

## **BUSINESS WRITING 94-701**

### **COURSE DESCRIPTION**

This course focuses on effective writing techniques for professionals. Assignments include a business proposal, an employment letter, a memo, a performance evaluation, and interoffice correspondence. Since writing is a cumulative skill, an emphasis is placed on the revision process through in-class workshops. Students learn to communicate professionally and succinctly using a variety of business formats.

### **COURSE OBJECTIVES (using Bloom's revised taxonomy of learning)**

Students will be able to...

Remember: Identify appropriate business formats.

Understand: Demonstrate an understanding of the audience, the purpose, and the message.

Apply: Convey professional language, a defined voice, and an appropriate style.

Analyze: Compare and contrast writing samples.

Evaluate: Complete self and peer evaluations (see rubric).

Create: Produce documents for professional situations.

### **STANDARDS ALIGNMENT**

NASPA Competency 5: To communicate and interact productively with a diverse and changing workforce and citizenry.

5.1 Learning Outcome: Prepare professional/effective documents appropriate to the objective and context.

5.3 Learning Outcome: Prepare communications suitable for diverse audiences.

### **ACCOMMODATIONS & OPTIONS FOR DIFFERENTIATION**

Accommodations: If a student provides evidence of learning for a specific topic, demonstrating an advanced level of proficiency (see rubric), a different assignment is provided. This approach to instruction enables me to meet the diverse academic needs of students in the course.

Options: At times, students have options to complete assignments that correlate with a field of study or personal interest.

## ACADEMIC INTEGRITY POLICY

If you plagiarize, you are in violation of academic integrity. Violations of this nature are subject to disciplinary action. An automatic failing grade is assigned for that paper, and the incident is reported to program administrators. All work goes through a plagiarism detector, *Turnitin*.

Please seek writing assistance from the professor, the TA, or the Global Communications Center at CMU. We guide you through the writing process, not do the work for you.

## ATTENDANCE POLICY

When in-person sessions are offered, students are expected to attend every class. However, a student may seek approval from the professor to work asynchronously. This will depend on the situation (location/time zone or personal circumstance).

## EXEMPTION POLICY

Exemption exams are offered twice a year. Specific information is sent to all students upon acceptance into the program. If you have questions, please contact your academic advisor.

## FEEDBACK

As a reminder, you have one week to write a paper; therefore, please be patient as I take time to review it. I am usually teaching three or four sections of writing during a mini semester and reviewing sixty - eighty papers each week. My plan is to return your work before the next assignment is due.

**Feedback Information for the TA:** Provide feedback immediately upon submission of a draft or final copy. You have two days to complete this task for your group of 20+ students. Then, I will start reviewing papers. If your comments are detailed, addressing specific criteria for the assignment and highlighting common grammar/mechanics issues, I can review the papers at a faster pace. However, if I need to correct your work, along with a student's errors, this slows down my process. Please check your work carefully and complete your comments according to the weekly turn-around time. Also, do not use the highlighter tool on Canvas. Once you highlight over words on a paper, I cannot read them. Instead, use the bubble comment tool. Click this tool and place it next to the word or sentence that needs to be revised. Then, add your comments to the right side of the paper. I read every paper, and I will comment on anything that you missed.

**Feedback Information for Students:** If the TA is not organized or fails to submit work to me in a timely manner (see above statement), this slows down my process. Since I read and comment on every paper, you will receive detailed feedback. If you do not understand a comment or want additional feedback, please send questions via email or schedule a Zoom conference.

