

INTRODUCTION

Within the larger context of the [shrinking humanities](#), there have been a large body of discussions on the longstanding [institutional politics](#) surrounding TPC programs, the [distribution of different types of programs and degrees](#), the constantly changing landscape of [industry and academic job market](#), and the controversial issue of [professionalization, power, and legitimacy of TPC](#) as a profession and discipline. However, little up-to-date research has been done regarding the important trends in [qualifications, responsibilities, and specialized skills](#) of job applicants for the academia.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- RQ1:** What are the [situations](#) of current academic job market in TPC (e.g., number of positions, ranks, job titles, academic locations, institutional categories, etc.)?
- RQ2:** What [teaching responsibilities](#) and [specializations](#) are required by TPC positions?
- RQ3:** What are the [implications](#) for job applicants, educators, and the field?

METHODS

Data Collection

- Source:** MLA Job Information List
- Time:** 2011-2017
- Search term:** “technical/professional communication” or “technical/professional writing”
- Data:** Of the 685 positions published by U.S. Universities, we focused on [204](#) full-time tenure-track positions that include TPC in the job titles and those that list TPC as the primary specialization/expertise.



Analytical Approach

- We broke the job ads down into 5 categories: job titles, responsibilities, qualifications/expertise, application materials, department descriptions.
- Using corpus analysis tool AntConc, we analyzed each category both quantitatively and qualitatively.

RESULTS

1. Overview of Academic Job Market in TPC

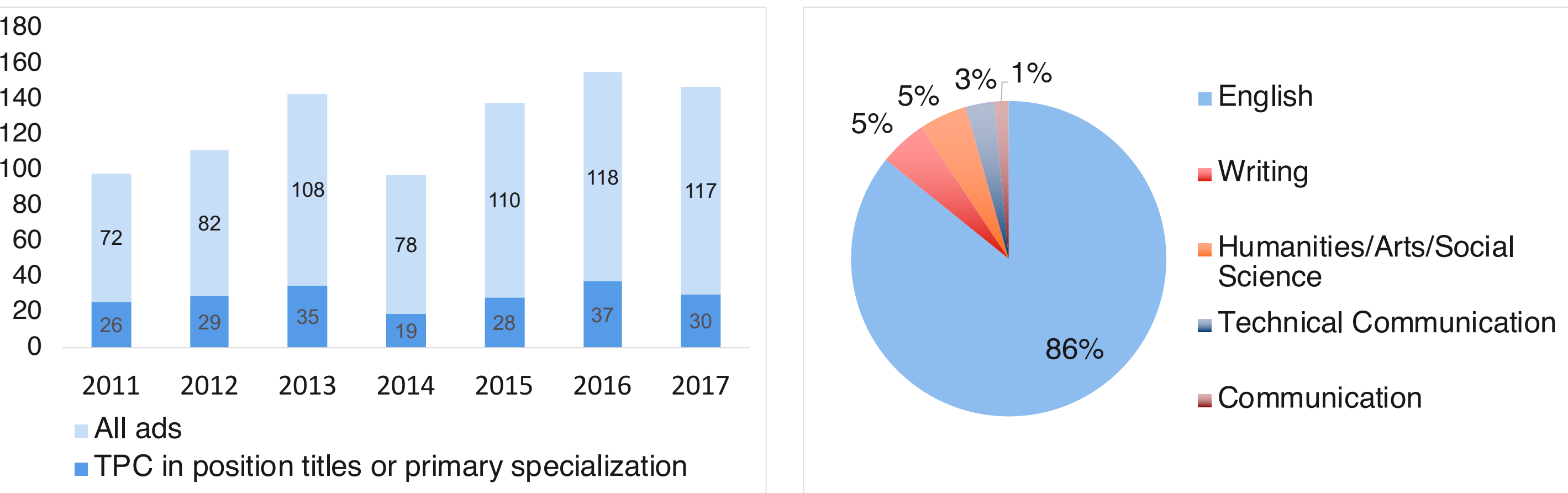


Figure 1. Ratios of Positions with TPC as Job Titles or Primary Specializations in All Positions

