

Program/Department:

*Technical and Professional Communication (TPC) B.S. degree program*

*Department of Languages and Literature, College of Arts & Sciences*

Program Assessment / Assessment of Student Learning

*Learning outcomes*

The TPC Program has identified 18 learning outcomes for our program graduates. These outcomes define career entry-level skills, the key skill sets required of all technical communicators, and the specialty area skills required for success within a technical communication specialty environment (see Appendix A: TPC Curricular Design chart).

*Assessment measures (indirect and direct)*

To determine our students' success within for each of the 18 learning outcomes, as well as their readiness for the job market, we have several assessment measures in place:

- Competence in skill areas: measured by student grades in required courses and on assigned projects (see Goals #1-7, also GPA requirements, #18)
- Application of skills: measured by performance on major projects in 400-level TPC courses and in internship (see Goals #9-17 and #8)
- Demonstration of skills: measured by professional portfolio (prepared and presented to a professional audience as partial requirement for TPC capstone course, ENGL499)

*Assessment cycle*

Each semester, individual student data are collected and evaluated. Other assessment measures are tied to student's senior year courses and internship.

The TPC Program evaluates its success in preparing students as part of the Academic Program Review Process, using data from program graduates, employers/internship sites, market analysis, etc.

*Assessment data from past year*

Individual student data are kept in TPC Program files (maintained by the Program Coordinator, S. Balkema).

2004-05 Program Review Self-Study Report is available from the TPC Program members and a copy available in the TPC Program library.

*Assessment used for curricular change*

Regular review of the program curriculum determines the value of each required course and its contribution to our students' ability to meet program goals. This review is typically informal, based on advising, discussions with students, TPC Program committee faculty members, advisory board members, and graduates. The Program Review process

most often provides the impetus and additional systematic data that may lead to curricular change.

## Course Outcome Assessment

### *Outcomes of multi-sectioned courses*

The TPC Program does not offer any multi-sectioned courses. The departments that offer these courses are responsible for these outcomes.

Of its required courses, TPC Program faculty have direct influence over only those with the ENGL prefix. The TPC Program coordinator serves on the department curriculum committee and brings any concerns about these outcomes to this group.

### *Addressing discrepancies*

ENGL-course issues are addressed within the Dept of Languages and Literature and its curriculum committee. The TPC Program Coordinator brings other issues, if any, to the appropriate departments.

### *Course outcomes and program goals*

The TPC Curriculum Design Chart (appendix A) and the Student Outcomes Assessment Plan (appendix B) describe the TPC Program goals and objectives, the assessment mechanism, and the required courses that meet these goals.

## Program Features

### *Advisory Board*

The TPC Program has an advisory board with a consistent membership, established meeting schedule, and on-going contact outside of bi-annual meetings.

We meet a minimum of once a year; our goal is to meet once a semester. Our last meeting was in late August 2004; we will be meeting again in April 2005.

The 12-member board consists of professional technical writers from the Michigan area, half of whom are program graduates and half professional colleagues. Most of the members are also members of the local Society for Technical Communication chapter; thus, our contact with these members is frequent and ongoing. Some of our members have been on the board for nearly 20 years, a consistency and long-term commitment to the program that we are proud of. In addition to the 12 professional members, the Advisory Board has 6 faculty members representing the TPC Program from the Languages and Literature Department. These 6 faculty members comprise the TPC Program Committee (Balkema, Brownell, Weber, Haneline, Jablonski, and Ding).

This academic year, as part of our program review self-study process, we re-vitalized our advisory board by asking the members to consider their role and their commitment to the group. Although a couple of our members asked to be replaced, most wanted to remain a part of the board. We added two new members this year, one a technical writing instructor from GRCC and the other a recent program graduate. Two of our members

(one faculty, one professional representative) agreed to serve as co-chairs of the board, responsible for organizing, coordinating, and publicizing our meetings.

The TPC Advisory Group has been a key component of our curricular review process over the years (in April we intend to review our program's required communication and writing courses). They were instrumental in the development of the MS/Certificate program curriculum and approach two years ago, as well.

### *Internship/cooperative or experiential learning*

All TPC students are required to complete an internship, English 491, for 4-8 credits. The credit range ties, roughly, to the duration and hours of the internship. Although we prefer full-time technical communication positions extending over the spring-summer semester (May-August), not all companies can provide full-time positions.

