Grammar & Style: Emphasis
(Adapted from Joseph Williams’ and Joseph Bizup’s
Style: The Basics of Clarity and Grace, 5th ed.
“Lesson 5: Emphasis”)

Williams’ Principles of Emphasis
#1: Move from less to more complex grammar within a sentence; end (rather than begin) with
long and complex phrases and clauses.
#2: Move from simpler, familiar information to new, more complex information (for example,
introducing a new term or concept).
#3: End sentences with words/ideas that deserve emphasis.

Williams’ Suggestions for Revision
#1: Trim the end. Look for clunky phrasing, repetition, too many prepositional phrases, and
revise to simplify.
#2: Shift peripheral ideas to the left part of the sentence to avoid ending on placeholder
words/phrases or relatively less important information.
#3: Shift new information to the right part of the sentence so that new information receives
emphasis.

Practice: Read your paper out loud to identify sentences that could be revised for emphasis. Use
the above suggestions for revision to rewrite the sentences.