

Course: DMED 540 Technical Writing I
Term: Fall 2021
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Course Description

This course is specially designed for students who intend to apply their writing know-how to professional technical fields. It is a foundational course, so the content will approach each stage through the lens of an ESP (English for specialized purposes) student learning the fundamentals of specialized writing. The primary strategy focuses on applicability and practicality, so the workshop/collaborative model is intended to offer in-class exercises and lab assignments, which will gradually build from the existing knowledge of the English language towards a clear, cohesive and concise writing style, suitable for technical environments.

The three stages of the course will follow a logical pattern, and they will be accompanied by reading materials. Classes will comprise research and field assignments, peer-editing, writing sessions according to the audience involved and a variety of examples to clarify each stage. The main tasks will revolve around the concepts of workplace standard reports, letters and emails, writing specific formal and informal proposals, instructional writing, summaries and abstracts, fundamentals of user manuals, and others.

The course is structured as follows:

- A. Fundamentals of workplace writing, conducting research, collecting data, selecting the core information for expository texts, reports and surveys; (first stage - reading and research)**
- B. Multimedia and technical writing, best practices in selecting media platforms, graphics, jargon and uses of jargon according to the audience; (second stage - the structure of a technical text, previews, summaries and sentence clarity)**
- C. Technical writing for project proposals (foundations) - language accuracy, clarity, proper grammaticality, addressing a specific audience, logical sequence and arrangement, etc. (third stage)**

*Covid-19 amendments and curriculum changes

Considering the current situation, the format of the present course has been carefully amended to suit an e-learning environment, and provide students with a variety of activities designed to enhance self-study and research techniques. We aim to create an engaging pre-MDM community where students can follow and measure their progress through regular feedback. Courses will be delivered on Zoom, written assignments will be completed in Google docs/Google drive and shared with the teacher and the IAs (when necessary), our communication will be mostly on Zoom, email, Google drive, canva.com for some presentations, and our WhatsApp group. You will receive the materials for the course each week before the start of the online class.

Course Objectives

Throughout the course, you will:

- Improve accuracy, clarity, cohesion and pace through technical writing exercises;
- Gradually improve reading and listening comprehension of technical terms and jargon used in the industry;
- Develop strategies for conducting research, selecting documentation and analyzing texts and user manuals, project proposals;
- Have a better understanding of your abilities to instruct a particular audience, get feedback and improve according to the feedback, revise your writing using various strategies and peer-edit;
- Correctly use new lexical items related to contemporary digital media environments by applying the language in writing assignments specially devised to improve clarity and cohesion;
- Practise concise writing of instructional and expository texts individually, in pairs and in groups,

Students' goals:

Note: This part will be completed in class during our first week. You will discuss your personal goals and needs related to this course in groups, and articulate five additional goals you would like to achieve throughout the semester.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

Course Format

The course will run for 13 weeks with 2.15-hour weekly synchronous* modules. *This is not a lecture-based course, it is a practical language one, therefore the materials and activities planned for class are communicative and involve active-learning. The course doesn't intend to teach hard skills and the focus is on the operating language in the authentic materials.*

***Synchronous e-learning means** that the instructor and the students in the course engage with the course content and each other simultaneously, but from different locations, through online platforms.

****Asynchronous e-learning** includes various forms of digital and online learning. The courses are not being delivered in person, and in real-time, and the schedule is more flexible. Students receive tasks and activities to complete independently, and the instructor offers feedback and error-correction (for language instruction).

Course pre-requisites

A minimum of intermediate/upper-intermediate English proficiency is required to take this course. i.e. IELTS academic overall - 6.5



You should also have an intermediate ability to operate with Digital Media terms/concepts.

Tips for a successful completion of the course

- The motivation, participation and attendance grade (MPA - 20%) should be taken seriously throughout the semester.
- Writing can be a daunting task if not handled and scheduled/structured properly, so a good outline for every task should help you immensely with an overview of the content you wish to present.
- Try to use all the digital tools recommended throughout the course, even if you have a preferred one. Testing a wide array of applications and writing tools will contribute to your development in the field.
- Collaboration is essential and learning how to ask the right questions and peer-edit will guarantee success in the course.
- As far as assignments are concerned, (graded and ungraded) they need to be handed in due time. You will have the possibility to extend **one** assignment **per semester** and extensions will only be granted for medical and emergency reasons, for which you will have to provide written proof.

Note!

