

Memo

To: Dr. Derek Ross, Dr. Leigh Gruwell, Dr. Stewart Whittemore
From: Carolina Bell
Re: Undergraduate Studies Guide Meta-Analysis
Date: April 7, 2025

This memo describes the goals, development, and design choices for the Undergraduate Studies Guide.

Audience and Purpose

This document was produced for ENGL 7000: Technical and Professional Editing with Dr. Susan Youngblood. I edited a 35-page document from the outgoing Director of Undergraduate Studies (DUS) into a usable guide for all English faculty involved in advising undergraduate students at Auburn. The final components include the revised guide, an accompanying style guide, a cover letter to the current DUS, and a 1-page public synopsis.

Significance

This project showcases how the Inclusive Editing Paradigm (Clem & Cheek, 2022) and the greater social justice turn can be applied to technical editing. Particularly in the workplace, technical communicators may be expected to follow normative ideas of editing. I believe it is possible to create effective, usable documents while also considering power and lived experience between author and editor.

Goals and Editing Process

My main goals for the document were to make it evergreen, to preserve aspects of original voice, and to restructure for better information searching. I focused on bigger picture editing ideas rather than “controlling error” (Clem & Cheek, 2022, p. 139). The document development process was iterative. My level of edit reflects a Level 1, which is the most thorough and includes all type of edits (Van Buren et al., 1976). My edits and queries were made using Track Changes on Microsoft Word.

Theories

Evergreen

As noted by Cunningham et al. (2019), content must be managed for reuse. I edited content to ensure that it would remain relevant for years to come. In the class rotation schedule, I used Year A and Year B rather than specific years. I also referred to job titles rather than individual names.

Change in Audience

I renamed the document to be *A Guide to English Undergraduate Studies* to emphasize the importance of the resource for an array of faculty and staff in the English department. The subheading also clearly emphasizes the use of the document beyond the DUS.

Information Architecture

To increase the ease of information searching, I changed, added, and reordered headings and subheadings. Cunningham et al. (2019) states that organization from most to least important is a useful pattern for users who skim pages. This addition allows users to quickly find information they need, rather than having to read the whole guide front to back.

Editor-Author Relationship

The editor-author relationship can be complex, especially when authors may feel defensiveness when their work is being criticized (Mackiewicz & Riley, 2003). While I could have removed the author's personal touches, I used pop out text boxes to preserve personal insights in the guide.

Under the inclusive editing paradigm, Clem & Cheek (2022) call for editors to recognize humanity. The introduction and note sections can be updated as needed by the outgoing DUS. By creating designated space for these notes, I was able to maintain space for future directors to add their own insights. While this helps maintain a cooperative relationship, it also helps serve users of the document (Mackiewicz & Riley, 2003).

Singular They

The use of the singular they instead of he/she pronouns in roles, helps create space for non-binary members of the English department. The singular they also prevent gender roles from dictating the supposed gender of those who do administrative labor. This choice is aligned with the inclusive editing paradigm and consideration of marginalized individuals (Clem & Cheek, 2022).

References

- Clem, S., & Cheek, R. (2022). Unjust revisions: A social justice framework for technical editing. *IEEE Transactions on Professional Communication*, 65(1), 135-150.
- Cunningham, D. H., Malone, E. A., and Rothschild, J. M. (2019). *Technical Editing: An Introduction to Editing in the Workplace*. Oxford, UK: Oxford U Press. ISBN 978-0190872670
- Mackiewicz, J., & Riley, K. (2003). The technical editor as diplomat: Linguistic strategies for balancing clarity and politeness. *Technical communication*, 50(1), 83-94.
- VanBuren, R., Buehler, M. F., & Wallenbrock, D. (1976). The levels of edit (No. NASA-CR-146584).