CHECKLIST FOR SCHOLARLY WRITING

© 2003 The Writing Center at GULC. All rights reserved.

I. PURPOSE

A. Is the purpose clear?
B. Is the thesis statement precisely stated?
C. Does the Introduction make the purpose clear?
D. Is the document primarily persuasive? informative? objective?

II. AUDIENCE

A. Does the paper take into account all audiences?
B. Is it geared properly to the primary audience, e.g., the expert, the layperson, the general public, etc.?
C. How much of the law does your audience need to know? How much do they already know? How much do you need to explain?
D. Is it "layered" where appropriate, so that the expert can skip basic information, but the layperson will have it?
E. Is it internally consistent so that any reader, at any point, can follow the argument?

III. CONTENT

A. Is the research complete? What is your list of sources?
B. Does the thesis statement hold up throughout the paper?
C. Are legal materials complete?
D. Have they been accurately synthesized?
E. Are all points of view accurately presented and responded to?
F. Are all points accurately connected to the thesis?
G. Is the paper analytical and creative, rather than just descriptive?
H. Do footnotes function properly?
   1. Do they give accurate citations to authority?
   2. Do they give the detail that is necessary, but that, if placed in the text, would disrupt creative and analytical flow?
   3. Do they collect together authority that supports a point?
   4. Do they adequately explain the authority so that it is useful to the reader?
I. Is the paper original and interesting?
IV. ORGANIZATION

A. Is the structure obvious to any reader?
B. Does the structure flow from substance?
C. Does the Introduction present a blueprint for the paper?
D. Does each section relate to the thesis statement?
E. Is each section internally organized?
F. Do paragraphs connect to each other?
G. Is each paragraph logically structured? Deductively? Inductively? Other?
H. Are sentences organized logically, e.g., subordinate ideas are subordinated, main ideas appear in main clauses, and parallel structure is used to present like ideas?
I. Is there effective use of transition sentences?

V. STYLE

A. Are the terms of art presented in the thesis statement echoed throughout the document?
B. Is there no more than one point per sentence?
C. Is repetition used effectively where appropriate?
D. Are rhetorical devices used for persuasion?
E. Is word choice precise, using less legalese and more plain English?
F. Are subjects and verbs generally concrete? Close together?
G. Did you use active and passive voice appropriately and intentionally?
H. Are nominalizations avoided?

VI. MECHANICS

A. Is the grammar correct?
B. Is the punctuation correct?
C. Are the citations correct?
D. Are all typos eliminated?