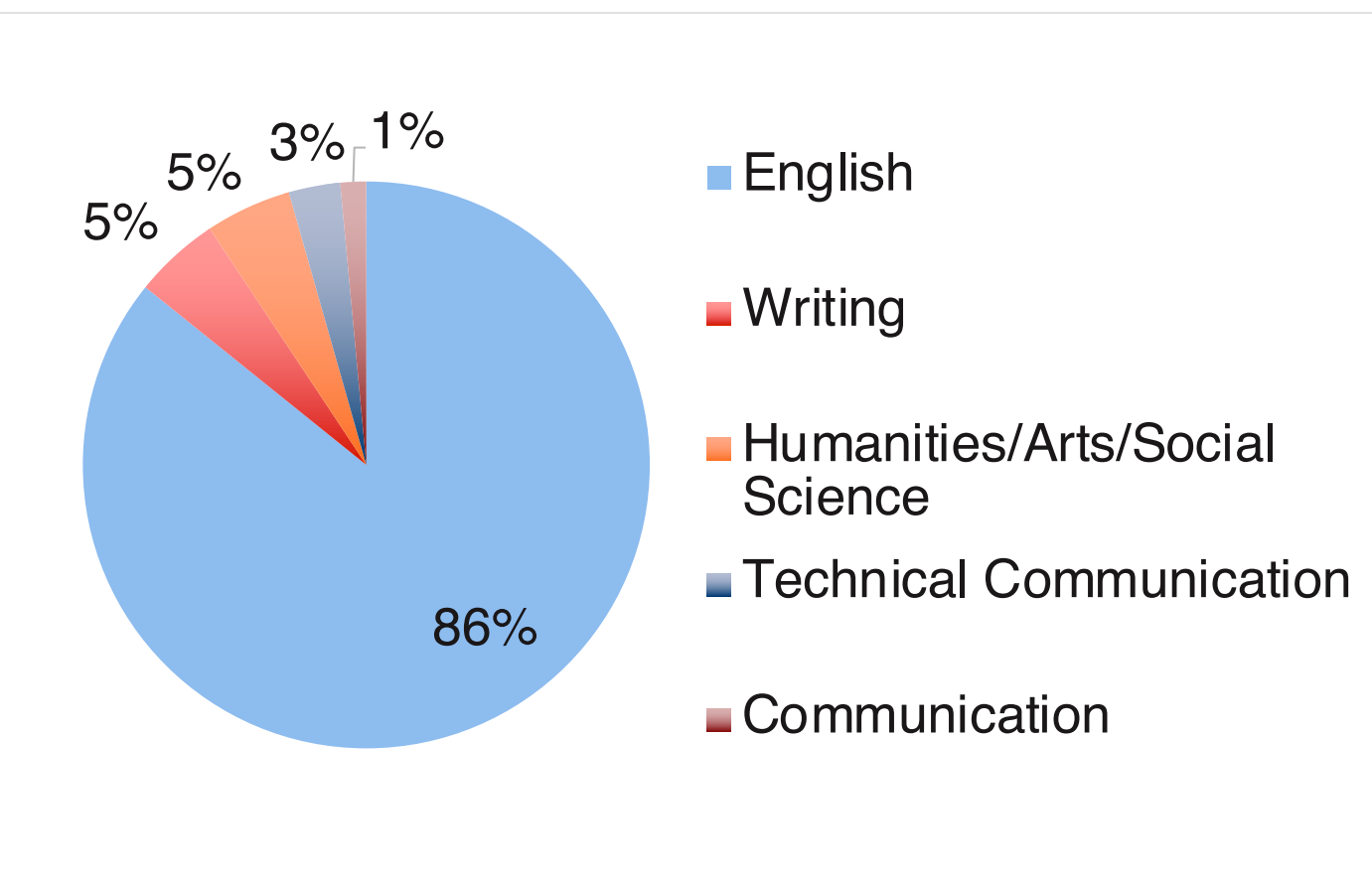


Figure 2. Distribution of Departmental Locations

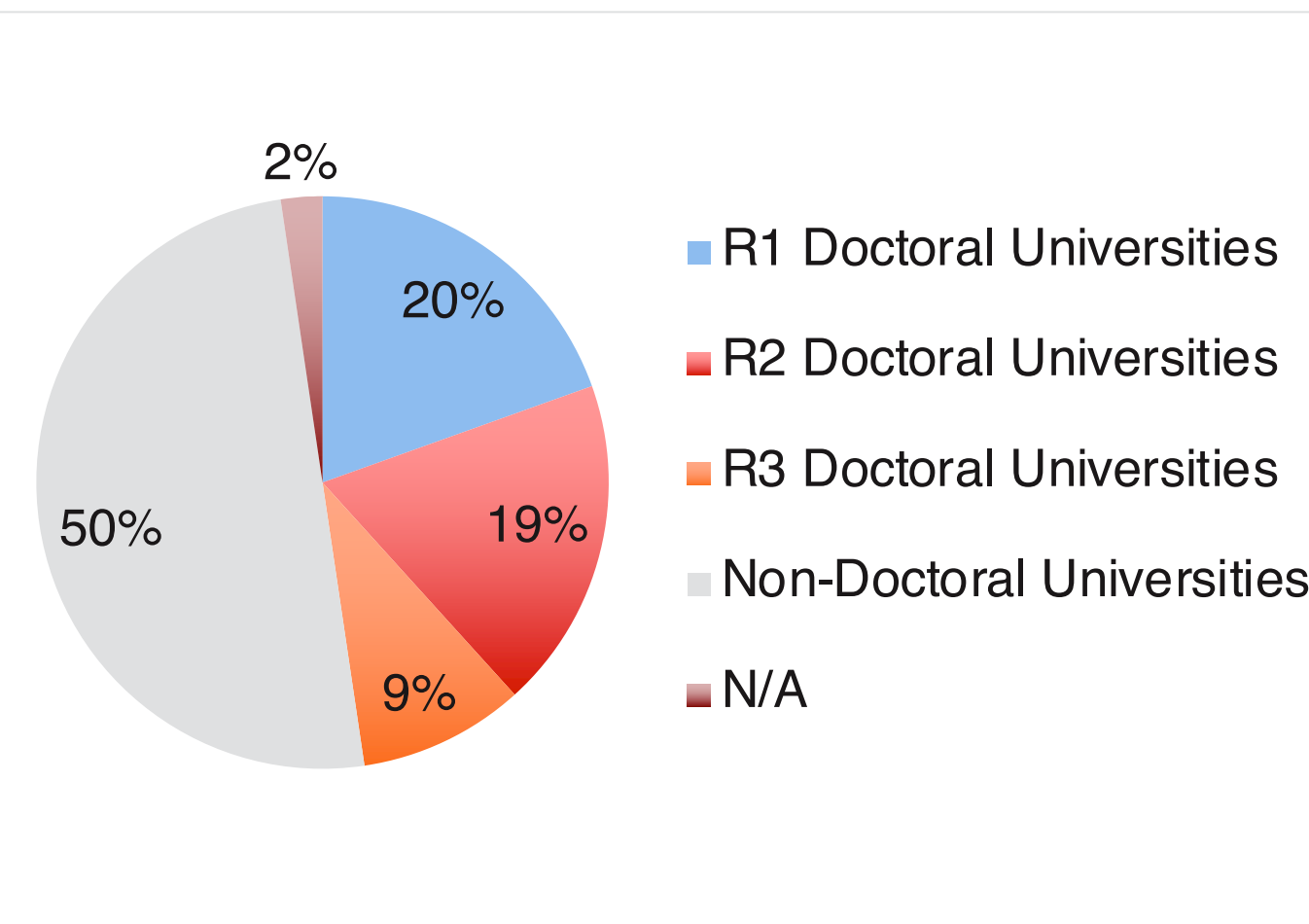


Figure 3. Percentage of Institutions Ranked by