

Date: December 15, 2004  
To: Dr. Sharon Nelson, Associate Dean, College of Liberal Arts  
From: Henry Limouze, Chair, English  
Subject: Attached Proposal for undergraduate Certificate and course changes

The proposal for an undergraduate Certificate in Technical and Professional Writing is attached. The new Certificate will combine the most important and current features of the previous Certificate in Professional Writing and the Certificate in Technical Writing. The proposal requires the creation of one new course:

ENG 404

The proposal requires the modification of the following courses:

ENG 347  
ENG 400  
ENG 402  
ENG 405

The titles of all courses in the proposal reflect the new titles requested in the attached course modification forms.

The proposal itself gives an excellent account of the justification for these changes on pages two and three. Our current certificates were created twenty years ago and have received little revision or updating since then. The field of technical writing, in particular, has changed significantly. The changes we propose will enable us better to meet students' professional needs, and will make the certificates more relevant for possible target audiences.

Please contact me if you have any questions on this proposal. Thank you.

Department of English Language and Literatures

# **Proposal for an *Undergraduate Certificate in Technical and Professional Writing***

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February 10, 2005

# **Proposal for an *Undergraduate Certificate in Technical and Professional Writing***

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## **Introduction: Proposal Summary**

This proposal recommends the following:

- Combining the separate Technical Writing and Professional Writing certificate programs.
- Changing the course requirements for the new certificate.
- Modifying the titles and contents of existing courses: English 347, English 400, English 402, and English 405.
- Adding a variable credit course: English 404.

### **Purpose**

The Certificate in Technical and Professional Writing offers appropriate courses to students interested in improving their writing, editing, and computer skills for a future in technical or professional writing. The certificate is especially useful for students majoring in technical fields.

## **Reasons for Program Changes**

The following is the rationale for revising our current dual certificate program:

### **Changes Needed for Our Program**

- Our program began over 16 years ago without any modifications.
- Our courses have changed to four hours, thus requiring that we modify the number of courses required for a certificate from six to five.
- Some of our current course titles and descriptions are outdated and inaccurate. Course content varies drastically, depending on the instructor.

### **Changes in the Profession**

- The technical writing field has changed drastically. For example, it is highly specialized (legal, financial, government, sciences, medical, software) and requires knowledge of technical subject areas and software tools.
- A survey of other technical writing certificate programs shows that we cannot be competitive with the course offerings.
- The job market is tight, making it difficult to market the existing certificate programs.

### **Changes in Our Target Audience**

- Enrollments have decreased in some of the advanced technical writing courses. Some of our courses have enrollments of fewer than 10 students, which is not cost-effective.

- Students in our current courses are predominantly Integrated Language Arts, English, and Communication majors. This diverse audience makes it difficult to meet student needs given the current limitations of our courses.
- Our course offerings for English majors are weak in the areas of hypertext, electronic publishing, and publishing careers and in basic computer and online skills.

## **Changes in Our Resources**

- Staff to teach technical writing courses is limited.
- Resources for continually upgrading the software in computer labs are limited.
- Software required for technical writing is highly specialized. These changes will eliminate some of the courses that have been targeted specifically for potential technical writers. New courses that teach software tools for writers can use software available at certain workstations or software books that include trial versions of the programs.
- Software training should be available at Wright State for students but should not primarily come from the English Department.

## **Benefits**

The proposed changes will make our certificate program

### **More Flexible**

- More topics can be offered.
- Topics can change to keep up with technology and changes in the field and future additions to staff.
- Adjuncts with field experience and expertise can offer specific courses or modules.
- Students can take more courses online, which is impossible with the current desktop publishing prerequisite.
- Many of the prerequisites are eliminated, thus reducing bottlenecks and making scheduling easier for students.
- Offering some courses with variable course credit would allow for several, smaller, focused workshops or mini-courses offered online or in one-day workshops. These would appeal to professionals and students outside of Ohio.
- Students will find the offerings more flexible and can tailor the certificate to their career goals.

