Ghent University – Academic writing checklist

Content		Desirable features
1. Information is complete and accurate	☐	1.1 ☐ Well-focussed subject 1.2 ☐ In-depth and sophisticated/mult-perspective explanation 1.3 ☐ Relevant details only
2. Clear and credible argumentation	☐	2.1 ☐ All steps in reasoning are included. 2.2 ☐ Sound and sufficient argumentation is included.
Structure		**Desirable features**
3. The paper is complete	☐	☐ The paper contains: foreword, abstract, table of contents, introduction, corpus, conclusions, list of abbreviations, appendices, reference list, etc.
4. The text has a logical structure	☐	4.1 ☐ The text takes the reader from one clear idea to the next. 4.2 ☐ Repetition is used for emphasis and clarity only.
5. The introduction is well-structured	☐	☐ Introduction includes: context, scientific motivation, (clear) research question, survey of what will follow
6. The main body of the text is well-structured	☐	☐ Chapters/sections are of similar length.
7. The conclusion is well-structured	☐	7.1 ☐ There is no new information in the conclusion. 7.2 ☐ Research question is effectively answered.
8. Titles are clear and well-chosen	☐	8.1 ☐ Labelling of sections is clear and well-defined. 8.2 ☐ Sufficient/clear section titles 8.3 ☐ Section titles are concise. 8.4 ☐ Consistent wording in section titles (either questions or statements or terms or quotes etc.)
9. Correct and useful appendices. Relevant and clear visual support (tables, graphs, photos, illustrations…)	☐	9.1 ☐ Reference(s) to the appendix/ces in core text 9.2 ☐ Essential information is in the core text; non-essential (illustrative) material in the appendix/ces. 9.3 ☐ Visual support leads to better understanding of the text and is sufficiently explained in the text.
10. The structure of chapter sections and paragraphs is sound	☐	10.1 ☐ Information is described in a balanced manner in chapters, sections and paragraphs. 10.2 ☐ Each paragraph has only one core idea. 10.3 ☐ Each paragraph has a topic sentence. 10.4 ☐ Structuring paragraphs are used at the beginning and end of larger units of text (section, chapter).
11. The internal structure of the text is marked by structure indicators (= signposts, signal words, referring words, linking sentences/paragraphs)	☐	11.1 ☐ Strong cohesion between sentences/paragraphs 11.2 ☐ Good signposting and referring words
Style		**Desirable features**
12. The text strikes a balance between difficult and simplistic language use	☐	12.1 ☐ Language is formal without employing stiff, archaic or officialese phrases. 12.2 ☐ Sentences are of appropriate length with finite verb forms.

		12.3 ☐ No words are missing. 12.4 ☐ Sentences strike a balance between too short and too long. 12.5 ☐ Sentences strike a balance between difficult and simplistic. 12.6 ☐ Passives can be used and so can impersonal constructions. 12.7 ☐ The style strikes a balance between too cumbersome and too simplistic.
13. Ideas are expressed clearly with precise wording.	☐	13.1 ☐ Technical terms are explained and used appropriately. 13.2 ☐ Vocabulary is appropriate, avoiding vague words. 13.3 ☐ Language is academic, avoiding inappropriate tentativeness.
14. The information density is distributed evenly over the text.	☐	14.1 ☐ Complex ideas are expressed clearly. 14.2 ☐ The text strikes a balance between unwieldy and too concise.
15. The style is elegant yet academic.	☐	15.1 ☐ The style is varied with a rich vocabulary and a variety of sentence constructions. 15.2 ☐ The style is appropriate, avoiding storytelling and inappropriate imagery/expressions.
16. The text addresses the reader impersonally and consistently.	☐	16.1 ☐ The text avoids conversational language. 16.2 ☐ The tone is objective and nuanced. 16.3 ☐ The style is consistent.
Mechanics		**Desirable features**
17. The text is correct and follows the rules of spelling and grammar.	☐	17.1 ☐ All words are correctly spelled. 17.2 ☐ Appropriate punctuation, correct and consistent capitalization 17.3 ☐ Consistent and correct use of tenses 17.4 ☐ Correct concord, correct reference words, correct word order etc. (grammar) 17.5 ☐ Idiomatic collocations, expressions, prepositions etc.
Reference		**Desirable features**
18. The content of the text is well-supported by academic literature.	☐	18.1 ☐ Sufficient sources, recent sources, relevant sources 18.2 ☐ Academic sources 18.3 ☐ Sources appropriately incorporated into the text, adequate and acceptable translations from sources (citations vs paraphrases) 18.4 ☐ Critical attitude towards sources 18.5 ☐ No plagiarism
Layout		**Desirable features**
19. The layout is attractive and consistent.	☐	19.1 ☐ Correct and consistent in-text referencing 19.2 ☐ Correct and consistent lay-out of the bibliography 19.3 ☐ Consistent use of (interlinear) spacing, italics, quotation marks, abbreviations etc. 19.4 ☐ Layout conform to the style sheet used by the university programme. 19.5 ☐ Figures have captions and in-text references.