Carnegie Classification System

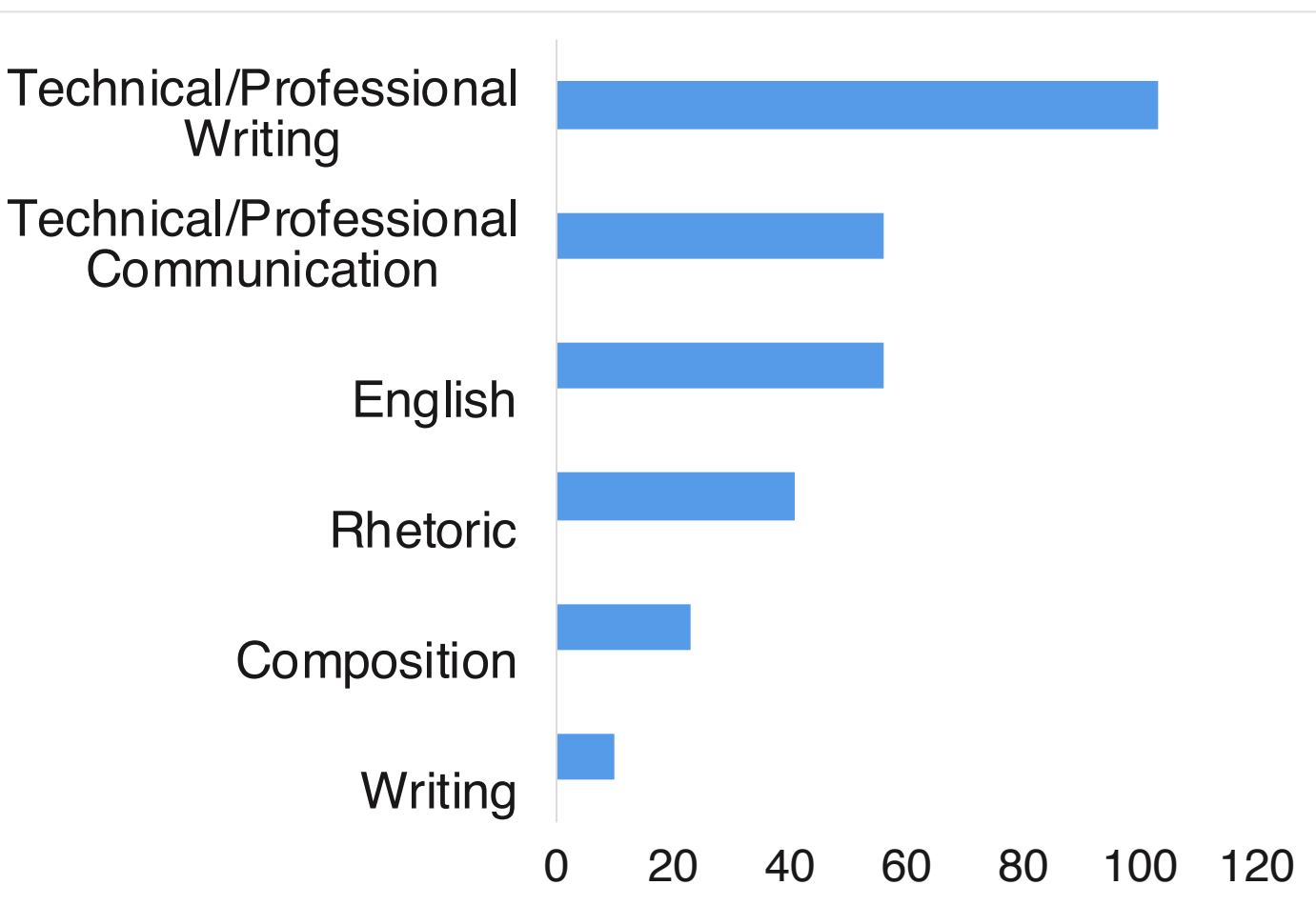


Figure 4. Primary Terms in Job Titles

2. Teaching Responsibilities

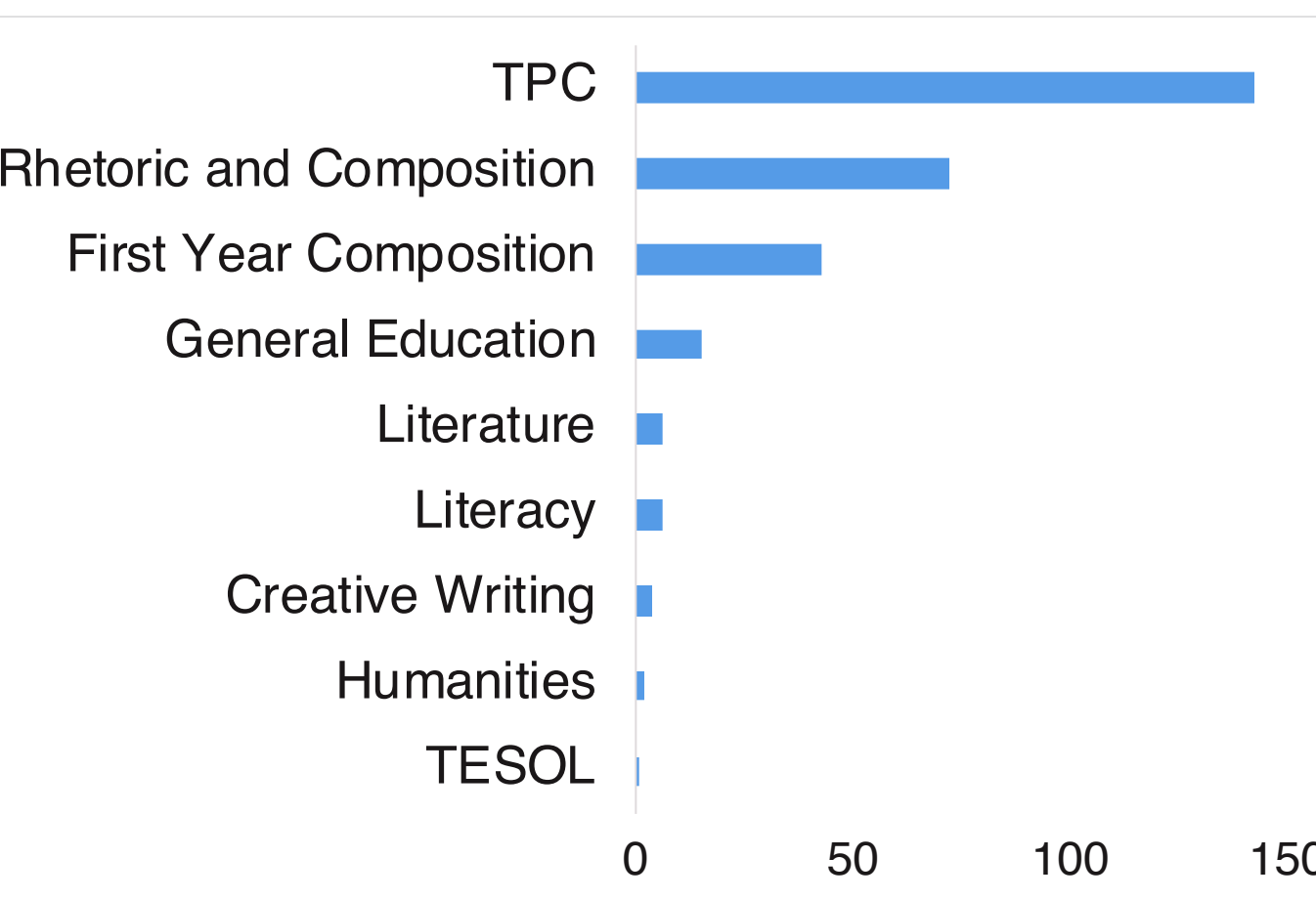


Figure 5. Frequency of Different Types of Courses

TPC was the top concentration among all the required courses, which was required by at least 80% of positions (144). [Rhetoric and Composition](#) was the second most popular course, with over 40% of positions required to teach (72). Teaching [First Year Composition](#) was also required by 43 positions (17%).

