PEER-EDITING WORKSHEET*

First, read through the writer's personal statement in order to get a general idea of the writing. Does the essay make sense? Can you, after reading the essay once, summarize its main point or points? Overall, does the paper provide a thoughtful and vivid snapshot of the scholarship applicant and his/her past, present, and future aspirations?

Thesis Statement

- Can you find it? Does it accurately voice the main idea of the paper? Does the thesis state the main idea and some of the reasoning behind that idea?
- Is the thesis supported in the body of the paper? Is there any evidence or support for the thesis that is missing? If so, point it out and explain.
- Is there any information that contradicts the thesis? Are all the life examples (past, present, future) mentioned in the essay clearly related to the thesis?
- If some information is not relevant, can it be cut from the paper? If this information is necessary, how could the writer include it without undercutting his or her main ideas? (Hint: look at transitional phrases within sentences.)

Coherence and Clarity

- Do any ideas seem vague? What can the writer explain more thoroughly that would help the reader?
- Can you determine the paper's audience?
- Is the purpose of the essay clear?

Content

- Does the introduction give the readers helpful "clues" about the subject of the essay?
- Does the essay have a recent past paragraph? How effectively does it support the thesis?
- Does the essay have a short-term future paragraph? How effectively does it support the thesis?
- Does the essay have a long-term future paragraph? How effectively does it support the thesis?
- Does the conclusion refer back to the introduction, and help to round out the essay?
- As a reader, do you sense a structure in the paper? Can you determine a logic behind it? Are the ideas easy to follow in their arrangement?
- Do the transitions (both between sentences and between paragraphs) help to connect ideas? If not, what other structural changes could the writer make? Would other transitional devices be more appropriate?
- Is the paper interesting? What are the most interesting/convincing sections of the paper? How could the writer expand upon these sections or make the rest of the paper as interesting?

- Are there sections of the paper that are better written than others? If so, do you think these sections are better focused, with the ideas more completely defined? How can the writer bring the rest of the essay up to this level?

Style

Is the style understandable? Also, is the style appropriate for the intended audience? Are there too many linking verbs (is/are/was/were) in the writing? Check, too, for overuse of the passive voice ("was written").

Does the writer avoid jargons or technical terms that are not readily accessible to readers in the field (or sub-field)?

Marking the draft

If you are working with a photocopied version of a paper, feel free to write a few comments and suggestions. Careful, don't make the page "bleed" by marking too much, or by writing in red ink.

Make the meaning of each of these markings clear to the writer so that once your peer conference is over, he or she can refer to the marked draft as a guide in later revision.

- Draw a straight line (_____) under words or images that strike you as effective. These words would include strong verbs, specific details, memorable phrases, and striking images.
- Draw a wavy line (~~~~~) under words or images that are weak or unconvincing. Put these lines under words the writer repeats too often, ideas that seem vague, flat, or unnecessary.
- Put brackets [ ] around sentences or groups of sentences that you think should be combined.
- Put parentheses ( ) around sentences that are awkward or don't make sense.