

# Follow-up Assessment Report: ENGLISH 2100

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## Introduction to Technical Writing



## Introduction

The following report revisits the “specific recommendations for emphasis in English 2100” from the assessment report conducted in May/June 2007 in order to document improvements in curriculum and pedagogy for Introductory Technical Writing. The committee, comprised of four experienced technical writing instructors, discussed how each individual instructor, as well as the in-person and Internet courses, is addressing each of the recommendations.

### Recommendation #1

- Emphasize using and interpreting information represented as data, graphs, tables, and schematics at all stages of the writing process.

IN-PERSON SECTIONS: Instructors talk more about front matter of reports, including title page. Emphasis is placed on symmetry of page design and the inclusion of charts and graphs to help support data. An in-class tutorial on the subject of designing visuals has been added. Even in seemingly routine, text-based documents such as memos, visual design is emphasized, including the option of using templates, adding graphical elements, and using bullet points. Students are reminded of the primacy of visual elements in the “real world.”

INTERNET SECTIONS: Assignment descriptions have been carefully re-worded so that the importance of document design is made clearer to students. Attention to document design is factored into evaluative comments for individual weekly assignments, not just the major projects. Plans are underway to create a grading rubric for major projects that alerts students to the importance of visual design elements in determining the success of their work.

### Recommendation #2

- Encourage more revision, or evidence thereof, in Internet classes through multiple draft submissions and required reflection assignments.

IN-PERSON SECTIONS: Not included in this recommendation.

INTERNET SECTIONS: Instructor takes advantage of “properties” feature in MS Word documents in order to determine when projects were created, by whom, how much time was spent on them, and how many revisions they have undergone. Project Three has been re-designed so that students submit an initial set of drafts as weekly assignments, then the composite final draft for peer review. Plans are underway to add a reflection assignment at the end of each major project.

### Recommendation #3

- Emphasize student awareness of the impact surface errors have on their professional ethos, including the relationship between careful reading and surface error reduction.

IN-PERSON SECTIONS: Student consultations are used to discuss rhetoric and grammar, disabusing students of the notion that “spell/grammar check will catch everything.” Instructors mark where errors occur, but allow students to determine the nature of the error and attempt to correct it on their own. Students are advised to have their drafts reviewed multiple times; peer review remains a central tool for revision. Instructors continue to spend class time, after grading the first project, addressing surface errors manifested in the work of students in each section. Students are reminded that a positive professional ethos is dependent upon an ability to minimize surface errors, particularly during a job search or business transactions with new clients or management.

INTERNET SECTIONS: Although grading of all assignments remains holistic, Instructor addresses surface errors in smaller weekly assignment, as well as larger projects, if these errors are creating problems for readers. Students are referred to the grammar appendix in the textbook as well as online resources, including the Writing Center. Students are reminded that a positive professional ethos is dependent upon an ability to minimize surface errors, particularly during a job search or business transactions with new clients or management.

## Recommendation #4

- Consider ways to make students more accountable for completing and applying required reading assignments.

IN-PERSON SECTIONS: Instructors have altered in-class discussions so that instead of being entirely student-driven, they are initiated by specific, detailed questions derived directly from the reading assignments. Student populations who take this class and are pursuing majors in science and technology, who often view English as solely “creative” and therefore a “waste of time,” are reminded of the concrete and practical nature of the textbook, and the specific ways in which it can empower them to express themselves successfully within their academic and professional discourse communities.

INTERNET SECTIONS: Instructor continues to emphasize the necessity of doing reading in order to succeed in the writing assigned in the class. Instructor continues to generate readerly responses when grading weekly assignments as well as major projects. Since the textbook is absolutely essential to the learning in an Internet course, students are expected to take charge of their literacy by reading carefully and implementing what they have learned into their written discourse.

## Recommendation #5

- Increase rhetorical awareness in general through various assignments and class components.

IN-PERSON SECTIONS: Instructors blur the dichotomy between “technical” and “creative” writing by emphasizing that there is creativity in how one employs genre, format, design and style in accordance with the audience. Class discussion continues to include rhetorical analysis of assigned readings, and of the nature of reading itself. Students continue to create reflective rhetorical analysis of their own work. Students are introduced to vocabulary and strategies of kairos and its role in rhetorical persuasion, in addition to continued discussion of logos, pathos, and ethos. In the third major project, the role of rhetorical persuasion is particularly emphasized, as the goal of the students’ final portfolio is to persuade an employer to hire them. Multi-media elements are employed in classroom pedagogy so that visual rhetoric is emphasized alongside traditional text-based and oral forms of rhetoric.

INTERNET SECTIONS: Internet assignments have been revised so that the instructor’s learning objectives, which are rhetorical in nature, are clearly articulated for the students. Assignments have also been re-designed so they are more rhetorical in nature. Genres are connected to their rhetorical impacts. Forum discussions continue to include rhetorical analysis of assigned readings, and of the nature of reading itself.

## Conclusion and Additional Recommendations

The committee has identified ways to improve the curriculum and pedagogy of English 2100 based upon the recommendations described above. We have either taken action or made specific plans to implement each of the five recommendations discussed. Our next step is to make this follow-up report available to the English 1010 and English 2010 committees as well as the entire English Department by having it posted to the English Department web site. We recommend the following:

1. All Course Committees work to synchronize their efforts to improve curriculum and pedagogy, and also to ensure there is a logical connection/transition between our 1010 and 2010/2100 courses.
2. The English 2100 Committee should conduct ongoing assessments and follow-up reports so that we maintain our goal of not only promoting student competencies in this particular course, but also meeting departmental, college-wide, and national goals for student success and student learning outcomes in writing endeavors.