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| **Rationale Worksheet** | logoTrimmed  Adapted from Genesee Valley Assessment Office September, 2017 |
| **State University of New York** | |

**Ra-tion-ale**

***n.***

**1. Fundamental reasons; the basis.**

**2. An exposition of principles or reasons**

“The American Heritage® Dictionary of the English Language. 4th ed. 2003.

The rationale is an essay that helps you to explain your degree program and the reasoning behind it. It should provide information about you, why you’re seeking a college degree, and how you think your degree program will help you to meet your goals. It should describe the research you’ve done to develop your degree program. Most important, your rationale should explain how the individual components of your degree program work together and how your degree program meets Empire State College’s academic expectations.

Devote most of the rationale to explaining your goals, your research, and the design of your degree program. It shouldn’t read primarily as a narrative of your personal life or as a listing of jobs and other professional experiences. Some personal and professional information is important, especially if it explains your goals and describes how your experiential knowledge fits within your degree. However, focus the greater part of your rationale on explaining your research and your degree program.

The rationale is a personal essay usually written in the first-person. After all, it’s about you and your degree program. At the same time, the rationale is an academic document that you will present to a committee of faculty members. You should therefore make sure that it is well-organized, focused, and grammatically and mechanically sound. Consult your primary mentor for guidance. The *Student Degree Planning Guide* offers a section on the rationale. Information is available on the MyESC website, and the GVC Writing Center can provide assistance.

The following worksheet can help you to better understand the information we expect to see in a rationale. It will also help you to incorporate your personal and professional information in a meaningful way.

**Using the worksheet**

When completed, the worksheet can serve as an outline for your rationale. **However, please be aware that this is a worksheet only; it cannot serve as a substitute for your rationale.**

There are a couple of different ways you can use this worksheet:

* Write brief answers in the spaces provided in each section, and then expand on these entries when you actually write your rationale.
* If there’s not enough space to answer all the questions as carefully as you’d like, use the worksheet as an outline and actually develop more extensive answers directly in a word processing program. These entries can then serve as a first draft of your rationale.

Do your best to carefully reflect on the questions posed in the worksheet and answer them as best as you can. If you do, you will have the foundation for a very good rationale.

**Rationale Worksheet**

**I.** **Background information about you and your goals**

1. What are your personal, professional, and educational goals?
2. How might a college degree help you to meet those goals?
3. What degree(s) are you seeking at Empire State College
4. What information about your employment background and life experience is important to your academic goals and to your degree program?

**II. Required Research: ESC Area of Study Guidelines**

1. Which Empire State College Area of Study guidelines are relevant to your concentration?
2. Does the relevant Area of Study guideline have both a general discussion of knowledge and skills expected in your degree AND a specific discussion of expected knowledge and skills for certain concentrations within the broad area of study?
3. List out the knowledge and skills that the guidelines indicate students in this area are expected to have. List out BOTH the knowledge and skills from the general guideline as well as the knowledge and skills from the specific concentration guideline, if this area of study has both.
4. What in your background addresses each area of knowledge or skill? (a particular college course or courses, PLA, knowledge you’ve gained but are not pursuing through coursework or PLA)
5. Self-check: have you addressed all expected areas of knowledge and skill? IF not, then discuss gaps with your mentor, as these will need to be addressed in some way for your degree to be approved.

**III. Additional Research: Other Sources, as appropriate to your degree plan**

1. Did you review catalogs, degree programs, and/or course descriptions from other colleges and universities? Be specific. Name the institutions and the programs you consulted. What did you learn from these catalogs? What courses are common to each program you reviewed? How did you include the common courses or areas of knowledge and skill in your degree program?
2. Did you consult professionals or academics who are experienced in the area of your degree program concentration? Who were they? What did you learn? How did you incorporate their advice into your degree program by adding specific studies?
3. Did you consult a graduate program advisor or a graduate catalog if you plan to continue your studies beyond the bachelor’s level? What institution? What did you learn? How did this knowledge affect your choice of studies?
4. Did you investigate employment or career opportunities? How? What did you learn? How did this knowledge affect your choice of studies?

**IV. Overall Degree Program Design**

1. Does your degree program meet requirements for liberal credits? Do you understand the meaning of “liberal” studies? (liberal studies are indicated with a \* in dpplanner)
2. Does your bachelor’s degree program include sufficient advanced-level credits overall (45 are required)? Within your concentration (24 are required)? Advanced-level credits can be included in an associate degree, but they aren’t required. (advanced-level credit is indicated with a + in dpplanner)
3. IF you have a concentration for an associate degree, did you include basic, foundation courses in that area of study? Explain briefly.
4. IF you have a concentration for a bachelor’s degree, how have you build upon foundation courses to do more advanced-level work? Explain very briefly any progression in coursework (e.g., Principles of Management is a foundation for Managerial Leadership, Human Resource Management and Development, and International Cross-Cultural Management).
5. IF you have a concentration, how are all of the studies in the concentration column of your degree plan consistent with the title of the concentration? How do they “work together” to make a coherent concentration?

**V. General Learning**

1. How have you addressed the SUNY General Education requirement (7 of 10 areas and at least 30 credits of general learning required; 2 of those areas MUST fulfill Mathematics and Basic Communications).

**VI. Conclusion**

1. Include comments as a means of completing your rationale essay.