



## Course Outline

### 1. COURSE INFORMATION

Session Offered	Winter 2024	
Course Name	Technical Communications	
Course Code	SEP 6TC3	
Date(s) and Time(s) of lectures	Online Avenue	
Program Name	Graduate – Master of Engineering (MEng)   Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)	
Calendar Description	This course introduces students to the best practices for essential written, spoken, and graphic communications used in technology workplaces. Emphasis is placed on how to conduct research, analyze information, and design communication materials that are succinct and customized to the readers' needs.	
Instructor	Lucas Thung	E-Mail: <a href="mailto:ThungL@mcmaster.ca">ThungL@mcmaster.ca</a> Office Hours & Location: By appointment via <a href="https://mcmaster.zoom.us/my/ThungL">https://mcmaster.zoom.us/my/ThungL</a>

### 2. COURSE SPECIFICS

Course Description			
Instruction Type	Code	Type	Hours per term
	C	Classroom instruction	26
	L	Laboratory, workshop or fieldwork	13
	T	Tutorial	
	DE	Distance education	
	Total Hours		39
Resources	ISBN	Textbook Title & Edition	Author & Publisher
	978-0199036851	Writing in the Technical Fields: A Practical Guide  3 <sup>rd</sup> Edition (2020)	Thorsten Ewald & Oxford University Press
	Other Supplies	Source	
	PowerPoint slides and supporting material	All material will be provided via electronic files on the course A2L site	
Prerequisite(s)	Registration in the Graduate program		
Corequisite(s)	None		
Antirequisite(s)	GENTECH 4TC3		
Course Specific Policies	<b>1. Weekly Readings:</b> Students are expected to complete assigned textbook readings before class. Students are responsible for all assigned textbook readings, regardless of depth of coverage offered in class.		

## 2. Avenue to Learn:

Instructors will post on Avenue to Learn, insofar as feasible, lecture notes and classroom materials; however, some materials presented in the classroom cannot be made available electronically for your “home use.”

This course will be using a range of software. Students should be aware that, when they access the electronic components of this course, private information such as first and last names, user names for the McMaster e-mail accounts, and program affiliation may become apparent to all other students in the same course. The available information is dependent on the technology used. Continuation in this course will be deemed consent to this disclosure. If you have any questions or concerns about such disclosure please discuss this with the course instructor. Instructors will also use other software: McMaster e-mail and Avenue to Learn

## 3. Final Exam

Students must take the final exam to pass the course.

The final exam will be “open book” based on lecture content and readings.

## 4. Participation Mark

Participation is not merely attendance; participation involves the quantity and quality of your contributions in class and your engagement during in-class activities and assignments. Come to class prepared to discuss the material, contribute ideas and examples and participate in individual and group activities.

## 5. Submitting work from other courses

All assignments submitted for grading must be **new work**.

Assignments containing work completed in other courses (previous or concurrent) will not be accepted.

## 6. Turnitin

This course will be using a web-based service (Turnitin.com) to reveal plagiarism. Please see Turnitin Policy under Section 6: Policies.

**Corrupt Files:** Any files uploaded to Turnitin or Avenue that the instructor cannot open will be treated as late, regardless of when the instructor attempts to open the file. Make sure your files are not corrupt and are in a file format approved by the instructor. Note, if you are submitting from an Apple computer, you must submit your work as a pdf file.

## 7. Late Assignments

Assignments are due at the beginning of the class on the date scheduled, unless they are scheduled as in-class assignments. Late assignments will receive a penalty of 10% for each day that the assignment is late, up to a maximum of 70%. Assignments that are more than 7 days late will not be accepted.

	<p><b>8. Extra Credit</b> Extra credit assignments are <b>NOT</b> offered in this course. No exceptions made. If there is an extra credit assignment opportunity, it will be the instructor's initiative and it will be given to ALL students in the class.</p> <p><b>9. Communicating with your instructor</b> Please feel free to contact your instructor with questions and/or issues. You may talk to your professor in person during his office hours, or arrange an appointment by email. You may also address issues through email.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>ONLY</b> use the University provided e-mail address, <a href="mailto:yourname@mcmaster.ca">@mcmaster.ca</a> for all email communications.</li> <li>• <b>Always</b> start the <b>Subject Line</b> with "<b>6TC3</b>" to ensure your email is not re-routed to my Spam folder</li> <li>• The instructor will make every effort to respond to email inquiries within two (2) business days.</li> <li>• Email inquiries sent through your personal email will <b>NOT</b> be accepted.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Departmental Policies</b></p>	<p>In order to achieve the required learning objectives, on average, MEng students can expect to do at least 3 hours of "out-of-class" work for every scheduled hour in class. "Out-of-class" work includes reading, research, assignments and preparation for tests and examinations.</p> <p>Where group work is indicated in the course outline, such collaborative work is mandatory.</p> <p>The use of cell phones, iPods, laptops and other personal electronic devices are prohibited from the classroom during the class time, unless the instructor makes an explicit exception.</p> <p>Announcements made in class or placed on Avenue are considered to have been communicated to all students including those individuals that are not in class.</p> <p>Instructor has the right to submit work to software to identify plagiarism.</p>