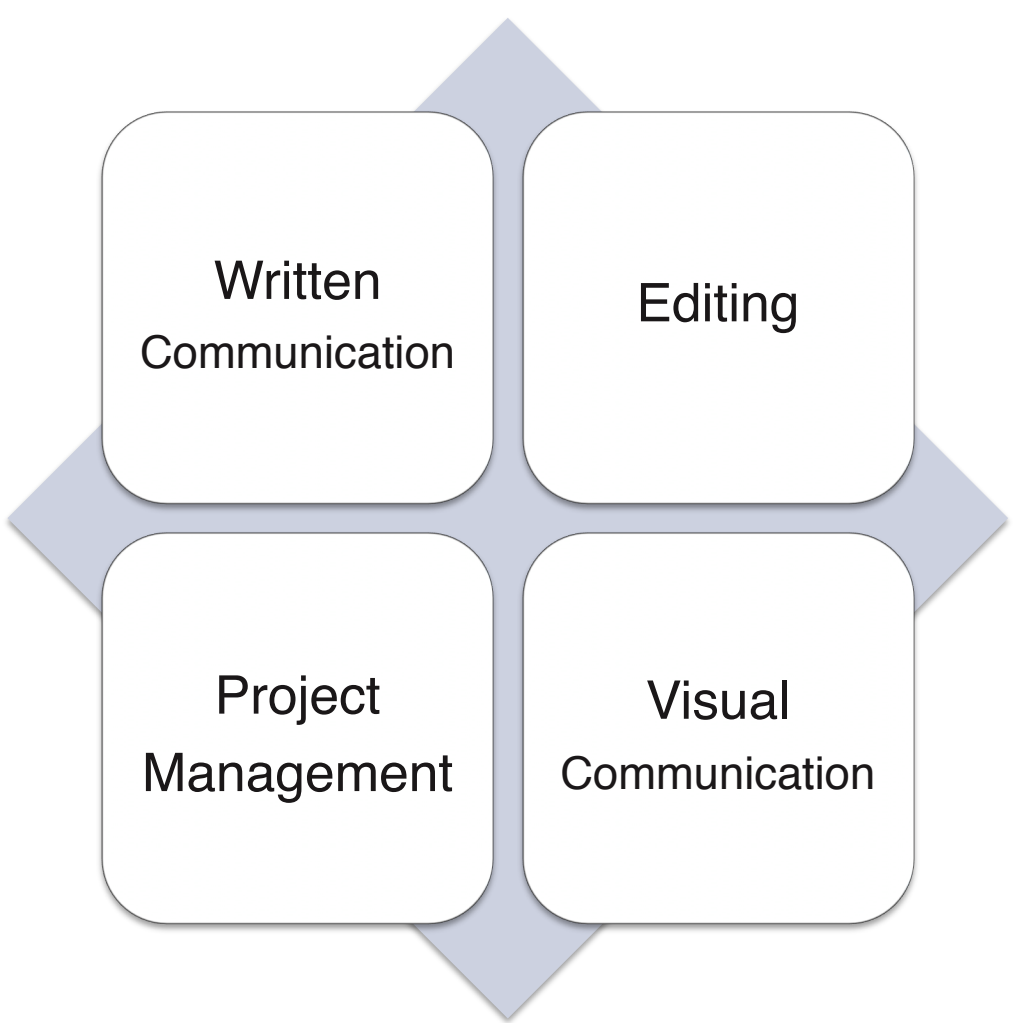


Figure 6. Top Four Competencies for Technical Communicators

Of the top four competencies for technical communicators in the U.S. (Brumberger & Lauer, 2015), [written Communication/editing](#) was required by over 70% of positions to teach. However, [project management](#) was only required by one position, which indicates the gap between the current course offerings and the actual demand from the industry.

3. Expected Specializations

Among all the specializations, [TPC](#) (80%) has the highest frequency (647). The second common specialization is [Rhetoric and Composition](#) (10%), followed by other [English specializations](#) (6%), other [communication specializations](#) (2%), [Humanities](#) (1%), and [Interdisciplinary Research](#) (1%).

Of all the six specializations within TPC, [writing/pedagogy](#) remained the core competency of job applicants, which was the most frequently mentioned specialization. In addition, [workplace communication](#) has been increasingly emphasized during the period of 2011 to 2017, which even surpassed writing/pedagogy in 2014.

