Checklist for Lab Reports & Scientific Papers

☐ Is the title concise and does it adequately describe the contents? For example, with the title “Substance Y Alters Blonial Structure of Elephant Bone Marrow,” researchers interested in substance Y, blonial structure, elephants, or bone marrow should recognize that the article may be of interest to them.

☐ Are the appropriate headings and subheadings included, in proper order? A typical scientific paper includes the following sections: title, abstract, introduction, methods, results, discussion, and references.

☐ Are tone and style appropriate? Scientific writing, for the most part, is intended to be more factual than entertaining and not embellished with descriptive language or anecdotes, humor, or dialogue.

☐ Does the writer use passive voice, the generally accepted convention? The writer of a lab report, for example should use the passive past tense: “Solution A was centrifuged,” not I centrifuged Solution A.”

☐ Are sentences short and to the point, expressing facts clearly and concisely? Does the writer answer all basic questions about the topic?

☐ Have conventions related to symbols and abbreviations been observed?

☐ Are figures and tables numbered and accompanied by explanatory captions? Are they introduced before they appear in the text?

Checklist for Argument Papers

☐ Is the claim or proposition – what the writing is trying to prove – clearly stated?
☐ Are all assertions supported by evidence?
☐ Is the evidence – facts, interpretations of facts, opinions – appropriate? Data should be accurate, recent, and sufficient. Sources cited should be reliable.
☐ Does the arrangement of evidence make sense? Does it emphasize the most important issues? Are there more effective ways of arranging the evidence?
☐ Are facts, statistics, examples, anecdotes, and expert opinions placed properly?
☐ Is the evidence carefully documented?
☐ Is the reasoning sound?
☐ Has the writer included any logical fallacies? (If you are unfamiliar with logical fallacies, refer to a writing textbook or handbook.)
☐ Are terms that might be controversial or ambiguous adequately defined?
☐ Have opposing arguments been considered and dealt with adequately?

Checklist for Research Papers

☐ If there is a title, is it informative and appropriate?
☐ Is the thesis clear? Is the organization logical? If headings and subheadings are used, do they consistently follow an accepted format?
☐ Are tone, voice, and diction consistent and appropriate?
☐ Are transitions smooth from sentence to sentence, paragraph to paragraph, section to section?
☐ Are credible sources and evidence used? Is the supporting material suitable and persuasive? Does it adequately support the thesis?
☐ Are quotations, paraphrased, and summarized passages properly introduced with a signal phrase?
☐ Are visual materials—tables, figures, charts, maps and the like—introduced with a signal phrase?
☐ Are long quotations off set from the text?
☐ Is proper credit given to sources throughout?
☐ Does the paper consistently adhere to the documentation style used (MLA, APA, CBE, etc.) in format and in documentation both within the text and at the end of the text?
☐ Were the instructions for the assignment—length, number, and kinds of resources, directions for the title page or documentation—followed carefully?