

Professional Writing Program Guide



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Program Overview

Program Mission

The professional writing program seeks to create an environment that encourages and supports the use and development of effective professional communication practices. We teach students to successfully perform the primary tasks of workplace writers (analysis, research, design, writing, editing, and publishing) in order to prepare them to adapt to a variety of work situations.

Ways to Study Professional Writing

Minor in Professional Writing

Students who minor in professional writing can learn to effectively communicate their content knowledge to different audiences. The minor prepares students to communicate effectively in their careers or to face the rigors of writing in graduate or law school. Students who pair a professional writing minor with a science, engineering, or technology degree develop a diverse skill set that can set them apart on the job market.

Bachelor of Arts in English with concentration in Professional Writing

Students who major in English with a concentration in professional writing learn to translate their “soft skills” (critical thinking, problem solving, empathy, interpersonal communication) to workplace contexts. The concentration prepares students for careers that depend on strong communication and writing skills. Students who take the core professional writing courses will be prepared for a careers in technical and professional writing.

Graduate Certificate in Professional Writing

The Online Graduate Certificate in Professional Writing was designed for working professionals and recent graduates looking to make themselves competitive in the job market. The 15-credit hour graduate certificate qualifies students for positions as professional or technical writers and provides the opportunity for professionals in business, government, and technical positions to greatly enhance their writing, editing, and document design abilities. The program is designed to be an additional credential or enhancement, not a substitute for a graduate degree.

Master of Arts in English with concentration in Professional Writing

Students who pursue an MA in English with a concentration in professional writing develop the research and critical writing skills of graduate students, as well as professional communication

skills. Like the graduate certificate, the MA qualifies students for positions as professional or technical writers. Additionally, students who take graduate courses in Rhetoric and Composition will be prepared to teach professional writing at community colleges and universities.

Course Requirements

Core Courses

ENGL 472 – Professional Writing

ENGL 473 – Professional Editing

ENGL 474 – Document Design

ENGL 462 – Special Projects in Professional Writing

ENGL 463 – Professional Writing Practicum (Internship)

Course Descriptions

ENGL 472 – Professional Writing. Emphasis on extended projects that involve generating and gathering information, and designing and producing documents for government, industry, and business.

ENGL 474 – Document Design. Principles of professional document design with emphasis on the application of these principles in creating print and electronic documents.
Spring Courses

ENGL 473 – Professional Editing. Practical application of professional editing in government, industry, and business.

ENGL 462 – Special Projects in Professional Writing. Special projects courses focus on an aspect of professional writing. Special projects include, but are not limited to, grant writing, e-publishing, and new media design.

ENGL 463 – Professional Writing Practicum. Industry, agency, or university internship.

Internship Opportunities & possible tasks

| Marketing Firm or Division of an Organization | News Media or Magazine | Writing Division of an Organization | UL Program or Department |
|--|-----------------------------------|--|---------------------------------|
| Create Social Media Plans & Content | Write Feature Stories | Write Technical Documents | Write Policies and Procedures |
| Blog | Blog | Create Instructional Material | Write Web Content |
| Write Web Content | Write & Edit Articles | Write Policies and Procedures | Design Newsletters, Brochures |
| Write Press Releases | Edit Video, Work with Camera Crew | Write Proposals | Create Presentations |
| Create Print & Web Advertising | Interview | Write & Edit Grants with non-profits | Edit Documents |

Previous Course Descriptions

ENGL 472: Professional Writing

This online course prepares students for professional writing situations. The project-based course focuses on the analysis of professional writing contexts and the creation of documents for businesses, non-profit organizations, and/or community groups. The course will mimic a virtual workplace, placing an emphasis on digital documents, collaborative methods, and project management tools and strategies. Students will produce a range of documents, which depending on the work context, could include standard operating policies and procedures, feasibility reports, handbooks, and business proposals.

ENGL 474: Document Design

This online professional writing course introduces students to document design. In the first half of the semester, the emphasis will be on document analysis. Students will collect professional documents, use principles and theories of design to analyze them, and present the documents and analysis in an online design portfolio. In the second half of the semester, students will begin to apply their design knowledge to original

compositions. They will create a style guide that they will utilize to design web-based and physical documents. Students will be introduced to graphic, web, and layout design software. Course materials include Document Design: A Guide to Technical Communication, video lectures, instructor-designed resources, and online resources.