3. SUB TOPIC(S)		
Week 1 (January 14)	<b>Introduction to Technical Writing</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Orientation</li> </ul>	<b>READING:</b> Syllabus and Chapter 1
Week 2 (January 21)	Best practices of written communication  <b>Everyday Workplace Correspondence</b> The professional action structure: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Emails</li> <li>Letter</li> </ul>	<b>READING:</b> Chapters 2, 3 & 5
Week 3 (January 28)	<b>Technical Documentation</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Technical writing with a purpose</li> <li>Report styles</li> </ul>	<b>READING:</b> Chapter 6
Week 4 (February 4)	<b>Oral Communication</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Best practices of oral communication</li> </ul>	<b>READING:</b> Chapter 13 (3 <sup>rd</sup> edition) <b>OR</b> Chapter 14 (2 <sup>nd</sup> edition)  <b>ONLINE Quiz #1 (1, 2 &amp; 3)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- "Open Book"</li> <li>- Starts at 9 am ET</li> </ul>
Week 5 (February 11)	<b>Formal Workplace Communication</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Formal Reports</li> <li>Organizing information</li> </ul>	<b>READING:</b> Chapters 4 & 7
Week 6 (February 18)	<b>Visualizing Data</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Functions and types of graphics</li> <li>Graphics in reports</li> </ul>	<b>READING:</b> Chapter 10  <b>ONLINE Quiz #2 (4, 5, 6 &amp; 7)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- "Open Book"</li> <li>- Starts at 9 am ET</li> </ul> <b>Assignment 1:</b> <b>ONLINE LinkedIn Application</b> <b>+ Job Pitch Presentations</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Post video at 10:30 am ET</li> <li>- Critique one video by 12 pm ET</li> </ul>
<b>Midterm Recess: Monday, February 19 to Sunday, February 25</b> <b>(No Classes Scheduled)</b>		

Week 7 (March 3)	<b>Intercultural Communication &amp; Indirect Writing Styles</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Buffer statements &amp; indirect writing</li> <li>• Writing and speaking to a global world</li> </ul>	<b>READING:</b> Chapter 8
Week 8 (March 10)	<b>Descriptive Writing: Definitions</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What is descriptive writing?</li> <li>• Elements and types of definitions               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Expansion methods</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<b>READING:</b> Chapter 11 (3 <sup>rd</sup> edition) <b>OR</b> Chapter 12 (2 <sup>nd</sup> edition)
Week 9 (March 17)	<b>Instructions, Procedures &amp; Manuals</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Functions of instructions vs. procedures</li> <li>• Manuals</li> <li>-</li> </ul>	<b>READING:</b> Chapter 12 (3 <sup>rd</sup> edition) <b>OR</b> Chapter 13 (2 <sup>nd</sup> edition)  <b>Assignment 2:</b> <b>ONLINE Interview Presentations</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Post video at 10:30 am <u>ET</u></li> <li>- Critique two videos by 12 pm <u>ET</u></li> </ul>
Week 10 (March 24)	<b>Choose your own communication topic:</b> Top Tech Topics in Communication (Group work) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Group Work (Part 1 of 2)</b></li> </ul>	<b>READING:</b> As assigned by group  <b>Assignment 3: Reflective Journal (For Graduate MEng / PhD students)</b> <b>Due on Sunday, March 24<sup>th</sup> at 11:59 pm <u>ET</u></b>
Week 11 (March 31)	<b>Choose your own communication topic:</b> Top Tech Topics in Communication (Group work) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Group Work (Part 2 of 2)</b></li> </ul>	<b>READING:</b> As assigned by group  <b>ONLINE Quiz #3 (8, 10, 11 &amp; 12)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- "Open Book"</li> <li>- Starts at 9 am <u>ET</u></li> </ul>
Week 12 (April 7)	<b>Group Presentations</b>	<b>Group Assignment:</b> <b>Top Tech Presentations</b> <b>Starts at 9 am <u>ET</u></b>

