

# BUCKNELL UNIVERSITY WRITING PROGRAM

## Rubric for Direct Assessment of Student Writing

| Element                               | <u>Not Competent (1)</u><br>Element is weak or absent                                                                                                                                            | <u>Emerging Competence (2)</u><br>Element has been attempted, but serious deficiencies are evident.                                                                                     | <u>Competent (3)</u><br>Element is present, but is not fully developed or is unevenly applied.                                                                                   | <u>Highly Competent (4)</u><br>Element is fully developed or consistently applied                                                                                                                                                                       |
|---------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Achieving Purpose(s)</b>           | Demonstrates little understanding of assignment and/or academic argument. Content lacks depth and complexity. Little evidence is provided to support claims.                                     | Despite inconsistent facility, demonstrates attempt to meet expectations of assignment. Information and arguments are well developed at times. Uses some evidence to support claims.    | Demonstrates adequate engagement with topic and understanding of assignment. Reasonably effective development of content. Provides evidence to support debatable claims.         | Demonstrates clear engagement with topic and sophisticated understanding of assignment. Thorough development of content (arguments/information) with appropriate depth and complexity. Uses evidence skillfully to support debatable claims.            |
| <b>Addressing Audience(s)</b>         | Demonstrates little awareness of audience appropriate to the assignment; fails to anticipate questions and concerns; consistently underestimates or overestimates the audience's prior knowledge | Demonstrates inconsistent awareness of audience; does not routinely anticipate questions and concerns; sometimes underestimates or overestimates the audience's prior knowledge         | Demonstrates adequate understanding of audience; generally presents information and ideas with readers in mind; generally anticipates readers' questions and concerns.           | Demonstrates sophisticated understanding of audience; presents information and ideas with readers clearly in mind; anticipates readers' questions and concerns and addresses them with skill.                                                           |
| <b>Organization</b>                   | Indiscernible connections among ideas at sentence and paragraph levels; lack of transitions; paper as a whole lacks coherence and logical structure.                                             | Some clear connections among ideas at sentence and paragraph levels; some or formulaic transitions; paper as a whole has an inconsistent structure.                                     | Generally clear connections among ideas at sentence and paragraph levels; transitions are present and generally useful; paper as a whole coheres and is structured logically.    | Consistently clear connections among ideas at sentence and paragraph levels; general and skillful use of transitions; paper is well structured and cohesive.                                                                                            |
| <b>Clarity of Expression</b>          | Writing reflects poor understanding and contains poor diction and/or usage errors. Readability is consistently compromised.                                                                      | Generally conveys meaning with clarity, although writing includes minor misunderstanding, imprecision/inaccuracy, and errors that compromise readability at times.                      | Uses precise, straightforward language that generally conveys meaning to readers. Language errors do not compromise readability.                                                 | Skillfully communicates meaning to readers with sophistication, elegance, and fluency. Virtually error-free.                                                                                                                                            |
| <b>Employing Conventions</b>          | Does not follow basic expectations appropriate to a specific discipline, genre, and/or assignment for basic organization, content, format, and style.                                            | Demonstrates inconsistent use of appropriate conventions particular to a specific discipline, genre, and/or assignment, including organization, content, format, and stylistic choices. | Generally employs appropriate conventions particular to a specific discipline, genre, and/or assignment, including organization, content, format, and stylistic choices.         | Demonstrates consistent, sophisticated use of important conventions particular to a specific discipline, genre, and/or assignment, including organization, content, format, and stylistic choices.                                                      |
| <b>Employing Writing as a Process</b> | Paper has been inadequately developed; local revision may be evident, but little attempt to revise at the global level. Unresponsive or resistant to feedback.                                   | Paper has been partially or inconsistently developed; some attempt to revise at the global and local levels, with limited success; inconsistently responsive to feedback.               | Paper has been successfully developed; clear attempt to revise at the global level, with some success; draft is largely free of local errors. Adequately responsive to feedback. | Paper has been successfully developed and revised at the global level (e.g., complexity of argument, logical connections, organization) and the local level (e.g., mechanics, diction, spelling, etc.) as needed. Appropriately responsive to feedback. |