# WRITING RUBRIC

RUBRIC ELEMENTS	Exceptional 12 points = A+  Professional; ready to distribute.	Skilled 11 points = A-  Professional; minor revisions are recommended prior to distribution.	Proficient 10 points = B  Semi-professional; minor revisions are required prior to distribution.	Developing 9 points = C  Unprofessional; major revisions are required prior to distribution.	Inadequate 0 – 8 points = R  Unsuitable for distribution
<b>FOCUS</b> The document focuses on a topic to inform a reader with ideas, concepts, and information.	The document clearly stays focused on a topic that informs the reader with ideas, concepts, and information.	The document mostly stays focused on a topic that informs the reader with ideas, concepts, and information.	The document minimally stays focused on a topic that informs the reader with ideas, concepts, and information.	The document has an unclear focus; however, it has ideas, concepts, and information.	The document has an unidentifiable topic with minimal ideas, concepts, and information.
<b>DEVELOPMENT</b> The document presents relevant facts, concrete details, quotations (if needed), and examples. The conclusion ties to and supports the information and explanation.	The document provides significant facts, concrete details, and examples that fully develop and explain the topic. The conclusion provides insight to the implications, explains the significance of the topic, and projects to the future.	The document provides effective facts, details, and examples that sufficiently develop and explain the topic. The conclusion provides the implications, significance of and future relevance of the topic.	The document provides relevant facts, details, and examples that develop and explain the topic. The conclusion ties to and supports the information and explanation.	The document provides facts, details, and examples that attempt to develop and explain the topic. The conclusion merely restates the development.	The document contains limited facts and examples related to the topic. The text may fail to offer a conclusion.
<b>AUDIENCE</b> The author anticipates the audience's background knowledge of the topic.	The document consistently addresses the audience's knowledge level and concerns about the topic; it addresses the specific needs of the audience.	The document anticipates the audience's knowledge level and concerns about the topic; it addresses the specific needs of the audience.	The document considers the audience's knowledge level and concerns about the claim; it addresses the needs of the audience.	The document illustrates an inconsistent awareness of the audience's knowledge level and needs.	The document lacks an awareness of the audience's knowledge level and needs.
<b>COHESION</b> The document uses appropriate and varied transitions to link the major sections of the text, creates cohesion, and clarifies the relationships among complex ideas and concepts.	The document strategically uses words, phrases, and clauses to link the major sections; it explains the relationships between the topic and the examples and/or facts.	The document skillfully uses words, phrases, and clauses to link the major sections; it identifies the relationship between the topic and the examples and/or facts.	The document uses words, phrases, and clauses to link the major sections; it connects the topic and the examples and/or facts.	The document contains limited words, phrases, and clauses to link the major sections; it attempts to connect the topic and the examples and/or facts.	The document contains few, if any, words, phrases, and clauses to link the major sections; it does not connect the topic and the examples and/or facts.
<b>LANGUAGE &amp; STYLE</b> The document presents a formal, objective tone and uses precise language and topic-specific vocabulary to manage the complexity of the topic.	The document presents an engaging, formal, and objective tone and uses sophisticated language and topic-specific vocabulary to manage the complexity of the topic.	The document presents an appropriate formal, objective tone and uses precise language and topic-specific vocabulary to manage the complexity of the topic.	The document presents an objective tone and uses relevant language and topic-specific vocabulary to manage the complexity of the topic.	The document illustrates a limited awareness of formal tone and awareness of topic-specific vocabulary.	The document illustrates a limited or inconsistent tone and awareness of topic-specific vocabulary.
<b>CONVENTIONS</b> The document uses standard English conventions of usage and mechanics along with discipline-specific requirements (e.g., APA, Chicago).	The document demonstrates advanced use of standard English conventions of usage and mechanics along with discipline-specific requirements (e.g., APA, Chicago).	The document demonstrates effective use of standard English conventions of usage and mechanics along with discipline-specific requirements (e.g., APA, Chicago).	The document generally demonstrates standard English conventions of usage and mechanics along with discipline-specific requirements (e.g., APA, Chicago).	The document minimally demonstrates accuracy in standard English conventions of usage and mechanics.	The document contains multiple inaccuracies in Standard English conventions of usage and mechanics.

Total \_\_\_\_\_ / 72

**Additional Comments:**

The rubric used in this class is aligned with the Heinz grading scale. If you have an issue with a grade, ask the professor (immediately) for a grade review. After the paper has been returned, you have one week to address issues. Papers will not be rescored at a later date, especially at the end of the semester.

Minimum Score / 72	Grade	Heinz %	Heinz Interpretation
70.56	A+	98 - 100	Exceptional
66.96	A	93 - 97	Excellent
64.8	A-	90 - 92	Very Good
63.36	B+	88 - 89	Good
59.76	B	83 - 87	Acceptable
57.60	B-	80 - 82	Fair
56.16	C+	78 - 79	Poor
52.56	C	73 - 77	Very Poor
50.40	C-	70 - 72	Minimal Passing
0 - 49	R	69 - below	Failing
NA	I	NA	Incomplete

**Final (in-class writing assignment):** Up to the final, all of your work received feedback prior to submission (i.e., helping your grade); however, the final reflects what you learned throughout the semester. Therefore, you will not get assistance from peers, the TA, or the professor. While the majority of weekly assignments are worth 72 points, the final is worth double (144 points). Reference Canvas to verify the specific date for the final.

As an important note, the final must be completed during your regular class time since different prompts are assigned to classes. Please do not ask to take the final on a different day or at another time. Unless there is a medical issue, verified by a doctor's excuse, failure to take the final on your assigned date/time has an automatic (late work) penalty.