<p><b>“Open Book” FINAL EXAM</b></p> <p><b>ONLINE (Avenue)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Tentative:</b> Sunday, April 13<sup>th</sup></li> <li>9 am to 11:30 am <b>ET (2.5 hours duration)</b> Hamilton, Ontario, Canada Time Zone</li> </ul>	<p><b>ONLINE Final Exam</b></p> <p><b>“Open Book”</b></p> <p><b>All chapters</b></p>
<p>Midterm Recess: Monday, February 19 to Sunday, February 25 Final Examination Period: Friday, April 12 to Saturday, April 27 All examinations MUST be written during the scheduled examination period.</p>	

List of Communication Lab Topics	
Lab 1	Introduction
Lab 2	Technical Sentences & Paragraphs
Lab 3	Standard Operating Procedure
Lab 4	Quiz #1
Lab 5	Editing and Revising Formal Documents
<b>Midterm Recess: Monday, February 19 to Sunday, February 25 (No Classes Scheduled)</b>	
Lab 6	Quiz #2
Lab 7	Email & Definitions
Lab 8	Letter
Lab 9	Background Research
Lab 10	Presentation Preparation
Lab 11	Quiz #3
Lab 12	Group Presentations
<p>Note that this structure represents a plan and is subject to adjustment term by term. The instructor and the University reserve the right to modify elements of the course during the term. The University may change the dates and deadlines for any or all courses in extreme circumstances. If either type of modification becomes necessary, reasonable notice and communication with the students will be given with explanation and the opportunity to comment on changes.</p>	

4. ASSESSMENT OF LEARNING *including dates*	Weight	Date
Active Learning Activities, Lab Work, Participation (Best 10 marks)	10%	Throughout Term
Assignment 1: LinkedIn Application + Job Pitch	15%	Week 6
Assignment 2: Interview Presentations	15%	Week 9
“Open Book” Quizzes (Best 2 out of 3 Quiz marks)	10%	Weeks 4, 6, 11
Assignment 3: Reflective Journal (For graduate MEng / PhD students)	10%	Week 10
Group Assignment: Top Tech Group Presentations	10%	Week 12
“Open Book” Case Study Final Exam (tests <u>cumulative</u> knowledge)	30%	<b>Tentative:</b> Sunday, April 13 <sup>th</sup> 9 am to 11:30 am <b>ET</b> Hamilton, Ontario, Canada Time Zone
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100%</b>	
Percentage grades will be converted to letter grades and grade points per the University calendar.		

#### 5. LEARNING OUTCOMES

1. Recognize, understand, and recall fundamental technical communication principles and techniques
2. Produce everyday workplace written communications that follow current professional practices
3. Comprehend and apply oral presentation principals and techniques
4. Demonstrate indirect form of writing to deliver unfavourable news in the workplace
5. Recognize and recall essential document design principals and techniques
6. Assess one’s own knowledge, competence, and limits as a team member
7. Understand the attributes of effective team organization

#### 6. COURSE OUTLINE – APPROVED ADVISORY STATEMENTS

##### ANTI-DISCRIMINATION

The Faculty of Engineering is concerned with ensuring an environment that is free of all discrimination. If there is a problem, individuals are reminded that they should contact the Department Chair, the Sexual Harassment Officer or the Human Rights Consultant, as soon as possible.

[http://www.mcmaster.ca/policy/General/HR/Discrimination\\_Harassment\\_Sexual\\_Harassment-Prevention&Response.pdf](http://www.mcmaster.ca/policy/General/HR/Discrimination_Harassment_Sexual_Harassment-Prevention&Response.pdf)

##### ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

You are expected to exhibit honesty and use ethical behaviour in all aspects of the learning process. Academic credentials you earn are rooted in principles of honesty and academic integrity. It is your responsibility to understand what constitutes academic dishonesty.

Academic dishonesty is to knowingly act or fail to act in a way that results or could result in unearned academic credit or advantage. This behaviour can result in serious consequences, e.g. the grade of zero on an assignment, loss of credit with a notation on the transcript (notation reads: “Grade of F assigned for academic dishonesty”), and/or suspension or expulsion from the university. For information on the various types of academic dishonesty please refer to the Academic Integrity Policy, located at <https://secretariat.mcmaster.ca/university-policies-procedures-guidelines/>

The following illustrates only three forms of academic dishonesty: The following illustrates only three forms of academic dishonesty:

- plagiarism, e.g. the submission of work that is not one's own or for which other credit has been obtained.
- improper collaboration in group work.
- copying or using unauthorized aids in tests and examinations.

### **AUTHENTICITY / PLAGIARISM DETECTION**

Some courses may use a web-based service (Turnitin.com) to reveal authenticity and ownership of student submitted work. For courses using such software, students will be expected to submit their work electronically either directly to Turnitin.com or via an online learning platform (e.g. A2L, etc.) using plagiarism detection (a service supported by Turnitin.com) so it can be checked for academic dishonesty.

