Personal Statement Makeover Workshop by Stephanie B. Wall, PhD, Jennifer L. Greer, PhD, & Carolina M.E. Kunnen, PhD, courtesy the UAB Postdoctoral Association, Office of Postdoctoral Education, & Graduate School

*SMART Writing Assessment Criteria & Rubric

The shaded criteria – **Audience, Purpose, and Organization** – represent **Higher-Order Concerns** (HOCs), or the intellectual content and positioning of the writer. Most of these concerns must be addressed early in the planning and initial drafting stages. The criteria in the white areas – **Style, Flow, and Presentation** – are **Later-Order Concerns (LOCs)**, which are typically addressed in the revising, editing, and proofreading stages of subsequent drafts. Both are equally important. When it comes to points, note that writing is not assessed as good or bad, but complete or incomplete.

*Adapted by Jennifer L. Greer, PhD, UAB, from Swales, J. M., and Feak, C. B., *Academic Writing for Graduate Students*: *Essential Tasks and Skills Third Edition*. (2012). Ann Arbor, Michigan: The University of Michigan Press.

Stage of Completion	1) Audience & 2) Purpose	3) Organization	4) Flow & 5) Style	6) Presentation
(90-100) Almost ready to circulate to an advisor, senior scholar, or mentor. May be the best you can do without their strategic advice.	* Content is relevant, thorough and persuasive. * Ideas support the text purpose, are original, with excellent reasons & examples. *Claims are well-sourced, building on prior scholarship, as is typical of original non-fiction work. * Vocabulary is ample, and background considers audience's prior knowledge & culture.	* Organization advances the purpose and genre; aids comprehension. *Structure is evidence-based, one of those introduced in the course, or identified in a good model from the field. * All component parts of format are present, with paragraphs developed and in order. * Relative prominence of ideas sets priorities and establishes a clear line of thinking.	* Sentences are extended, and complex ideas are well explained. * Connective devices allow reader to follow text; which has narrative quality. * Style, tone, voice, and word choice are as appropriate as precise. * Work accurately cites and sources other authors.	* Work has professional format, with indentions, clear line spacing, standard lettering, etc. * Language reveals a broad range of correct grammar and rich vocabulary. * Effective punctuation and correct spelling indicate proofreading.
(80-89) Needs 1-2 more rounds of revision to best represent yourself and your ideas. Seek feedback again if necessary.	* Content is relevant and strong, but may contain minor gaps or redundancies. *Most ideas are original and purposeful, with reasons & examples. * Claims are mostly supported, but may be weak (only one source for a sweeping or major point, for example). * Vocabulary and background frequently consider reader's knowledge & culture.	* Organization serves purpose and structure partially. * Structure is identifiable and loosely present, showing writer has identified an organizational strategy. * Most component parts are present, with paragraphs developed and in order. * Relative prominence of ideas sets a line of thinking, with some need for revision.	* Sentences are clear, if simple, with satisfactory structure. * Connective devices and transitions are present, with only minor inaccuracies. * Style, tone, voice and word choice are generally appropriate. * Work cites and sources other authors with only minor inaccuracies.	* Work looks neat with few formatting errors. * Language shows a good range of grammar and vocabulary, with occasional errors that do not impede effect. * Punctuation/spelling show only minor errors, with evidence of proofreading.
(70-79) Still a work in progress; needs more attention to HOCs as well as LOCs; seek feedback from peers, colleagues, or other writers on content and positioning.	* Content is partially relevant, but may stray off task or is incomplete. *Some ideas are purposeful, but reasons and examples are incomplete. * Claims are occasionally supported, but inconsistently so, casting doubt on writer's argument and credibility. * Vocabulary and background fail to fully recognize the reader.	* Organization is attempted, but breaks down; slightly unclear. * Structure is attempted but incomplete, leaving reader guessing about which genre/direction writer is writing/going. * Some components are present, but some are out of order/incomplete. * Lack of prioritization of ideas within paragraphs or between paragraphs blurs line of thinking.	* Sentences are sometimes incomplete or break down. * Connective devices are present, but may seem mechanical, forced, or over-used. * Style, tone, voice may lapse into informal word choice, clichés, etc. * Work attempts to integrate other's ideas, but struggles with sources & citations.	* Work may appear partially finished due to formatting errors. * Language may show frequent errors in grammar and word choice, as well as omissions. * Punctuation and spelling errors may show patterns, distracting the reader.