ENGL 473: Professional Editing

Professional Editing is a practical course designed to familiarize students with the tools and techniques of editing print and digital documents. As a core course in the Professional Writing Certificate Program, it provides students the opportunity to develop the skills to confidently edit the work of co-workers, colleagues, and/or clients. The course will be project-based with students applying their knowledge of professional editing to authentic documents from non-profits, business, technology, and the academy. Students will learn to use editing tools like proofreader's marks, style guides, and standard editorial reference materials, and digital tools like the editing features of Google Docs and MS Word. Carolyn Rude and Angela Eaton's Technical Editing (5th Ed.) will be the course textbook.

ENGL 462: Special Projects in Professional Writing

Topics changes for special projects courses. Below are descriptions of some of the special projects courses offered.

Topic: Professional Blogging

Blogging in Professional Contexts is a project-based course in which students plan, design, and create their own professional blogs. Students will take a systematic approach to creating a blog, progressing from a statement of goals to a published blog with a content plan and editorial calendar. The course reinforces professional writing methods with students conducting audience analysis and usability tests, producing social media content strategies, and writing professional content targeted to a specific audience. Course materials include Writing & Editing for Digital Media, video lectures, instructor-designed resources, and online resources. This class will NOT meet face-to-face.

Topic: Multimedia Storytelling

Professional writing now requires students to be fluent in visual rhetoric and multimedia technologies. As Internet genres are adapted for a multiplatform world, professional writers are finding the need to merge traditional storytelling concepts with multimedia technology. This course will focus on multimedia storytelling, providing students with the skills needed to create visual stories for the Internet. Multimedia Storytelling is a project-based course in which students plan, design, and compose visual "stories" for the Internet. Students will be introduced to visual design and storytelling principles and theories, and through weekly exercises develop digital media skills. Students will apply what they learn to an advocacy campaign, creating video stories that align with professional content plans. Students at all videography skill-levels can benefit from the course. Prior experience shooting or editing video is not a requirement. Students will need access to a, and video editing software. Course materials include Multimedia Storytelling for Digital

Communicators in a Multiplatform World, a camera or phone capable of taking video, and video editing software. This class will NOT meet face-to-face.

Topic: ePublishing

“EePublishing Online” will begin by exploring various social media spaces, such as Facebook, YouTube and WordPress (somewhat old school but still very much used as a blogspace), with a special emphasis on the creation of etexts and appropriate online personae by the professional writer working in a variety of fields. We’ll also create a project using Storify, which is a useful and free space for standalone online research or nonfiction essays involving media. The final part of the semester will explore the use of Drupal as a model for the use of a Content Management System (CMS), rather than the very old school use of HTML and direct Web coding, including the use of prewritten modules that add functionality but require configuration by the site administrator. For their final project, students will create a Drupal based project that would fit their areas of interest, and doing the project and writing a defense of it would be part of the academic work of the course. This course is part of the new online certificate in professional writing; rhetoric students, creative writers and literature scholars welcome, with the cheerful note that many English MAs and PhDs have managed very successful and lucrative careers as professional writers as the market prospects for teaching positions worsen with each passing year; projects may also be creative or research oriented in nature. Certificate students who work outside academe may write in a number of genres, but are encouraged to create real world projects, including those assigned as part of their work lives, with permission of the instructor. No textbooks required. No tests. No quizzes. Just writing/digital text production and lots of it. Online only.

Undergraduate Outcomes

Professional Writing Mission

The Professional Writing program prepares students to successfully perform the primary tasks of workplace writers: analysis, research, design, writing, editing, and publishing.

Goals of the Undergraduate Professional Writing Program

Students who take the core professional writing courses will be prepared to write in a workplace, produce web content and web content strategies for organizations, and manage writing projects. Every undergraduate will be able to demonstrate their preparation to take on the following roles:

Workplace Writer

Understand features of workplace genres; produce documents with a clear understanding of audience, purpose, and organizational standards and policies; write accurate content that communicates clearly and concisely.

Understand the features of workplace genres:

- **Practical Communication:** Email, memos, and letters.
- **Technical Communication:** Procedures, instructions, and FAQs.
- **Professional Communication:** Reports, proposals, and work plans.