Students who do not wish their work to be submitted through the plagiarism detection software must inform the Instructor before the assignment is due. No penalty will be assigned to a student who does not submit work to the plagiarism detection software. All submitted work is subject to normal verification that standards of academic integrity have been upheld (e.g., on-line search, other software, etc.). For more details about McMaster's use of Turnitin.com please go to [www.mcmaster.ca/academicintegrity](http://www.mcmaster.ca/academicintegrity).

### **COURSES WITH AN ON-LINE ELEMENT**

Some courses may use on-line elements (e.g. e-mail, Avenue to Learn (A2L), LearnLink, web pages, capa, Moodle, ThinkingCap, etc.). Students should be aware that, when they access the electronic components of a course using these elements, private information such as first and last names, user names for the McMaster e-mail accounts, and program affiliation may become apparent to all other students in the same course. The available information is dependent on the technology used. Continuation in a course that uses on-line elements will be deemed consent to this disclosure. If you have any questions or concerns about such disclosure please discuss this with the course instructor.

### **ONLINE PROCTORING**

Some courses may use online proctoring software for tests and exams. This software may require students to turn on their video camera, present identification, monitor and record their computer activities, and/or lock/restrict their browser or other applications/software during tests or exams. This software may be required to be installed before the test/exam begins.

### **COMMUNICATIONS**

It is the student's responsibility to:

- Maintain current contact information with the University, including address, phone numbers, and emergency contact information.
- **ONLY** use the University provided e-mail address, [@mcmaster.ca](mailto:@mcmaster.ca) for all email communications.
- **Always** start the **Subject Line** with "**6TC3**" to ensure your email is not re-routed to my Spam folder.
- Regularly check the official University communications channels. Official University communications are considered received if sent by postal mail, by fax, or by e-mail to the student's designated primary e-mail account via their [@mcmaster.ca](mailto:@mcmaster.ca) alias.
- Accept that forwarded e-mails may be lost and that e-mail is considered received if sent via the student's [@mcmaster.ca](mailto:@mcmaster.ca) alias.
- Check the McMaster/Avenue email and course websites on a regular basis during the term.



### CONDUCT EXPECTATIONS

As a McMaster student, you have the right to experience, and the responsibility to demonstrate, respectful and dignified interactions within all of our living, learning and working communities. These expectations are described in the Code of Student Rights & Responsibilities (the “Code”). All students share the responsibility of maintaining a positive environment for the academic and personal growth of all McMaster community members, whether in person or online.

It is essential that students be mindful of their interactions online, as the Code remains in effect in virtual learning environments. The Code applies to any interactions that adversely affect, disrupt, or interfere with reasonable participation in University activities. Student disruptions or behaviours that interfere with university functions on online platforms (e.g. use of Avenue 2 Learn, WebEx or Zoom for delivery), will be taken very seriously and will be investigated. Outcomes may include restriction or removal of the involved students’ access to these platforms.

### ACADEMIC ACCOMMODATION OF STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

Students with disabilities who require academic accommodation must contact Student Accessibility Services (SAS) at 905-525-9140 ext. 28652 or [sas@mcmaster.ca](mailto:sas@mcmaster.ca) to make arrangements with a Program Coordinator. For further information, consult McMaster University’s Academic Accommodation of Students with Disabilities policy.

### REQUESTS FOR RELIEF FOR MISSED ACADEMIC TERM WORK

McMaster Student Absence Form (MSAF): In the event of an absence for medical or other reasons, students should review and follow the Academic Regulation in the Graduate Calendar “Requests for Relief for Missed Academic Term Work”.

### ACADEMIC ACCOMMODATION FOR RELIGIOUS, INDIGENOUS OR SPIRITUAL OBSERVANCES (RISO)

Students requiring academic accommodation based on religious, indigenous or spiritual observances should follow the procedures set out in the RISO policy. Students should submit their request to their Faculty Office normally within 10 working days of the beginning of term in which they anticipate a need for accommodation or to the Registrar's Office prior to their examinations. Students should also contact their instructors as soon as possible to make alternative arrangements for classes, assignments, and tests. <http://www.mcmaster.ca/policy/Students-AcademicStudies/Studentcode.pdf>

### COPYRIGHT AND RECORDING

Students are advised that lectures, demonstrations, performances, and any other course material provided by an instructor include copyright protected works. The Copyright Act and copyright law protect every original literary, dramatic, musical and artistic work, including lectures by University instructors.

**No part of the course may be recorded without the express written consent from the instructor.**

### EXTREME CIRCUMSTANCES

The University reserves the right to change the dates and deadlines for any or all courses in extreme circumstances (e.g., severe weather, labour disruptions, etc.). Changes will be communicated through regular McMaster communication channels, such as McMaster Daily News, A2L and/or McMaster email.