

Progress Report

ENG 313

Walter Dulle

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Welcome to ENG 313

Technical Writing

Department of English

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Purpose

This is a progress report that will cover how I have developed throughout this course, and how my knowledge of Technical Writing has grown.

Summary

Back in the fall of 2020, I had no experience with Technical Writing. I was unfamiliar with what this class would entail but I knew that I needed some formal writing classes that would prepare me for a wide variety of writing styles for my future career in writing. I asked one of my peers what class I should take and she recommended I take this class. She told me that it was a decent overview of a lot of styles of formal writing, so I decided to take this class.

Now, three or four months later, I am nearing the end of the semester. The end of the class. And I find that I have a better understanding of a wide variety of formal writing styles. Formats like the memo, writing instructions, and even this report, the Progress report. From this class, I feel a lot more confident about writing in any future technical career if I get a job like that. I also find that my skill as a writer has improved as well. I have not done these writing styles before, so getting some experience in these styles has been helpful.

Introduction

When this class started we were told that we would be using a Technical Writing textbook to guide our learning through this class. This textbook by Mike Markel and Stuart A. Selber gave all the information that we students needed to complete the course, as well as carried most of the assignments that we did in this class.

Our Professor gave us a road map in the canvas modules page that we students will complete as the semester progressed. Doing things such as responding in discussion threads, giving our fellow students peer feedback on their assignments when asked, taking quizzes that revolved around the textbook, and many more assignments that we were asked to complete. Some of the biggest projects/assignments were:

- Resume and Cover Letter

- Instruction Writing and Usability Tests
- This progress report.

In the rest of this progress report, I will discuss the results of completing all these assignments and how they have improved my writing skills. Then I will discuss how these assignments, and more broadly, this class will influence my future work.

Results of Research

This section will discuss the large assignments in the order of Resume and Cover Letter, Instructions Writing, Usability Testing Instructions, and Writing the Report (these will be together as they were wrapped in the same assignment) then finally we will end with this Progress Report.

Project 1: Writing a Resume and Cover Letter

View Rubric Evaluation

Assigned Peer Reviews

✓ Jack Szafranski

✓ David Rose

Comments:

I first want to commend you for what you have included for you cover letter and resume. Most of what I have to say is small fixes or formatting suggestions. Starting with the cover letter, I would switch the 2nd and 3rd paragraphs. I feel that your major in Creative Writing is more vital to the position than your demonstration of responsibility. Then, I would strike the term "solo" from the document and replace it with a synonym. Finally, there seems to be an extra space in a sentence in your 4th paragraph that needs to be deleted. As per you resume, I am not sure if this was a formatting issue, but the document reads on 2 pages. It should only be 1 considering how much is on the second page. This

Writing and having a resume and a cover letter are two instrumental components to getting a job at any company. For this project, we were asked to write a Resume and Cover Letter based on a job that we found on a variety of job-finding websites. The main objective of this assignment was to teach us how to design, format, and target a resume and cover letter for a specific company. We were given several tasks to complete to get this done correctly. The first was to take a look at Bad examples of Resumes and cover letters, this was to give us an idea of what sort of things NOT to do when we are working on our own. We students received this list of bad resumes and cover letters from our teacher. Then from here, we sent in a draft of our Resume and Cover letters which were then peer-reviewed by classmates and then re-edited so that they were up to somewhat professional standards. As you can see in the image to the left, I had to do Peer Reviews for both Jack Szafranski and David Rose. Then below that were some of the comments that I had received from the people that reviewed my paper.

This project also brought forth some benefits for the future. Through all this practice, peer review, and then final grading from our professor, we students learned how to not only format a resume and cover letter for the job chosen in this project, but we also learned how to make a resume and cover letters for future jobs. The experience that this project has given us will carry forward into future job applications and help us students make a resume and cover letter that will outshine the others.

One of the complications that came with this project was the formatting of the resume. We were tasked with getting everything onto one page, but also to make sure that we have all the required information on that page. It was difficult to know what information to cut, how to format each section to optimize the space as best as possible, and some other elements to shorten the resume to one page. But this was also part of the learning process, Learning how to make a resume short and easy to digest, but also as appealing to the person reading it as possible.

Project 2: Instruction Writing and Usability Tests

Although these were technically two different assignments that we had in this class, one had to be done before the other. So I will clump them together for this report. The first project for this section that we had to do was instruction writing. For this, we had to find some tasks and write a set of instructions about that tasks. For example, I did my project on Subscribing to a YouTube Channel. This project was designed so that we could learn how to guide users through a task as easily as possible through the use of images and short but concise sentences. To do this effectively we used the "Technical Communication 12 edition" textbook by Mike Markel and Stuart A. Selber. Several paragraphs described the good and bad of how to write instructions, a variety of tips and tricks, and even a couple of examples on how to write instructions. From here we wrote these instructions and then had them peer-reviewed by both other students and the teacher, before rewriting and turning in the final product.

