The Thesis Statement: Verifying the Quality of Your Written Thesis

When you have a workable thesis, go ahead and check it against these qualities. Print this form more than once and bring it to a meeting with your supervisor. Be honest with yourself. If you’re not sure where to check the statements below, have a discussion with your supervisor, or have your supervisor evaluate your thesis using this form and see if you both agree with your marks.

My Working Thesis Statement: ______________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________________

Has/Does/Is my thesis… (place an “X”)

1. take a clear stance ___ fail to take a stance or argument ___
2. justify discussion ___ fail to justify appropriate discussion ___
3. focus on one main idea ___ have no focus or focus on too much ___
4. answer the research question ___ fail to answer the research question ___
5. specific ___ too general or vague ___
6. use clear diction throughout ___ clouded with elements of ambiguity ___
7. avoid redundancy in terms ___ use unnecessary words ___
8. considered form in relation to argument ___ not yet considered form in relation to argument ___
9. allow for open-mindedness in discussion ___ seem to lead to a close-minded discussion ___
10. changed or flexed from the beginning\(^1\) ___ stayed rigidly consistent ___

Notes:
_________________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________________

\(^1\) Keep in mind that your thesis is best constructed on the premise of inductive reasoning. Though you want to have a working thesis from the beginning, your research—your observations and data collection—must be allowed to influence and create your thesis. By no means should your thesis drive your research. If your thesis does not change at all during this process, it means that you haven’t re-evaluated it, you are searching only for data to support your original argument, or you aren’t learning much because you have a disengaging topic. Worse yet, your paper may be biased and probably will seem much weaker to others than to you in its content. To begin your extended essay with the attitude that “I already know my answer, confidently and completely” defeats the entire purpose of the exploration for knowledge.