

Student Writing Development

The following rubric articulates the way in which we expect student writing skills to develop throughout the course of their baccalaureate degree. As students progress, the quality of their writing should move from the “basic” and “proficient” levels toward “proficient” and “advanced.” This rubric is meant to provide general guidelines for academic writing. Each major field of study has its own particular sets of conventions, and each course of study may also have course-specific writing requirements that would be used to adjust or expand this rubric.

| Writing outcome | Below Basic | Developing | Proficient | Advanced |
|---------------------------|--|--|---|---|
| Focus | Thesis is unidentifiable or does not respond to the assignment. Essay has no coherent focal point. | Thesis fits the writing assignment, is identifiable but vague, too broad, or unrelated to the essay. Essay is not consistently or adequately linked to the thesis. | Thesis fits the writing assignment, is clear and, expresses a specific point of view. Essay maintains consistent and adequate connection to the thesis. | Thesis fits the writing assignment, is clear, and expresses a specific point of view that is legitimately debatable and insightful. Essay maintains a connection to the thesis with style. |
| Analysis and Organization | Ideas not explained; inadequate or inappropriate evidence; unorganized: no clear relationship between paragraphs or sentences. | Typically explains concepts; over uses or under-analyzes evidence; demonstrates some signs of organization; occasionally includes abrupt or illogical shifts and ineffective sequence of ideas. | Develops concepts coherently within paragraphs effectively-ordered paragraphs and generally links concepts with useful transitions; supports the thesis with credible, analyzed evidence. | Develops concepts with sophistication and creativity, sequences ideas effectively and seamlessly; supports the thesis with well-selected and thoroughly analyzed evidence. |
| Readability and Style | Spelling, syntax, diction, or punctuation errors impede readability; incorrect or omitted citations; tone suggests an absence of audience awareness. | Spelling, syntax, diction, or punctuation errors impede readability or otherwise distract from meaning; generally uses citations correctly; tone is inconsistent or suggests misreading of the audience. | Spelling, syntax, diction, or punctuation errors are few and do not distract from meaning; correctly uses appropriate citations; uses tone appropriate to audience. | Outstanding control of language, including effective diction and sentence variety; superior facility with the conventions of standard written English. Correctly uses appropriate citations; uses tone with sophistication. |