The second half of this section will talk about the Usability Reports that followed. For this project, we had to go out and test our instructions. There were several different ways we could have conducted the test itself from a list given to us from the Usability.gov website, but there were also things that everyone had to do the same. Find participants that would go through our instructions to test them, set dates and times for said participants to do said tests, and then finally write a report about the things that we found. This report displayed the results of our tests formally through the use of professional language and graphs. This also meant that we as students had to be accustomed to using both professional language and graphs to get our results and our points across. This is something that these two projects and even the resume and cover letter project had given us experience in.

Mod 3.1: Usability Testing and Report Writing	
Criteria	
The project demonstrated a clear purpose throughout the usability testing and the report writing. The overall report adapts and demonstrates the the conventions of a usability report genre.	
The project provides clear context, details, and explanation that will enable the reader to act effectively and efficiently or comprehend the report's results with ease.	
The report provides clear and useful information/description on the usability design and test and provides a persuasive rationale for the design. Readers would be able to repeat this test for reliability purposes.	
The project demonstrates effective design principles and relevant graphic(s) and data visualization. In short, comprehension should be able to aided by the visuals and graphics. The visuals/graphics are integrated well with the text in the report and in the Works Cited or References page.	
The project demonstrates effective language use, grammar, and organization of ideas. Effective language may include the use of a formal tone, correct syntax, and a direct style of writing, as typical of technical writing.	

For context and a little more idea on what the goals of this project were, here is the rubric that we were given to follow for the Usability Testing and Report Writing side of the project which I pulled from our class canvas page (Recolored for visibility). As you can see much of what I have said is repeated in this rubric, and it also goes to show the main tasks/ results this project intended us students to learn.

Due to the current state of the world that Covid-19 has put us in, one of the largest complications for this project was finding people to be participants in these tests, and then making sure to take all the necessary precautions to make sure these tests were as clean as possible (if they were done in person, which I did). I ended up finding four people that were willing to go through my instructions but then came to make sure that everything was clean and as safe as possible, especially since two of my participants were older than eighty years old.

Project 3: Progress Report.

This report you are reading is the final project of this report, and for this class. In the instructions from this report, our teacher stated that “This project will ask you to synthesize the work and learning that you have already completed for this class and develop a **progress report that analyzes and describes your learning.**” With the intent that we both learn how to write a progress report, something that we have not done in this class before this project, but also to

serve as a sort of reflection letter. To do this we were once again directed to the “Technical Communication” textbook by Markel and Selber where we were given a sample as well as a couple of pages of text to teach us what a progress report is. From here we were tasked with writing, going through all our past assignments to collect the ideas and new techniques that we learned during this semester and placing them into this report as a sort of final reflection. Another thing that we were asked to do was to reflect on this semester's assignments and talk about what we found to be the most challenging, what we have improved on, and what we would do differently. This task also seconds as the findings of this project, which I will list the most important of each now.

- I listed some of the challenges for the individual projects above, but as for the entirety of the semester, the largest challenge came from this class being entirely online. This is something that had to be done due to Covid-19 and took a lot of time to get used to. Before Covid, all of my classes were in person and I had gotten quite used to them being run that way, and when I transitioned to the online classes I figured I would be able to adjust very quickly as I am on my computer often anyways. But online classes proved to be much more difficult than I gave them credit for. Not having in-person classes with teachers who constantly remind us of assignments, projects, and other work that is coming in the future was difficult to adapt to at first.
- One of the greatest things that I feel I have improved on is my use of Professional Language. Although I have been writing semi-formal papers and reports my entire college career, I have never had to write this professionally before this class. This class taught me a variety of professional writing templates and skills that I did not know anything about before. These skills will be something that I remember as I enter the workforce and potentially get a job that requires some type of professional writing.
- One of the things that I would like to do differently was the beginning of this semester. I had a bit of difficulty adjusting to all my classes being online and staying on top of assignments, but I think if I put more effort into the beginning of the semester I would have been in a better spot. I had a bit of a rocky start to this semester in this class, and I believe that it affected the rest of my semester negatively.

All three of these things are also second as things that I will learn from and use in the future. Having these experiences in this class has taught me a lot of lessons on how a career with some form of professional writing will go, and how that career/ any career will function online.

One of the complications that I am having with this paper is knowing if all the content is relevant and necessary. I have been following the guidelines and examples set by Markel and Selber in the textbook they have written, but since this project does not have a peer review step where mistakes like this would be fixed, I am unsure if I am completing this task correctly.

Updated Schedule

Typically this section would be the perfect area for a table, listing the tasks that still need to be completed and when they are tentatively planned to be completed, but as this project is the last main task for this class that needs to be completed still, and it will be completed shortly, I will forgo the table. Instead, I will just end this section by saying that the only thing left to do for me is to graduate.

Conclusion

At this point, all tasks have been completed, with this Progress Report to be completed soon. From all of it, I have gained an understanding of a variety of professional writing techniques, as well as an understanding of different forms/ templates used in professional writing. Styles as I have mentioned above: the resume and cover letter, instruction writing, usability tests, the following report, and then finally this progress report. This report which will be presented to the teacher no later than December 10th, 2020 will hopefully include all required information and give a detailed report on the things that I have learned, and the things that I will take into consideration as I move into the future. With that being said, the final task of this class has been completed.

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