## Definitions of key terms

ACADEMIC STYLE

This is judged according to what they are taught on the course. Elements to consider include formal vocabulary, impersonal grammar, concise and precise expression.

ANALYSIS

According to the Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English, this means a careful examination of something in order to understand it better/see what it is made of. In academic writing we encourage students to take things apart and consider the causes and effects or identify key points of comparison and contrast. Students may be able to do this and produce good paragraphs but still not be able to hook these good paragraphs onto a line of reasoning – the backbone of the text.

ARGUMENT

Argument (line of reasoning) does not equal arguments (claims and evidence). ‘It is the development of a position… rather than evidence for individual claims that determines the quality of an essay’ (Wingate 2011:3)

Wingate identifies 3 key components of an argument:

* The analysis and evaluation of content knowledge,
* The writer’s development of a position,
* The presentation of that position in a coherent manner.

According to Brick (2006:38), western academic culture strongly favours deductive argument (thesis followed by reasons) and some lecturers may mark inductively organised argument (reasons followed by thesis) very harshly. Hence, we need to teach students to take responsibility as a writer to tell their reader what they are going to do, do it and then tell them what they have done. This is particularly important for second language writers where there may be language issues.

COHERENCE

Logical progression of thought as indicated by signal words (logical connectors). This involves patterns of organisation that meet the expectations of the audience eg paragraphs moving from general to specific.

COHESION/COHESIVE DEVICES

This is the glue that sticks the sentences and paragraphs together, achieved by grammatical connectors such as pronoun reference, article use, lexical chains and given - new sentence structure to maintain topic/theme. Eg ‘This’ plus a summary noun eg this issue (which also adds voice as my *issu*e may be your *phenomenon*!) or the choice of passive vs active to front the topic.

FUTURE FOCUS

A conclusion would normally widen the essay out again by looking at future implications, predictions, recommendations, etc.

MAJOR OMISSION

This will depend on the task, but it will refer to one missing element from the question. For example, the student may have addressed only causes when asked for causes and effects. The student may have written about one problem when asked for two, or offered two solutions when asked for three.

MAP

This is the final part of the introduction that gives the reader an indication of how you will tackle the question i.e. paragraph order. It may be added to a thesis concisely using a colon and a grammatically parallel list. (*There are three major problems to be considered: cost, effectiveness and adoption.*) If the writer then departs from this map, the writing fails to meet reader expectations of organisation i.e. lacks coherence.

NOUN PHRASE GRAMMAR

We would expect a good pass to show some successful application of noun phrase grammar, but this may still lack conciseness – particularly in post-modification. Students are happier using relative clauses but often need to learn to use reduced relatives (participles) and prepositional phrases in order to arrive at concise expression of detailed information. The very concise noun + noun combination is difficult for students to achieve naturally eg the public reaction vs the public’s reaction.

STANCE

A position (stance) may be taken in a thesis statement (based on analysis and evaluation of sources), but if the writer’s voice (critical comment, interpretation and evaluation) is not there throughout the text (see point above) then the line of reasoning is not well developed. This is a good (60s) but not very good (70s) text. A very good writer’s stance will have topic sentences clearly linked back to the thesis and linguistic control of emphasis through maximisers and minimisers. A borderline pass (40s) might have a position stated in the introduction but not even followed through in the conclusion. A satisfactory pass (50s) has the stance in the introduction and paraphrased in the conclusion but lacking in the body.

THESIS

This is more than a statement of purpose (*This essay is going to compare education systems in two countries, namely UK and China*). We would expect it to include an argument even if at a basic level (*On comparing the education systems in the UK and China, it becomes clear that there are more points in common than differences between the two countries.)* A sophisticated thesis will show evidence of a nuanced position which has been arrived at through a consideration of alternative perspectives.

UNITY

A paragraph has unity when everything in it is linked to one main point as expressed in the topic sentence.

VOICE

This is the ultimate goal of an academic writer and is hard to achieve. Hence, it only features in the exceptional and very good bands. According to Alexander & Argent (forthcoming), having a clear writer’s voice involves:

* Taking a nuanced stance,
* Selecting and reporting evidence (data or sources) critically,
* Interpreting evidence to support your stance,
* Choosing a persuasive structure for your argument,
* Integrating the evidence into your argument, with the appropriate signals,
* Using your own words.