WAC Writing Guides:
Checklist for Research Papers

Higher Order Concerns

- Does the essay address the assignment? Were the instructions – page length, format, number and type of resources – followed?
- Does the introduction capture the reader’s attention? How so? Does the intro forecast the paper’s intent?
- Is the thesis clear? Is the thesis too broad or too narrow?
- Is the paper organized clearly and logically? If there are subheadings, do the subheadings follow the accepted format?
- Does each body paragraph support the thesis and begin with a topic sentence?
- Do the sentences in each paragraph support the topic sentence?
- Are the relationships between ideas clear? Do ideas transition smoothly from one to the next?
- Does the evidence adequately and logically support the thesis? Are there enough supporting details and examples?
- Are the sources credible? Do they come from scholarly texts or reliable organizations?
- Are the diction and tone appropriate for the audience?
- Does the conclusion answer the broad question “So what?” (What does all of this information amount to?), or does it simply restate points that have already been made?

Lower Order Concerns

- Is the title appropriate? Is it too broad or narrow? Does it capture the reader’s attention?
- Are quotations clearly introduced, and do they flow smoothly within the text? Are long quotes set off from the text?
- Does the writer properly cite sources throughout the paper? Are parenthetical citations accurate?
- Does the writer follow the formatting guidelines (MLA, APA, CSE, etc.)?
- Has the writer included a Works Cited page or Bibliography?
- Are there spelling or grammar errors?