Web Content Writer

Understand the features of digital publishing platforms and technologies; understand theories and best practices for writing for the web; understand the ethics and marketing strategies of digital publication for organizations; produce informative and persuasive web content.

Writing Project Manager

Understand the process of writing in an organization; understand methods and process of information collection, evaluation, and reporting; coordinate complex writing projects; collaborate with a team and across multiple teams.

Opportunities in the Professional Writing Program

Students who participate in co-curricular activities and work towards their professional development will graduate with a wider range of skills and abilities. They can develop skills and knowledge introduced in courses and proficiency in technologies and tools in the Professional Design Studio, and demonstrate their abilities with internships.

Students can develop skills & abilities to take on the following roles:

- **Social Media Marketing Writer**
 - Understands how social media platforms used by organizations; understands Internet marketing strategies and tools; designs and writes social media content, style guides, and plans; creates visual media.
 - **Keywords:** Social Media Management, Google Analytics

- **Website Coordinator**
 - Understands website design best practices and technologies; understands Internet marketing strategies and tools; develops proficiency in web design; designs and writes web content.
 - **Keywords:** CMS, Web Design, HTML, CSS, Google Analytics

- **Digital Media Creator**
 - Understands the affordances of different media platforms; uses multimedia tools and technologies to plan and/or create multimedia content for organizations.
 - **Keywords:** Digital Storytelling, Graphic Design, Video Editing Camera, Microphone

- **Document Designer**
 - Understand principles of design and apply them to documents; use layout and design tools and technologies to create print and digital media.
 - **Keywords:** Document Design, Desktop Publishing

- **Feature Writer**
 - Apply knowledge of research, writing, and storytelling, and an awareness of public audiences to write informative essays and stories.
 - **Keywords:** Nonfiction, Feature Writing, Magazine, Newspaper

- **Copy Editor**

- Understand editing roles and procedures; ability to ensure consistency in style and information; ability to clarify meaning and improve document readability and effectiveness; ability to organize, rewrite, and refine drafts.
 - **Keywords:** Professional Editing, Grammar, Publishing

Graduate Studies

Graduate Certificate

The Graduate Certificate in Professional Writing is an entirely online program that will provide professionals knowledge and experience composing in a wide range of professional and technical genres for a wide range of audiences in technical and professional writing (both print and online), as well as in document design, editing, and collaborating with others in creating texts for business, government, and technical purposes. This 15-hour graduate certificate will qualify students for positions as professional or technical writers and provides the opportunity for professionals in business, government, and technical positions to greatly enhance their writing, editing, and document design abilities.

Course Requirements

Candidates must successfully complete all five (5) courses listed below with a grade of "B" or better to receive the Graduate Certificate in Professional Writing.

Core Courses

- ENGL 472 - Professional Writing
- ENGL 473 - Professional Editing
- ENGL 474 - Document Design
- ENGL 462 - Special Projects in Professional Writing
- ENGL 463 - Professional Writing Practicum (Internship)

Duration

This entirely online program offers 16-week courses in Fall and Spring and 8-week courses in Summer. The program can be completed in twelve or sixteen months.

12-Month Plan

Students who schedule two courses in Fall and Spring will be able to complete the program in twelve months with a Summer internship.

16-month Plan

Students who prefer to schedule one course per semester will be able to complete the program in sixteen months with an internship concurrent with their final semester.

Master of Arts in English with concentration in Professional Writing

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Required Courses

- ENGL 472 - Professional Writing (Online)
- ENGL 473 - Professional Editing (Online)
- ENGL 474 - Document Design (Online)
- ENGL 462 - Special Projects in Professional Writing (Online)
- ENGL 463 - Professional Writing Practicum. We will place students with a business, non-profit organization, or university office to complete a 45 hour internship in which students will complete assignments that allow them to use and develop their professional writing skills.
- ENGL 596 - Research Methods (On Campus)

Electives *

- One course in Rhetoric
- One course in Linguistics
- One course in Rhetoric, Linguistics, Creative Writing, Literature, and/or Folklore.

Thesis

M.A. students with a concentration in professional writing will complete a thesis project, a professional portfolio with a theoretical introduction. Students will collect documents they have completed throughout their course work and prepare them for inclusion in a professional portfolio. Students will write an academic introduction to their portfolio based on readings in professional writing theory and workplace research.