### **More Focused**

- Course titles can be more specific.
- The certificate will be more focused, thus encouraging students specializing in professional writing to get the certificate.
- Proposed changes would better meet the needs of English majors and offer courses to prepare students for professions in writing.
- Because course titles and objectives will be more specific and targeted to a specific audience, we can advertise them to potential students.
- Our course content will be attractive because it is current and provides marketable skills.

## **More Manageable**

- Computer labs in Millett will be used more.
- One certificate will be easier to manage.
- Making the internship an elective rather than a requirement will allow the certificate program to be 20 hours, will reduce the need to find and manage as many internships. Short courses will allow us to use adjunct experts.

## **Transition Plan**

Students presenting courses under the old certificate requirements will have them accepted, in consultation with the Director of Writing Programs. Courses offered under the old certificate requirement will be grandfathered for seven (7) years.

## **Description of Program**

### **I. Title of Program; college and department responsible for administering program**

Certificate in Technical and Professional Writing  
College of Liberal Arts  
Department of English Language and Literatures

### **II. Objectives**

Offer appropriate courses to students interested in improving their writing, editing, and computer skills for a future in technical or professional writing.

### **III. Undergraduate catalog description**

A certificate in professional and technical writing is available to all students who successfully complete 20 hours from a list of approved writing courses. The certificate program can supplement any of the three English concentrations or any other major. The courses in the program prepare students for careers as writers and editors in technical, business and related fields.

### **IV. Admission Requirements**

- English 101 and 102 or the equivalent
- English 330/530 Business Writing
- Only two transfer courses may be accepted.

### **V. Program Requirements**

**5 Courses; 20 hours**

<b>Basics</b>	<b>Skills</b>	<b>Specialized Topics</b>
<b>English 333: Fundamentals of Technical Writing</b>  <b>4 hours</b>	<b>English 400: Topics in Computers and Professional Writing</b>  <b>4 hours</b>	<b>One of the following:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• English 405: Topics in Technical and Professional Writing</li> <li>• English 404: Short Topics in Technical and Professional Writing</li> </ul> <b>4 hours</b>
	<b>English 402: Professional Editing</b> <b>4 hours</b>	<b>Electives</b>  <b>4 hours; no more than 6 hours</b>

**English 333: Fundamentals of Technical Writing (no change in this course required)**

**Description:** Survey of the fundamental principles and skills used in scientific and technical writing.

**Credit hours:** 4

**English 400: Topics in Computers and Professional Writing (umbrella course)**

**Description:** Courses, seminars, or workshops in specialized topics relating to writing with computers.

**Credit hours:** 4

**Sample Topics:**

- Electronic Publishing
  - HTML
  - Web writing
  - Microsoft Word 2003 editing tools, styles, templates
  - Microsoft PowerPoint 2003 and creating presentations
  - Adobe Acrobat 6 Professional
  - Electronic tools for writers
  - Information design principles
- Visual Communication and Document Design

- Desktop Publishing With InDesign CS
- Introduction to Web Writing and Design

***All courses will be taught in a computer lab or online.***

## **English 402: Professional Editing**

**Credit hours:** 4

**Description:** Instruction and experience in editing technical and professional documents, including both print and online publications. Covers types of editing, the production process and issues in editing.

### **Sample Topics:**

- Skills needed to make appropriate changes in the content, grammar, mechanics, style, format, and organization of manuscripts for scholarly, trade, journalistic, and other professional and technical publications.
- Stages in the publishing process, hard-copy and online editing, mechanical and substantive editing, editing software tools, and use of house and press styles.
- How to edit a variety of technical documents—correspondence, reports, instructions, proposals, online help, Web sites—to make them more usable for their intended audience.
- Copyediting and comprehensive editing and how to apply these to technical and professional documents.
- How to edit the content, organization, style, and mechanics of technical and professional documents.
- How to edit design and illustrations.
- Production process and the editor's roles in production.
- Ethical, legal, and management issues concerning editing.

***This course will be taught in a computer lab or online.***

## **English 405: Topics in Technical, Business, and Professional Writing (umbrella course)**

**Credit hours:** 4

***This course is Writing Intensive***

**Description:** Courses, seminars, or workshops in specialized topics relating to business, technical, and professional writing.

