NSSP/CTSP/CSHS Analysis Paper Guidelines (2021)

This is a longer analysis paper which should be 6-8 pages at least plus bibliography. This is a more typical academic research paper.

Sections of the Analysis Paper:

A. Abstract or BLUF (Bottom Line Up Front)
   - Identifies the concern or question.
   - Includes a statement covering the basis for analysis and the information/facts used.
   - States clearly MAJOR implications, key judgments, conclusions, and/or recommendations or possible courses of action.

   This is several strong tight and focused paragraphs. It is all that is really needed to understand your paper.

B. Background or Introduction:
   - Summarizes the question and issue, the various points of view on the topic and explains how they have led to the question driving the inquiry (What?)
     - Clearly states a good relevant question (based on the requirement question)
     - The guiding question is not limited to “yes” or “no” or “either/or”
     - The guiding question asks how, why, should or the extent to which …..
     - Conveys a clear idea of who you are answering the question for, e.g., the political or leaders or an informed citizen
   - Explains why this issue is important, and what is at stake; addresses relation to other bigger or more important issues (Why and so What?)

   A page at least - several paragraphs for each of the two main bullets above.

C. Method and Analysis Development:
   - States the analysis purpose - is it for information only, to give judgment(s), and/or to suggest possible action(s).
   - List any underlying assumptions or working thesis. If needed point out any concepts needed for the analysis – what the reader is assumed to know.
   - Discuss your method (any analysis tools) and what type of information you have access to.
   - Information for the analysis: Describe the key information and the gathered facts relative to the issue. Why are they the best available. (e.g., experts, data, types of intelligence, doing background/historical work, etc.)

   A least three pages – at most one for the first three bullets in this category and at least two for the last most important bullet.
D. Implications

- Claims and expected results: Explains the implications regarding this question and how the assumptions, information, facts and methods support the implications.
- Challenges anticipated counterarguments: Are there other implications that could come from the information and analysis and what counterarguments are there to them? Most often this is due to different assumptions and understanding of the underlying concepts.

One page for each major implication and for each major counter position. Order from most important to least (but still important).

Part C and D are often merged taking each major implication and counter implication in turn. Thus, facts, information, etc. can be followed by an implication and an analysis of the implementation and then a second implication with facts etc. first presented to support it. Then each counter implication is presented in that fashion.

E. Conclusions, key judgments, and course of action the analysis supports.

- State the main conclusions and key judgments of the assessment and be sure they are adequately justified. What might be implications of action or non-action if a course or action is suggested or is part of the issue? Implications should lead naturally to conclusions or key judgments or to possible actions.

Generally, less than one page unless there are multiple judgments to cover.

F. Annotated Bibliography

Divides sources by genre

- At least 10 sources (minimal use of Wikipedia (best to go to their sources), no About, must be books or articles from journals, other open sources such as news organizations authored articles, or documented experts quoted in news, magazine, and other sources)
- Demonstrates that you have collected and reviewed relevant sources to the extent that you are able to write authoritatively on the analysis being done on your topic.
- Websites OK if it is clear (or if you explain the context), such as "official site of the Y organization" or "Blog site with authored article by X". It is better here to cite the author and then use the blog as the published source. When possible go to the source for information instead of a third party.

G. Other features of your analysis paper.

- Audience: Write to an appropriate audience as identified in the Introduction, e.g., paper for NSSP summer research project or for Y class.
- Title: Very important to describe the topic and issue to catch attention to the analysis/assessment.
- Language and Grammar: Use Skrunk and White, The Elements of Style or similar writing guide.