

# The Hierarchy Checklist

As you complete your draft, look to the hierarchy checklist for guidance. The aspects higher on the list are weighted more heavily during the grading process so focus on those first. Then, move down the list to make sure your paper is fulfilling each requirement.

## **Urgent and Most Important**

- *Does the paper fulfill the assignment?*
  - o Does it acknowledge, and respond to, what the draft prompt has asked?
- *Does the paper have a concept to convey?*
  - o Does the paper lay out a claim (commonly referred to as a thesis, productive focus, theory or main argument?)
- *Is the concept worth writing about?*
  - o The concept needs to *do* something: introduce a new idea, argue for one idea instead of another, suggest a new way of doing things, synthesize previously disparate ideas, argue for a different focus, etc.
  - o Another way of looking at this: Does the concept add to the conversation? (Instead of just recapping it?)

## **Urgent and Important**

- *Is the concept fully developed and supported?*
  - o Does the paper have ample evidence for its main idea, or does it just state it and assume the reader will agree?
  - o Does the paper examine the concept and its implications from a number of different angles? (This can come in a number of forms, from logical arguments to support from outside sources to illuminating anecdotes.)
  - o Will a reader be convinced of the main idea? Will the reader still have questions?
- *Is the concept conveyed clearly?*
  - o If multiple readers read this paper, would they agree on what the main idea is?
- *Is the paper unified?*
  - o Do all of the parts work together, in some way, toward clarifying, explaining, or supporting the concept?

## **Less urgent, but important**

- *Does the paper 'flow'?*
  - o Are there clear transitions between paragraphs and between sub-ideas?
  - o Will a reader be confused about how one idea is connected to the next or about why the writer switched between ideas?
- *Is the paper error-free?*
  - o Are there any mechanical, grammatical, punctuation, or spelling errors?
  - o Will your reader trust that you have command of your writing—that you're a writer to be trusted, in other words?
- *Is the paper graceful?*
  - o Do the sentences convey the ideas as clearly and artfully as possible?
  - o Will a reader have to work to get the writer's meaning, or does the writer unpack it smoothly and gracefully?
- *Does your paper conform to the format/style/register it needs to?*
  - o If it needs to be in MLA format are title pages, citations, and references correct?
  - o Will your reader be convinced that you're not a novice in your field?