**FYS Writing Rubric**

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| **learning objective** | **level of achievement** |
| initial | emerging | developed | highly developed |
| thesis or research question  | Reader finds it difficult to identify the thesis, hypothesis, or research question. Introduction does not include a recognizable thesis &, consequently, the thesis does not establish the structure & analysis that will follow in the body of the paper. Response may be off topic, show no comprehension of the text, or lack clarity & purpose. | While a thesis, hypothesis, or research question is stated near the beginning of paper, the reader has to work to understand it, it seems to change as the essay proceeds, or the structure of the paper only sometimes supports the thesis. There may be some disjointedness and/or lack of focus; writer may restate an obvious point & take a simplistic view of the topic. | Thesis, hypothesis, or research question is easily identifiable, clearly establishes the boundary of the subject of the paper, & gives the reader a strong idea of what to expect. Thesis governs the paper’s structure, evidence, & analysis; predicts major divisions in the paper’s structure. However, while promising, thesis may be predictable, go too far into generalization, & lack insight and/or originality. | Writer formulates an interesting, insightful/ original—and possibly ambitious—thesis, hypothesis, or research question. Thesis is direct, easily identifiable, & crystal-clear; clearly establishes the boundary of the subject of the paper; gives the reader a clear idea of what to expect; governs the paper’s structure, evidence, & analysis throughout; & predicts major divisions in the paper’s structure. |
| audience awareness | Writer does not focus on target audience’s needs; assumes prior knowledge without giving background or defining terms. Essay is mostly confusing; reader has trouble comprehending the message or argument. | Writer does not consistently focus on target audience needs. Structure, mechanics, & use of terminology often create confusion; reader has to work to comprehend the argument & logical development of the paper. | Writer is mostly aware of & mostly accommodates target audience’s needs. Any confusion in use of terminology, structure, or mechanics is rare (limited to one or two minor instances). For the most part, reader has no trouble comprehending. | Writer is fully aware of the target audience & accommodates readers’ needs throughout; does not assume prior knowledge. Argument & key terms are clear & explicit throughout. Reader finds it easy (and satisfying) to follow along. |
| structure | Organization is haphazard; reader finds it very difficult to follow the argument because thesis is weak or non-existent. Paragraphs generally lack topic sentences, do not clearly build on & follow from one another, & do not work together to create a coherent whole. There are unclear transitions or no transitions between paragraphs. | Weakness in analytical thinking or a lack of development of key ideas; as a result, some paragraphs do not appear to follow logically from previous ones. Writer tends to wander from point to point; ideas may be repeated throughout the paper instead of grouped into related paragraphs. Few or weak transitions; some paragraphs lack topic sentences. Individual paragraph coherence & continuity need work. | While most paragraphs support the thesis in some way, paper still lacks a tightly structured argument that flows throughout the essay in a common thread. There may be one or two unclear transitions or one or two paragraphs without strong topic sentences. Despite some disjointedness/lack of focus, the reader can move with relative ease through the discourse. | Paper is structured to clearly support the logical development & complexity of the argument. Clear topic sentences & strong transitions between paragraphs & sections; reader finds it easy to follow the argument from paragraph to paragraph. Each paragraph builds on the paragraph that preceded it & focuses on one main point. All paragraphs work together to create a coherent whole. |
| use & analysis of evidence | General failure to support statements or the evidence seems to support no statement. Quotes are not integrated into sentences & are instead “plopped” into the text without use of signal phrases. Very little or very weak attempt to related evidence to argument; may be no identifiable argument or no evidence to relate to it. Sources are generally inappropriately cited or not cited. | Analysis tends to lack depth & sophistication. Points often lack supporting evidence or evidence is used where inappropriate (perhaps because the point being made is not clear). Quotes may appear without analysis or be used in place of analysis. Sources may sometimes be inappropriately cited. | All points are buttressed with at least one example from the text, although some evidence does not fully support the argument or may not be the most appropriate examples. Quotes & paraphrasing are well integrated into the text using signal phrases, although use of signal phrases may lack variation. Sources are correctly cited. | Analysis is fresh & interesting, posing new ways to think about the material. Writer selects persuasive, interesting, & insightful information to contextualize & inform the argument. All points are buttressed with at least one example from the text. Excellent integration of quotes & paraphrasing; sophisticated & varied use of signal phrases. Sources are correctly cited. |
| mechanics of writing | Significant errors in grammar, syntax, diction, vocabulary, terminology, and/or punctuation on each page of the paper. Errors make the content & ideas difficult to understand. | Several significant errors in grammar, syntax, diction, and/or punctuation distract from the paper’s line of reasoning. Paper lacks variety in sentence structure, exhibits redundancy and/or clumsy phrases; vocabulary may be misused in a number of places throughout the paper. | Paper is mostly well written & ideas are clear, despite a few minor errors in grammar, syntax, diction, and/or punctuation. Writer mostly varies sentence structure; very little redundancy; may still exhibit some awkward phrases. Vocabulary is well developed, with no more than 1-2 cases of terminology/vocab misuse. | Writing is clear, concise, & engaging. Excellent grammar & diction; correct use of punctuation; minimal to no spelling errors; no incomplete or run-on sentences. Writer correctly uses wide range of vocabulary. Smooth sentence structure; clear communication of ideas.  |
| voice & style | Essay may be potentially interesting, but writer is unable to sustain an appropriate voice. | Essay may be potentially interesting, but writer’s voice is occasionally inappropriate or lacking in confidence. | Writer sustains an appropriate & sometimes interesting/engaging voice. Essay is handled with clarity & purpose & occasional sophistication. | Writer sustains an appropriate & interesting voice. Essay is engaging, complex, & handled with sophistication throughout. |
| conclusion | Essay ends without concluding. | Conclusion answers most questions, but may be unclear, confusing, or incomplete. | Conclusion answers all questions satisfactorily. | Conclusion answers all questions with insight; continues to stimulate the reader’s thinking; may suggest areas for further research. |