Each week, you will receive an assignment covering the topic discussed. You will complete **graded and **ungraded** assignments as well as a formative (optional) and sometimes mandatory with your reflections/ideas about the topic. The formative assignments are optional, which means you don't have to complete them, but I advise you to finish and send them in, because they are designed to re-structure and strengthen the knowledge you have received throughout the week. All assignments are linked with the previous and future topics, contributing to a good flow in learning.**

Stages	Week	Focus	Assignment	Due
Stage 1	1	<p>Fundamentals of workplace writing, conducting research, collecting data, selecting the core information for expository texts, reports and surveys;</p> <p>Introduction and style sheets/style guides</p>	<p>Formative and optional</p> <p>Writing task</p>	Week 2
	2	<p>Reading - style, informal and formal writing at the workplace</p>	<p>Final assignment explanation</p> <p>Formative and optional</p> <p>Writing task</p>	<p>Week 12</p> <p>Week 3</p>
	3	<p>Conducting research, collecting data, writing short expository texts and fundamentals of templates.</p> <p>(focus on grammaticality, clarity and cohesion)</p>	<p>Reading examples and comments</p> <p>Formative and optional</p>	Week 3

Stages	Week	Focus	Assignment	Due
Stage 2	4	The grammar of technical writing	Formative and optional Exercise sheet	Week 5
	5	Multimedia and technical writing, best practices in selecting media platforms, graphics, jargon and uses of jargon according to the audience; (second stage - the structure of a technical text, pre-views, summaries and sentence clarity) Introduction Technical vocabulary and style Grammar and clarity Using publishing tools - examples and best practices	Formative and optional Writing task	Week 6
	6	Technical jargon (examples/dictionaries and tools)	Formative and optional Reading materials	Week 7

Stages	Week	Focus	Assignment	Due
	7	Structure of a technical text	Formative and optional Reading materials	Week 8
	8	Focus week - overview of the writing methods	Formative and optional Writing task	Week 9
	9	In-class presentations of the writing assignments, (types of feedback)	Formative and optional Writing task	Week 10
Stage 3	10	Technical writing for project proposals Examples of proposals (scanning and skimming user documentation) <i>Reading materials</i>	Formative and optional Quiz Last stage assignment (final guidelines)	Week 10 Week 12

Stages	Week	Focus	Assignment	Due
	11	The logical sequence project proposal	Formative and optional User manual outline (steps)	Week 12
	12	Steps for writing-editing-revising-peer-revising <i>Delivering final assignments</i>	Formative and optional	
	13	Conclusion. Final grades	N/A	Week 13

Evaluation

You will be evaluated according to your research ability, collaborative work and final stage assignment, and quizzes. Writing clearly and accurately and using proper style vocabulary for a specialized industry is of utmost importance for your professional life and for your future MDM program. The following methods will offer you a balanced assessment at the end of the term:

Motivation, participation and attendance (MPA) 20%

Throughout the semester, you will be graded according to your willingness to participate in discussions, peer-reviews, self-correction and attitude towards your instructor and peers. You should limit your device time to in-class activity requirements (during synchronous sessions) and be present and active at all times (both synchronous and asynchronous activities).

Quiz (Q-1) 30%

You will complete one **quiz per semester** related to technical writing strategies and best practices. It will be based on the mandatory readings and/or listening activities and will be administered in the last weeks of the term. **No extensions will be granted for this task. Quizzes are mandatory and to be completed synchronously, on Zoom.**

Final Assignment (FA - 1) 50%

Final assignments will be graded according to: task achievement, effective command of language, fluency, accuracy, coherence, cohesion, and critical thinking. (Project proposal as final assignment)

**The rest of the assignments are formative and they will not receive a grade per se. They will, however, be accounted for on the base of completion.*

Total 100%

Grading System

A+	95-100
A	90-94
A-	85-89
B+	80-84
B	75-79
B-	70-74
C+	65-69
C	60-64
F	0-59

Policies

The student and academic policies of the Masters of Digital Media Program and of Simon Fraser University apply within this course. Relevant SFU policies can be found at:

- Graduate General Regulations

<http://www.sfu.ca/students/calendar/2021/fall/fees-and-regulations/grad-regulation.html>

- Academic Honesty and Student Conduct Policies

<http://www.sfu.ca/policies/Students/index.html>

- Teaching and Instruction Policies

<http://www.sfu.ca/policies/gazette/teaching.html>

- University Policies (complete site)

<http://www.sfu.ca/policies>