

Course/Title: _____ Date: _____

Writer: _____ Assessor: _____

Written Communication Rubric

Instructions: Use this form for assessing (for improvement) or evaluating (for a grade) content, organization, and critical thinking quality of written work or for tasks such as the comprehensive exam. Provide constructive comments to the writer at the bottom, especially if the purpose is to assess for improvement. It is best to read the following pages carefully for explanations and examples for ratings of 1 through 5 before using this form.

Ratings: 1 2 3 4 5 (see following pages for details)

Ratings

INTRODUCTION: -----

- Involvement to general topic; orientation, involvement of readers
- Statement of purpose & thesis proposition or hypothesis

LITERATURE REVIEW: -----

- Achievement of focus in review of supporting & opposing literature
- Use of quality citations for the purpose

KNOWLEDGE BASE: -----

- Demonstration of breadth of relevant knowledge (e.g., references)
- Demonstration of depth of relevant knowledge (e.g., examples, applications)

INTEGRATION: -----

- Overall depth of analysis, using relevant evidence and critical thinking
- Ability to consistently tie evidence and reasoning to premise

ORGANIZATION: -----

- Use of headings to show logic of sequencing of ideas and argumentation
- Use of transition statements to guide readers to next topic or section

SUMMARIZATION: -----

- Clarity and relevance of section summaries to help readers “track”
- Focus of final conclusions on main purpose & thesis or hypothesis

PROFESSIONALISM: -----

- Professional “look” achieved by using APA style conventions
- Quality of composition “mechanics” (grammar, punctuation, word usage)
- Quality of composition techniques (examples, analogies, models, perspective)

AVERAGE SCORE: -----

Assessor’s Comments (e.g., main strengths and suggestions for improvement):

Description of the 5 Levels (1 through 5) in the Written Communication Rubric

1. **Egocentric Writer**

- a. Focus on facts or opinions of personal interest fails to involve readers.
- b. Unaware of the need for assessment; may consider feedback as critical evaluation of themselves.
- c. Assumes the facts speak for themselves and that personal opinion is a valid basis for conclusions.
- d. Unaware of readers' needs for organizing features such as topic sentences, transitions, and headers.
- e. Exhibits difficulties with composition mechanics such as grammar, punctuation, and word usage.

2. **Paraphraser**

- a. Assumption that the purpose of writing is mainly summarization; involves only readers interested in an overview of some specific referenced sources.
- b. Aware of need for evaluative feedback from an expert to validate accuracy of paraphrasing; not aware of potential of feedback to improve thinking.
- c. Assumes published material to be generally valid; draws conclusions on the basis of what appears to be most commonly agreed.
- d. Provides some organizing features because these are prescribed by composition guides or instructors.
- e. Has some problems with grammar, punctuation, and word usage; sometimes remembers to assess for these types of inaccuracies.

3. **Analytic Writer**

- a. Systematically involves readers in an analysis of the evidence and logic related to the knowledge at hand.
- b. Does some self-assessment and sometimes requests external assessment in order to improve the thinking quality behind writing.
- c. Draws conclusions on the basis of careful analysis of the internal validity of evidence for a position.
- d. Recognizes readers' needs for organizing features and transitions and competently provides them in most cases.
- e. Displays solid composition skills; word usage may be overly abstract at times.

4. **Creative Communicator**

- a. Very flexible writer with several strong styles; usually achieves interesting results.
- b. Has strong self-assessment skills; requests external feedback from peers known to have relevant expertise; frequently compares own work with that of published authors.
- c. Always attentive to internal validity of arguments; often able to use external validity perspectives to improve the generalizability of conclusions.
- d. Uses organizing features and transitions systematically; fully aware of readers' needs.
- e. Composition techniques are usually inventive and helpful to readers.

5. **Published Author**

- a. Highly intriguing to readers because of the consistent, excellent quality of inferences and creativity.
- b. Submits work to experts for peer review with confidence in its creative value for furthering knowledge.
- c. Draws conclusions on the basis of a comprehensive analysis of internal and external validity of all ideas, examples, evidence, logic, and applications.
- d. Provides organizing features and transitions that are almost "transparent" for readers.
- e. Creatively uses composition techniques to provide an almost "playful" environment for readers.

Summary Statements for the 5 Levels:

The five “levels” indicate general patterns of awareness and skills related to the ability to communicate through writing.

1. Egocentric Writer

Individuals at this level tend to think within their own frame of reference but may be unaware of more comprehensive or divergent ways of addressing a topic they are writing about. They struggle with the mechanics of composition and need additional practice and guidance before they are ready to consider reader needs.

