/ideas; organization feels random making cohesion impossible.</td>
<td>Preliminary attempts to synthesize texts/ideas; discussion feels unorganized at times. Yet, some paragraphs/sections hold together.</td>
<td>Some attempts to synthesize complex texts/ideas, but cannot sustain the effort. Global organization is clear, but local organization may stray.</td>
<td>Synthesizes texts/ideas with some expertise and begins to formulate a cohesive look at the topic, but lacks some sophistication. Some missteps with organization.</td>
<td>Synthesizes texts/ideas with expertise and formulates a sophisticated, complex discussion of the topic. Organization feels deliberate and complements the topic.</td>
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<td><strong>Support:</strong></td>
<td>Assertions and/or conclusions are difficult to locate and are unsupported. Needless repetition takes the place of development.</td>
<td>Assertions and/or conclusions are identifiable, but are not supported by evidence. Some repetition persists and makes reading difficult at times.</td>
<td>Assertions and/or conclusions are occasionally supported by evidence. Some generalities persist.</td>
<td>Clear assertions/conclusions are made; evidence is usually used effectively, but some errors in logic are detectable. Development aided by the inclusion of some key details.</td>
<td>Makes fully developed assertions and/or draws logical conclusions that are supported by the evidence. Consistently includes details that point to the complex nature of the topic.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Style:</strong></td>
<td>Simple sentences and word choice; paragraphs break randomly and may lack topic sentences.</td>
<td>Attempts at complex sentences/ language and deliberate paragraph breaks, but awkward moments persist.</td>
<td>Demonstrates some adeptness when making stylistic choices, but style lacks consistency and refinement.</td>
<td>Generally writes with complex sentence structure and language; evidence of stylistic complexity.</td>
<td>Evidence of consistent, deliberate, and refined stylistic presence on the page.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Mechanics:</strong></td>
<td>Pervasive errors distort meaning and make reading difficult.</td>
<td>Some errors are significant and detract from the meaning. Piece requires closer editing.</td>
<td>Some errors impede reading but the content is generally clear.</td>
<td>Minor errors are present, but not too distracting. Content is clear.</td>
<td>The writing is near perfect with almost no errors.</td>
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