

Appendix C

A Dozen Elements to Consider While Analyzing Student Writing Doug Hesse

1. Is the student doing the task assigned? If not, does the task that the student is doing have sufficient merit that you can sanction it? How has the student interpreted the task? Has anything seemed to mislead him or her? If there are multiple elements of the task, are they given appropriate weight or due in the paper?
2. How effective, appropriate, or ambitious is the focus? What is the quality/ambition of the student's thesis or purpose relative to the assignment? Is the thesis or topic clearly established and maintained throughout? Worth proving or addressing? Manageable in the situation available?
3. How effective is the quality of thinking throughout the paper? Are insights appropriately original—or originally expressed?
4. How accurately and appropriately does the student represent key source materials or concepts? Are you convinced the student understands them?
5. How well does the paper fit its intended audience? Does the writing assume the right things of readers in terms of knowledge, information, facts, basic assumptions (explaining neither too much nor too little)? Does it assume the right things about beliefs, values, positions?
6. What is the ratio of summary (or information deployment) to analysis or argument? Is it appropriate to the task? To what extent is there an information dump? An information desert?
7. Does the paper have the right kinds and amounts of evidence for claims? Are evidence and support present, or are they missing or inadequate? Does the writer address countering positions or confounding information or alternatives, if the task calls for it? Does the writer explicitly connect evidence to claims, or does he or she merely deploy it?
8. How are source materials used? Integrated or inserted? Deployed or discussed?
9. Is the structure of the paper effective? Does the introduction provide enough context or clearly signal purpose, without being padded or gratuitous? Is the introduction appropriately engaging? Is the paper rightly weighted in development? Do important ideas or elements get relatively more attention than less important ones? Is the organization clear to readers? Is the sequence of parts the most effective one? Is the conclusion apt and engaging, or is it absent, superfluous, or perfunctory?
10. Is the style of the paper effective? Are word choices and sentence types appropriate for the audience? Is the paper free of stigmatized grammar, usage, and punctuation errors? Is the style appropriately economical and lively? Does the voice of the paper emulate the voice associated with good professional writing in this area?
11. What about conventions (format, voice, documentation style, essential elements, expected rhetorical moves, etc.)?
12. How well is the paper edited or proofed?