

Course: DMED 540 Technical Writing (Fundamentals) 1

Term: Fall semester 2023

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Course Description

This course is designed to be foundational; therefore, the content will approach each stage through the lens of an ESP (English for specialized purposes) student learning the fundamentals of specialized writing. We will focus on applicability and practicality, so the workshop/collaborative model is intended to offer in-class exercises and lab assignments, which will gradually build from your existing knowledge of the technical English language toward 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 sometimes be accompanied by reading materials. Classes will comprise at least one group project, research and field assignments, peer-editing, writing sessions according to the audience involved and various 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 covers the following topics, and the instructor reserves the right to change, add or remove materials as per students' needs and class format:

- 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)

Course Objectives

Throughout the course, you will:

- Improve accuracy, clarity, cohesion and pace through technical writing exercises;
- Develop strategies for conducting research by selecting documentation and analyzing texts and, user manuals, project proposals;
- Get 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. In groups, you will discuss your personal goals and needs related to this course and articulate five additional goals you would like to achieve throughout the semester.

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Course Format

The course will run for 13 weeks with 3-hour weekly synchronous* modules. *This is not a lecture-based course; it is a practical language; therefore, the materials and activities planned for the class are communicative and involve active learning. The course doesn't intend to teach hard skills; the focus is on the operating language in authentic materials.*

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 successful completion of the course

- The motivation, participation and attendance grade (MPA - 20%) should be taken seriously throughout the semester.
- Writing can be daunting 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. In class, you will be asked to use ChatGPT as an auxiliary editing and text-organizing tool. That being said, please refrain from using any AI tools when writing your final graded assignments. That constitutes plagiarism and will be treated as per the Simon Fraser University academic integrity code.
- Collaboration is essential, and learning to ask the right questions and peer-edit will guarantee success in the course.
- As far as assignments (graded and ungraded), they must be handed in due time. You can 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.

Tasks and assignments

Each week, you will receive an assignment covering the topic discussed. You will complete **graded** and **ungraded** assignments and a formative one with your reflections/ideas about the topic. The formative assignments are optional, but you should complete them 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 learning flow.

Group Project

During the fall semester, you will all participate in a group project centred around **writing project proposals as a team**. You will be set up into teams of 3 or more and experience various roles within the team, going through a project simulation that covers a digital solution for one of Metro Vancouver's main touristic attractions. This project will include field trips and team meetings in a simulated Agile vocabulary environment. All **the written materials** will constitute the final grade of the Technical Writing I course. You will learn self and peer-assessment techniques.

Schedule

Week	Stage	Focus	Tasks and assignments
1	<i>Fundamentals of workplace writing</i>	Fundamentals of workplace writing [workplace written communication in Canada]	N/A
2		Register - formal and informal writing at the workplace	In-class writing sessions
3		Writing short expository texts and creating templates.	In-class writing sessions
4		The grammar of technical writing	In-class writing sessions
5	<i>Multimedia and technical writing, best practices</i>	Technical vocabulary and style Using publishing tools - examples and best practices	In-class writing sessions
6		Technical jargon. When to use and when to avoid? (examples and tools)	In-class writing sessions
7		The structure of a technical text	In-class writing sessions
8		Writing for your audience	In-class writing sessions
9	<i>Technical writing for project proposals (foundational knowledge)</i>	The structure of a project proposal - examples and practical exercises	In-class writing sessions
10		Scanning and skimming methods - research data and user documentation for a project proposal	In-class writing sessions
11		Project proposal steps: writing-editing-revising-peer-revising	In-class writing sessions
12		Bringing it all together. Project proposal documentation delivery	Project proposal delivery
13	<i>Wrap up</i>	Review content, get final feedback.	End of term review

Evaluation

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

Motivation, participation and attendance 20%

Throughout the semester, you will be graded according to your willingness to participate in discussions, peer reviews, self-correction and attitude toward your instructor and peers. You should limit your device time to in-class activity requirements and always be present and active.

Project work (team involvement) 30%

You will conduct self-assessment and peer assessment and receive instructor feedback for your team collaboration during our project simulation proposal writing.

Final Assignment 50%

Final assignments will be graded according to task achievement, effective command of the language, fluency, accuracy, coherence, cohesion, and critical thinking. (Team-based project proposal = 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	Very Good, Excellent, or Outstanding Performance
A	90-94	
A-	85-89	
B+	80-84	Good Performance
B	75-79	Satisfactory Performance
B-	70-74	Marginally Unsatisfactory Performance
C+	65-69	Unsatisfactory Performance
C	60-64	
F	0 – 59	Unsatisfactory Performance (students must retake the course)

Policies (Simon Fraser University)

Accommodations

The university accommodates students whose religious obligations conflict with attendance, submitting assignments, or completing scheduled tests and examinations. Please let your instructor know in advance, preferably the first week of class, if you will require any accommodations on these grounds.

The Centre for Accessible Learning (CAL) will make every effort to assist students with disabilities in achieving their educational goals.

<https://www.sfu.ca/students/accessible-learning/establishing-accommodations/accommodation.html>

Academic Integrity: Your Work, Your Success

SFU's Academic Integrity website <http://www.sfu.ca/students/academicintegrity.html> is filled with information on what academic dishonesty means, where you can find resources to help with your studies and the consequences of cheating.

Each student is responsible for their conduct as it affects the university community. Academic dishonesty, in any form, destroys the university's values. Furthermore, it is unfair and discouraging to most students who pursue their studies honestly. Scholarly integrity is required of all members of the university. <http://www.sfu.ca/policies/gazette/student/s10-01.html>

Inappropriate use of technology in coursework

If you are using generative AI to produce content that will be part of your graded work in the course, you must be transparent about your tools. Undeclared use of the tool/technology will be considered a violation of the academic integrity policy. Be aware that any tool used will require you to evaluate the output for accuracy and be responsible for making the appropriate corrections.

Graduate Studies Notes

Important dates and deadlines for graduate students are found here: http://www.sfu.ca/dean-gradstudies/current/important_dates/guidelines.html.