Internship positions in the technical communication field have been more difficult to find in recent years for economic reasons, but with faculty contacts, advisory board members, and aggressive job search strategies, our TPC students have been successful in locating sites. Some of our students have served on campus internships when off-campus sites were unavailable. We have increased focus on job search strategies and assistance when advising students and in our capstone class, English 499.

All of our interns are evaluated by their internship site supervisor, using an established evaluation form. We also end the internship with an on-site visit and meeting where we discuss the internship, the intern's success on the job, and areas where the TPC Program could improve the internship experience.

We have used our internship evaluations less for curricular evaluation and more for input on overall student preparation. These evaluations have reinforced, for example, the industry preferences in software applications, specific written formats, and communication skills necessary for our students' success.

### *On-line courses*

The Department of Languages and Literature offers several online courses that are required by the TPC Program. These include ENGL 311, Advanced Technical Writing; JRNL 230, Technical Editing; and ENGL 321, Advanced Composition.

We do not have any short-term plans to offer the B.S. degree online, but are completing the paperwork for the online MS/Certificate degree. The undergraduate degree is more suited to traditional face-to-face, instructor-led courses where writing skills can be developed, stylistic variations discussed, and communication theories examined and argued. As an online degree program, the MS/Certificate Program will meet the needs of working adults who need to apply new skills and approaches to their current work, expand their technical communication "repertoire," and complete an advanced degree while maintaining a busy work schedule.

## *Accreditation*

Currently, no accreditation process is in place for the technical communication field. The key professional organizations, the Society for Technical Communication (STC) and the Counsel for Programs in Technical and Scientific Communication (CPTSC) have discussed accreditation possibilities over the years, but none have been developed.

## *Student / Faculty recognition*

Recent TPC student achievements include

- Two students represented Ferris at the American Democracy Project in NYC in Feb 2005
- A TPC senior is the 2005 editor-in-chief of the *Torch*
- A 2004 TPC grad completed an internship with the *David Letterman Show* in the fall of 2003; this student is now completing a graduate program at Ball State University

Recent TPC faculty achievements include

- A TPC faculty member completed a sabbatical in 2004 including several projects and contacts in the technical communication field
- A TPC faculty member is heading up the training efforts for the Banner project
- A TPC faculty member served on President Eisler's Communication Task Force in the fall of 2004
- A TPC faculty member is consulting (as an Instructional Designer) on several training projects for clients such as the U.S. Postal Service; Hewlett-Packard, Corp.; and Meijer
- A TPC faculty member who was awarded a Fulbright to Hungary arranged for a Hungarian colleague to visit Ferris and spend the winter semester 2005 researching methods of teaching business and technical writing. She will also be visiting technical communication companies across Michigan during her stay.
- Several of the TPC faculty members will be presenting papers, attending conferences, leading colloquia, and/or writing and publishing papers during the 2004-05 academic year. Some of these conferences / professional environments include
  - Local STC chapter meetings in Grand Rapids (monthly)
  - International STC annual meeting in Seattle (May 05)
  - National American Medical Writing Association (AMWA) meeting (Nov 04)

## Additional Information

### *Areas of Strength:*

The TPC Program's key areas of strength are

- The program offers students a wide range of specialty options while providing a solid foundation of writing skills
- The field continues to offer graduates a wide range of career opportunities
- The field continues to grow (even with Michigan's economic situation, the national job market is considered excellent)
- The TPC Program offers a coherent curriculum tied to student outcomes performance
- The TPC Program faculty continue to be in high demand across the University and in the profession for their industry experience; their active professional contributions; and their practical, useful skills

### *Areas of Concern and Proposed Actions to Address Them:*

Although the TPC Program has no major areas of concern, we identified these items during our recent Program Review Self-Study process:

- *Curriculum.* Review the value of the three 300-level Communication courses to our graduates' skill sets and consider (a) replacing one of the requirements with an additional writing course (English 325); (b) allowing students to select 2 Communication courses from a list of approved options.
- *Recruitment.* Increase and expand program recruitment efforts: develop a high school outreach program to local schools that offer technical writing courses and develop a packet of information for teachers at these schools. Also increase the program's visual presence across campus and its "identity" in the Prakken Building (the location of the program facilities).