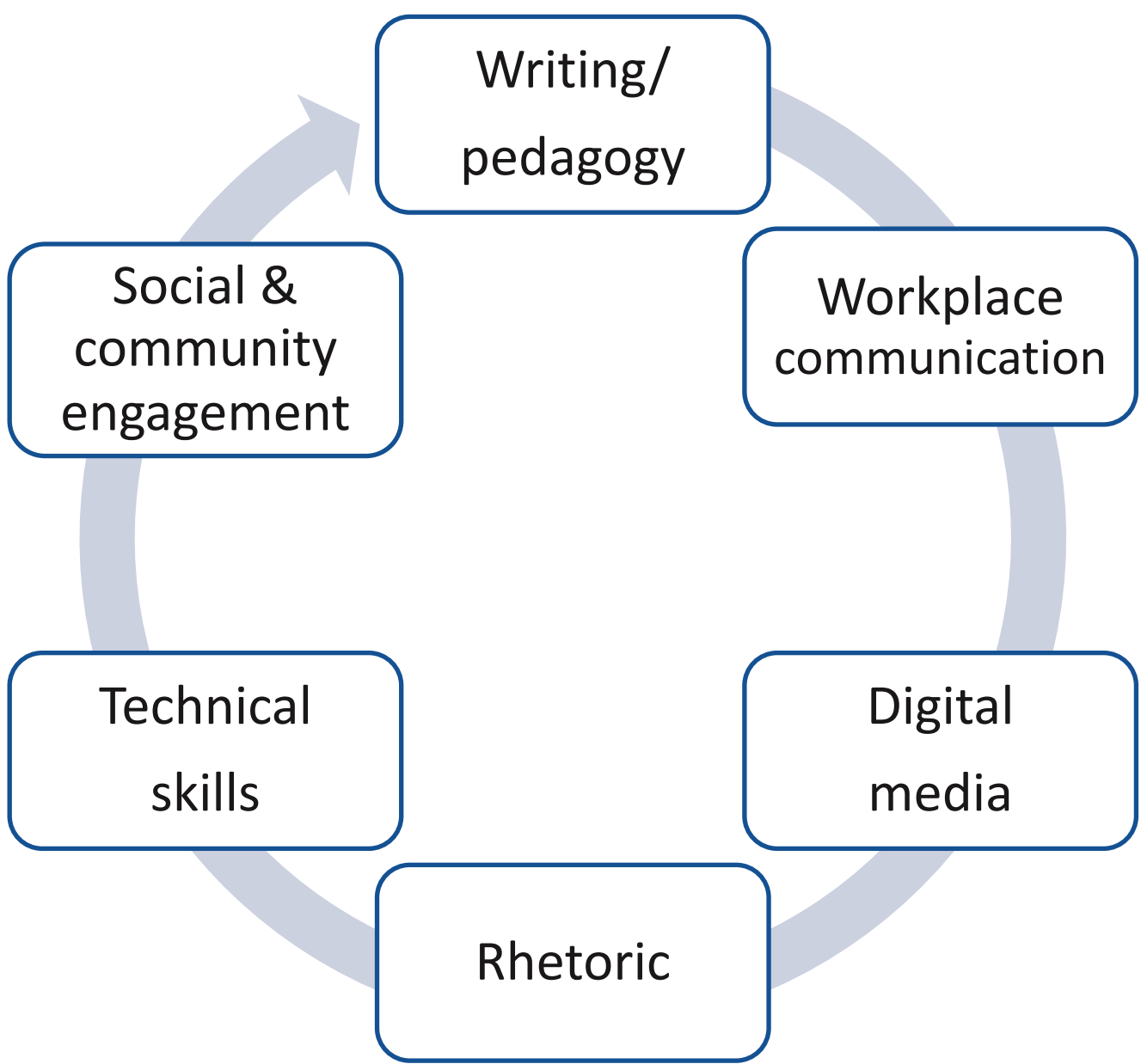


Figure 7. Specializations within TPC

DISCUSSION

Implications for Job Applicants and Educators

- The capacity to teach writing is highly evaluated.
- Bridge the gap between the industry and academia.

Implications for the Field of TPC

- Develop good relationships with English Department.
- Address the balance between research and practice.
- Strive to have consistent naming.

REFERENCES

- Brumberger, E., & Lauer, C. (2015). The evolution of technical communication: An analysis of industry job postings. *Technical Communication*, 62(4), 224-243.
- Dayley, C., & Walton, R. (2018). Informing Efforts to Increase Diversity: Academic Programs and Student Motivation in Technical and Professional Communication. *Programmatic Perspectives*, 10(2), 5-46.
- Lauer, C. (2013). Technology and Technical Communication through the Lens of the MLA Job Information List, 1990–2011. *Programmatic Perspectives*, 5(1), 4-33.
- Meloncon, L., & Henschel, S. (2013). Current state of US undergraduate degree programs in technical and professional communication. *Technical Communication*, 60(1), 45-64.
- Rude, C., & Cook, K. C. (2004). The academic job market in technical communication, 2002-2003. *Technical Communication Quarterly*, 13(1), 49-71.