2. Paraphrasers

At this level the tendency is to pay close attention to ideas of others, especially in published formats and the internet, with the assumption that knowledge exists as expert statements in these sources. Self-assessment is somewhat difficult until the writer gains additional insights about how to construct knowledge for their own purposes. Feedback tends to feel personally critical because they are not yet fully aware that writing is a performance skill for communicating one’s ideas.

3. Analytic Writer

Analysis is the fourth level (above Knowledge, Comprehension, and Application) in Bloom’s taxonomy of cognitive learning. Writers at this level exhibit awareness of the importance of critical examination of ideas, examples, processes, research evidence, theories, models and perspectives to help with drawing relevant conclusions about a position, hypothesis, or thesis proposition. The writer at this level recognizes that knowledge results from careful attention to detail, while also keeping in mind one’s purpose and audience.

4. Creative Communicator

Writers at this level have learned to focus on improvement through varied kinds of assessment. They have developed a creative ability to synthesize in their writing in order to communicate interesting insights and discoveries gained from careful analysis and thinking. They have an in-depth grasp of how analogy, metaphors, and other composition techniques can raise the level of knowledge in their writing. Writers at this level and above will constantly examine excellent examples of writing as models of what can be accomplished and how.

5. Published Author

This is a level achieved by only some professionals. It involves attaining ability to work from varied perspectives, to predict quite accurately the knowledge needs and interests of audiences, and to have great expertise with composition techniques. Their work tends to show playfulness with language, awareness of universal human experiences, ability to handle paradoxes and inconsistencies, and they are confident that expert evaluators, such as peer reviewers for journals, will find their writing valuable enough for publication. These authors desire their knowledge be tested and challenged by the best minds in the world.

Definitions Used:

<i>Assessment</i>	Feedback for improvement; can be self, peer, instructor, expert, or any other source used to gather insights that will lead to better performance
<i>Composition Mechanics</i>	Grammar, punctuation, and word usage required for effective written communication
<i>Composition Techniques</i>	Use of figures of speech like analogies, metaphors; use of stylistic methods to create desired effects on a reader and to make reading interesting; descriptive techniques, examples, models, and applications are often very helpful for readers
<i>Evaluation</i>	Summative information about the degree to which a standard has been met; grading is evaluative
<i>Egocentric</i>	Refers to taking a personal perspective without awareness of other possible worldviews that can be considered; does not mean selfishness or narcissism
<i>External Validity</i>	It is important to consider evidence or perspectives that are “outside” of one’s own in order to increase the truth or usefulness of what one concludes. For example, it would not be valid to conclude that because a teaching method helps grade school students it will also help college students. It would require research to find out if developmental and context differences create critical differences in learning approach or if variations on the same principle are operating
<i>Internal Validity</i>	This type of validity is seen within a written product. All the elements are consistent with each other. If some evidence is not relevant to the main thesis point being examined, the writing would lack internal validity
<i>Paraphrasing</i>	Accurately stating ideas and meaning of another in one’s own words
<i>Rubric</i>	A broad but realistic measure of performance characteristics
<i>Transfer</i>	Direct use of writing technique in a similar context
<i>Validity</i>	Refers to the truth and usefulness of a method of measurement, a conclusion, or a solution

Elements (“a” to “e”) Incorporated with Each Level of the Written Communication Rubric

Within each of the 5 levels there are descriptive sentences for elements “a” through “e.” The assumption is that all of these descriptors will be approximately true for an individual at that level. In order to use the rubric it is important to take time to fully think through, reflect on, and experiment with the instrument in order to form a clear “gestalt” of each level. The elements in each level, which change in complexity for each level, are as follows:

- (a) *Audience Involvement:* As writers get better they develop techniques that make their material interesting by stimulating improved thinking in readers – and even invite playfulness through language usages and techniques.
- (b) *Awareness of perspectives:* In order to become aware of more perspectives a writer must engage in a great deal of self-assessment, including asking for feedback from those more expert and using the accomplishments of revered writers as models for what can be communicated through writing. The critical thinking skill of identifying assumptions often plays an important role for this element of writing skills.
- (c) *Statement of position:* The management of information and evidence is established largely by clarity and proper scope of the hypothesis or thesis proposition. Related to this is critical thinking about evidence and logic that leads to concise conclusions.
- (d) *Organization:* As a practical matter, writers need to provide readers with “tools” that help them navigate and to quickly perceive the overall layout of the writing product. These tools include use of standard style conventions (e.g., APA manuscript style), use of well-designed paragraphs, visual cues such as headings and spacing, and providing of transition wording to guide readers to changes of topic and to new sections.
- (e) *Composition mechanics and techniques:* Grammar, punctuation, and word usage are expected to be consistently accurate and well chosen. Writing techniques require more skill but add considerable quality and richness to any written product. Some of these are uses of analogies, metaphors, poetic styles, and various kinds of argumentation and logic.