### **Sample Topics:**

- Computer Documentation: An introduction to writing documentation for the computer industry. Covers how to design documentation from a task-oriented point of

view and how to apply the documentation process from planning to production to software tutorials, procedures, and reference documents.

- Writing for the Web
- Introduction to Instructional Design and Writing Training Materials
- Visual Communication

***These courses will be taught in a computer lab or online.***

### **English 404: Short Topics in Technical, Business, and Professional Writing (umbrella course)**

**Credit hours:** 1-4

**Description:** Short courses, seminars, or workshops in specialized topics relating to business, technical, and professional writing.

**Sample Topics:**

- Software Tools for Technical and Professional Writers:
  - Introduction to online help (RoboHelp and HTML help)
  - Flowchart/project management software (Visio)
  - Microsoft Word
  - Microsoft PowerPoint
  - Microsoft FrontPage
  - Introduction to screen capture programs (SnagIt)
  - Page layout programs (FrameMaker)
  - Introduction to HTML
  - Introduction to XML
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- Persuasive Writing: Writing Proposals, Grants, and Technical Marketing Materials

***These courses will be taught in a computer lab or online.***

### **Electives (4-6 hours)**

- English 344 Research Writing
- English 454 Feature Story Writing (also Com 454)
- English 458 Editing for the Media (also Com 458)
- English 400 Topics in Computers and Professional Writing (new topic)
- English 404 Short Topics in Computers and Professional Writing (new topic)
- English 405 Topics in Technical and Professional Writing (new topic)
- English 495 Internship

### **VI. Program Quality.**

16 of the 20 hours are upper-level courses and will be a moderate to advanced level of difficulty.

## **VII. Student Performance.**

- Only grades of A, B or P are acceptable.
- The average GPA in the letter-graded courses must be at least 3.25.

## **VIII. Curriculum Coordination.**

Proposed changes will not directly affect students or curricula in other departments.

## **IX. Resource Coordination.**

- The majority of the courses will be offered online. There are currently four online courses that already exist in the program and that will be modified for the new topics and requirements. Only one additional online course will be added immediately (402/602), which will not adversely affect WebCT load.
- Computer labs in Millett and the computer annex will be used more effectively because course enrollment will increase. Additional computer resources are not needed.
- New courses that teach software tools for writers can use software available at certain workstations or software books that include trial versions of the programs.

## **X. Program Staffing.**

Martha Sammons, Professor of English, full-time.

Mary Beth Pringle, Professor of English, full-time.

Jim Guthrie, Professor of English, full-time.

Jane Blakelock, Lecturer in English, full-time.

Adjuncts will be used for several short courses.

## Course Modifications

<b>Current Course and Description</b>	<b>Modification</b>
<b>English 347/547 Desktop Publishing and Technical Graphics</b> Introduction to the design and illustration of technical documents through labs requiring use of word processing and desktop publishing systems.	<b>English 347/547 Desktop Publishing and Writing for Integrated Language Arts</b> Introduction to computer applications for a variety of both print and online publications, including page design and layout, writing, and editing.
<b>English 402/602 Technical Editing</b> Experience in various elements of technical editing-grammar, style, and content; editing for consistency of format and adherence to standards; and preparing a document for printing.	<b>English 402/602 Professional Editing</b> Instruction and experience in editing technical and professional documents, including both print and online publications. Covers types of editing, the production process and issues in editing.
<b>English 405/605 Topics in Technical Writing</b> Courses, seminars, or workshops in specialized topics relating to technical writing.	<b>English 405/605 Topics in Technical and Professional Writing</b> Courses, seminars, or workshops in specialized topics relating to business, technical, and professional writing.
<b>English 400/600 Advanced Technical Writing</b> Reviews the fundamentals of technical writing with attention to reports, proposals, manuals, technical articles, and style manuals. Emphasis on writing for specific fields with opportunity for independent writing projects in the student's major field.	<b>English 400/600 Topics in Computers and Professional Writing</b> Courses, seminars, or workshops in specialized topics relating to writing with computers. Specific advanced technical writing topics would be taught in the English 405/605 umbrella.

