

Identify Priority Issues of Higher and Lower Order Concerns

Identifying and prioritizing a limited number of Higher Order Concerns (HOCs) and Lower Order Concerns (LOCs) is a critical part of helping Tutees with their writing.

Higher Order Concerns (HOCs)

The most important parts of an academic paper, called the Higher Order Concerns, are the big picture elements. The following Higher Order Concerns need to be addressed before Lower Order Concerns.

Logic/Content

- Does the submission address the assignment as described by the student?

Thesis

- Is there a clear and well-focused controlling idea expressed near the beginning of the submission?
- **Note:** not all assignments necessarily require a thesis statement. Depending on genre and the purpose of the assignment, the expression of a controlling idea may vary.

Structure/Organization

- Does the structure of the submission fit with the assignment as described by the student?
- Are ideas organized to support the stated thesis?

Introduction

- Does the introduction clearly introduce the topic and express a controlling idea as appropriate to the assignment?
- Do the ideas expressed in the introduction fit with the material presented in the body of the submission?

Conclusion

- Is the conclusion appropriate for the assignment?
- Does the conclusion only summarize material that has already been presented in the body of the submission?

Paragraph Structure

- Is there an appropriate amount of material in each paragraph and section to clearly express one idea?
- Are there topic sentences?
- Do paragraphs relate to the stated thesis?

Use of Evidence

- Is material relevant to the submission?
- Where appropriate to the assignment, has evidence been used to support the student's claims?
- Is evidence properly attributed?

Integration of Sources

- Does the student frame evidence with their own words?

Explanation of Evidence

- Does the student adequately describe, explain, reflect on, or critique (as appropriate to the assignment) evidence?

Clarity and Flow (Coherence)

- Is the submission overly wordy?
- Is there reader resistance?

Transitions

- Are ideas linked through signpost words and phrases (for example, “however,” “although,” “on the other hand”)?
- Are there thematic connections between paragraphs and sections?

Problems with Lower Order Concerns (LOCs), such as sentence structure, can obscure the effectiveness of conveying Higher Order Concerns. This means that the writer may need to move back and forth between the HOCs and LOCs to produce the final essay.

Lower Order Concerns (LOCs)

After you have generally addressed the HOCs, you then turn your attention to the LOCs.

Style and Tone

- Are the level of formality and tone appropriate for the assignment?
- Is vocabulary or word choice appropriate?
- Is the passive voice used excessively or inappropriately?

Expression

- Grammar: are there repeated errors in noun or verb forms, tenses, agreement, or prepositions?
- Spelling: are there typos and/or “sound-alike” spelling errors?

Punctuation

- Are there repeated errors in the use of commas, semicolons, colons, or in end-punctuation?
- Are quotation marks used appropriately?

Sentence Structure

- Are there sentence fragments, mixed or illogical constructions, faulty parallelism, or faulty modifiers?
- Do sentences tend to sprawl or be too short/choppy?

Format

- Are in-text citations formatted correctly?
- Are references listed in alphabetical order?

Essay Checklist:

- Title reflected the thesis, not just the assignment topic.
- Introduction had an opening strategy.
- Gave an introduction to the broad topic.
- Had an introduction to the specific topic.
- Acknowledged the opposing arguments (if necessary).
- Stated thesis – argument about the topic.
- Provided a preview – how essay will be divided into paragraphs.
- Began each body paragraph with a topic sentence – link to the thesis is clear.
- Provided ample supporting details – each one directly supported the paragraph topic and provided clear connections between sentences.
- Ended each paragraph with a framing sentence.
- Conclusion briefly restated the thesis, using different wording and comments on the main arguments.
- Closing sentence sounds finished.
- Works Cited Page acknowledged any sources used in the essay.

For reference materials to help Tutees with HOCs and LOCs, see:

Basic Essay Structure

https://courses.kpu.ca/pluginfile.php/217639/mod_resource/content/1/LC%20-%20Basic%20Essay%20Structure%20%20Essay%20Revision%20Checklist%20-%202015.pdf

Paragraph Structure

https://courses.kpu.ca/pluginfile.php/217635/mod_resource/content/2/LC%20-%20General%20Paragraph%20Structure%20-%202015.pdf

Creating Transition between Sentences

https://courses.kpu.ca/pluginfile.php/217640/mod_resource/content/1/LC%20-%20Providing%20Transition%20between%20Sentences%20-%202015.pdf

Formal Writing Guidelines

https://courses.kpu.ca/pluginfile.php/217641/mod_resource/content/1/LC%20-%20FWG%20-%20Overview%20%20Guidelines%20-%202015.pdf

Sentence-Combining – Introduction

https://courses.kpu.ca/pluginfile.php/217618/mod_resource/content/2/LC%20-%20Sentence-Combining%20-%20Overview%20%20Intro%20-%202015.pdf

Grammar Overview – All Rules

https://courses.kpu.ca/pluginfile.php/217617/mod_resource/content/2/LC%20-%20Grammar%20Cheat%20Sheet%20-%202020.pdf

Activity: Analysis of First Simulation Paper

Apply the hierarchy of concerns to the paper used in the first simulation. What would you suggest that the writer work on first? Why?