**BUCKNELL UNIVERSITY WRITING PROGRAM**  
**Direct Assessment of Student Writing: Questions to Consider**

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| <b>Achieving Purpose(s)</b>           | <p><b><i>Refers to the writer's success in fulfilling the assignment</i></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is the topic appropriate in scope (i.e., not too broad, not too narrow)?</li> <li>• Are the arguments/objectives articulated clearly and effectively?</li> <li>• Are the claims well supported?</li> <li>• Do the analyses/arguments have appropriate depth and complexity, and demonstrate critical engagement with the topic?</li> <li>• Is the content accurate?</li> <li>• Are sources used (and cited) appropriately?</li> <li>• Does the paper demonstrate application or synthesis of knowledge (not just regurgitation or summary)?</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                |
| <b>Addressing Audience(s)</b>         | <p><b><i>Describes the writer's engagement with the reader and awareness of the reader's needs</i></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Does the writer provide sufficient background to orient the reader to the topic?</li> <li>• Are technical terms defined when necessary and used appropriately (not gratuitously)?</li> <li>• Is information presented in a manner that is easily accessible to the reader?</li> <li>• Does paper provide insights that are interesting and valuable to the reader?</li> <li>• Are explanations concise, yet thorough and sufficiently detailed to facilitate understanding?</li> <li>• Does the writer anticipate and address the target audience's likely questions or counter-arguments?</li> </ul>                                                                       |
| <b>Organization</b>                   | <p><b><i>Refers to the structure of the paper</i></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Does paper follow a clear, effective structure?</li> <li>• Do sections/paragraphs contain content appropriate for that section/paragraph?</li> <li>• Are ideas separated into an appropriate number of paragraphs?</li> <li>• Does each paragraph focus on a central idea?</li> <li>• Are points made in logical order?</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| <b>Clarity of Expression</b>          | <p><b><i>Refers to the paper's communicative qualities and readability, with emphasis on local concerns</i></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do sentences employ appropriate structure, syntax, punctuation, voice, and tone?</li> <li>• Does writer use appropriate vocabulary and convey meaning precisely and accurately?</li> <li>• Is text grammatically proficient (e.g., tense, agreement, etc.)?</li> <li>• Does the writer make effective use of transitional words and phrases?</li> <li>• Does the writer manage complex sentences effectively?</li> <li>• If tables and figures are appropriate, are they present and used effectively to complement the text?</li> <li>• Does the paper title fit the topic?</li> <li>• Are writers' original ideas distinguished from those of others?</li> </ul> |
| <b>Employing Conventions</b>          | <p><b><i>Refers to adherence to rules and conventions of the discipline, genre, and/or assignment</i></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Does the paper follow appropriate structure(s) and contain all relevant sections?</li> <li>• Does the paper comply with conventions for format?</li> <li>• Does the paper follow stylistic conventions?</li> <li>• Are sources consistently cited and referenced in the required style?</li> <li>• Are citations accurate, and do they match references?</li> <li>• Does the writer apply theoretical models effectively?</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| <b>Employing Writing as a Process</b> | <p><b><i>Describes writer's practices in developing and refining the assignment</i></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Did the writer engage in appropriate planning and research?</li> <li>• Did the writer prepare one or more preliminary drafts?</li> <li>• Did the writer give adequate consideration to feedback from the instructor and/or peers?</li> <li>• Did the writer make revisions at the global level as appropriate?</li> <li>• Did the writer make local revisions (edits) as appropriate?</li> <li>• Has the paper been proofread to eliminate typographical errors?</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                |

**NOTE:** This list of questions is intended to be used as a guide for assisting instructors with direct assessment based on the Writing Program rubric. The list likely does not contain all of the possible questions that an instructor may consider for a particular element in the rubric, and some of the questions may not be applicable for all assignments.