**Late work:** If work is not submitted by the designated day/time, it is late. Add late assignments to the "Late Work" folder on Canvas. This folder is reviewed at the end of the semester (not the week you submit the assignment). For late work, grading starts at 80% of the total score for the assignment.

**Reflections:** After a weekly writing workshop, each student completes a reflection. Completing this assignment is a course expectation (grade) to demonstrate learning objectives.

## OFFICE HOURS

I am flexible most days to respond to questions via email or schedule a Zoom conference. This nontraditional approach to office hours enhances student/professor interactions by allowing me to address your needs as soon as possible. Students appreciate the flexibility to contact me when they have a question or want to meet. Then, you're not waiting to meet me at a scheduled time on a specific day.

## RECOMMENDED TECHNOLOGY

The use of Grammarly ([www.grammarly.com](http://www.grammarly.com)) is highly encouraged, but not required. Free and paid options are available.

## TEXT (not required)

Online articles, website links, and videos are provided via Canvas.

## WAITLIST POLICY

Each section is limited to twenty students. If there is an opening, students will be added from the waitlist in sequential order.

## WELLNESS AND DIVERSITY STATEMENTS

**Wellness** (adapted from <http://www.cmu.edu/counseling/>): Take care of yourself. Do your best to maintain a healthy lifestyle this semester by eating well, exercising, avoiding drugs and alcohol, getting enough sleep, and taking time to relax. This will help you achieve your goals and cope with stress. All of us benefit from support during times of struggle. You are not alone. There are many resources (people, events, and programs) available on campus, and an important part of the college experience is learning how to ask for help when you need it.

If you or anyone you know experiences any academic stress, difficult life events, or feelings of anxiety or depression, we strongly encourage you to seek support. Counseling and Psychological Services (CaPS) is available to help you. Consider reaching out to a friend, faculty, or family member for help, too. If you or someone you know is feeling suicidal or in danger of self-harm, call someone immediately, day or night. Do not hesitate!

- **CaPS:** 412-268-2922
- **Re:solve Crisis Network:** 888-796-8226
- If the situation is life threatening, call CMU Police at **412-268-2323** or **911**.

**Diversity** (adapted from <https://www.cmu.edu/student-diversity>): Diversity and inclusion have a singular place among the values of Carnegie Mellon University. This class will “enhance an inclusive and transformative student experience in dimensions such as access, success, and intergroup dialogue” through class activities, writing workshops, discussions, and assignments.

## FORMAT & OVERVIEW

Course content is delivered in a variety of formats (in-person meetings, synchronous instruction via Zoom, and asynchronous instruction).

This syllabus is online for others to view; therefore, **I do not post specific assignments.** Once you are registered, you will have full access to all of the content on Canvas. Below is a vague overview and schedule.

	Assignment	Examples of Content
Week 1	Resume Review	parallel structure, strong action verbs, commas, semi-colons, plurals, numbers, dates, capitalization
Week 2	Cover Letter Why are you the right person for the job? Did you connect your experience to the job posting or simply regurgitate your resume in narrative form?	sentence starters, transitions, cohesion
Week 3	LinkedIn Profile: “About” section From another’s point of view... What does your profile say about you? Is this the message you intended to send?	audience and message effectiveness
Week 4	Memo (outlining as a writing strategy)	focus and development
Week 5	Performance Review (explaining data)	professional language and style
Weeks 6 - 7	Business Proposal (researching a topic)	in-text citations and references writing to persuade
	FINAL: See information on Canvas	

## **PRIOR KNOWLEDGE**

This course is designed for non-native English-speaking students. Since it has a strong emphasis on grammar/mechanics, I stealthily integrate lessons (standard conventions of English) using employment correspondence (e.g., resumes, cover letters, LinkedIn profiles) and other business documents (e.g., proposals, memos, performance reviews).

For example, I start the course with a resume review, but I do not teach you how to write a resume. My goal is to use your current resume to focus on common writing issues (e.g., lack of strong action verbs and parallel structure). These are important aspects of professional writing. Moving into the cover letter, I discuss how a variety of sentence starters, effective transitions, and persuasive language demonstrate a confident writing style.

By the end of this course, you will be able to apply these lessons to professional experiences for a positive impact.

## **WRITING WORKSHOPS**

Each week, you will be assigned a conferencing partner or group for required writing workshops (a.k.a., peer reviews). Reviewing another person's paper helps you see a different perspective, gain insight on your work, and make decisions for a revision. If you find grammar/mechanics errors, too, you are welcome to point them out; however, the overall goal is to focus on the clarity and conciseness of the message, not on finding errors. (Note: I'll comment on that aspect.)

In order to share work, I will set up a folder for each class via Google Drive.