### *Future goals (with time frame)*

#### *Short-term goals and plans:*

- Begin recruitment plan (listed above) and visit targeted local high schools (target program begun and implemented by the end of winter semester)
- Print program posters, magnets, mouse pads, signs (etc) for (a) distribution across campus, (b) circulation to advisory board members, graduates, and current students, (c) posting across campus and in the Prakken Building (started by the end of fall 2004 semester; completed by the end of winter 2005 semester)
- Discuss curriculum revision ideas with TPC Program Committee and Advisory Board members (at Spring 2005 Advisory Board meeting, April 2005)

#### *Long-term goals and plans:*

Begin the MS/Certificate Program with initial course offerings (possibly in the fall 2005)

*Other Recommendations:*

None at this time

Prepared by Sandra J.Balkema, TPC program coordinator, February 3, 2005

Technical and Professional Communication Program  
Curriculum Design — Goals — Assessment

| TPC Program Goals  | First Year  | Second Year                | Third Year   | Fourth Year                   |
|--|---|----------------------------|--|-------------------------------|
| <b>Goals based on TPC skill areas</b><br>(Graduates will be able to...)  | ENGL 150<br>(1,2,3)   | ENGL 250<br>(1,2,3)        | ENGL 321<br>(1-5, 7, 9,10)   | ENGL 380<br>(1,2,3)           |
| 1. write effectively for various audiences   | COMM 121<br>(2)   |                            | COMM 336<br>(2)  | ENGL 411<br>(1,2,4,6,7)       |
| 2. collect and present material for various audiences and situations (including research strategies, oral presentations, interviewing, and using effective interpersonal communication skills) | ENGL 280<br>(1-5, 7, 9-12)  | ENGL 280<br>(1-5, 7, 9-12) | ENGL 311<br>(1-5, 7, 9,10)   | ENGL 499<br>(1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8) |
| 3. edit their (and others') writing using correct standard written English   | <b>General Education Requirements</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>communication competence (see above: ENGL 150, 250, 321; COMM 121)</li> <li>cultural enrichment (9 cr.)</li> <li>scientific understanding (7-8 cr.)</li> <li>social awareness (9 cr.)</li> <li>quantitative skills (0-4 cr.)</li> <li>global consciousness; race, ethnicity, and gender (no add'l credits req.)</li> </ul> |                            | PTEC 153<br>(4,6,15)   | ENGL 323<br>(1-5, 9,10)       |
| 4. create effective document layout and design   |   |                            | COMM 301<br>(2)  | COMM 332<br>(2)               |
| 5. produce various technical and business formats  |   |                            | ENGL 280<br>(1-5, 7, 9-12)   | ENGL 491<br>(Summer)<br>(all) |
| 6. demonstrate their knowledge of publication production cycles and procedures   |   |                            | <b>Content Specialty (min. 21 cr.)</b><br>(Goal #8)<br><br>(possible specialty tracks include) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Scientific / medical writing</li> <li>Technical Journalism</li> <li>Multi-media writing</li> <li>Publication Management</li> <li>Automotive Writing</li> <li>Computer Information Writing</li> </ul> |                               |
| 7. create and use effective technical and business visuals   |   |                            | <b>Directed Electives</b><br>(min.12cr.)   |                               |
| <b>Goals based on content / technical specialty area:</b>  | <b>Note:</b> the parenthetical numbers following course names/numbers in the chart above identify the program learning outcome listed in the left column.   |                            |  |                               |
| 8. demonstrate their knowledge of information,   |   |                            |  |                               |
| <b>Behavioral goals:</b>   |   |                            |  |                               |
| 9. demonstrate effective collaborative skills.   |   |                            |  |                               |
| 10. demonstrate effective teamwork strategies.   |   |                            |  |                               |
| 11. demonstrate effective leadership skills.   |   |                            |  |                               |
| 12. demonstrate project management skills.   |   |                            |  |                               |
| <b>Career Entry-Level Skills:</b>  |   |                            |  |                               |
| 13. write using standard written English.  |   |                            |  |                               |
| 14. edit their (and others') writing using standard written English.   |   |                            |  |                               |
| 15. use word processing programs effectively.  |   |                            |  |                               |
| 16. use desk-top publishing software programs effectively.   |   |                            |  |                               |
| 17. demonstrate as many specialized technical communication skills as possible, including HTML / SGML / JAVA, basic technical illustration, multimedia   |   |                            |  |                               |
| <b>Program GPA requirements:</b>   |   |                            |  |                               |
| 18. Students will meet all GPA requirements of the program.  |   |                            |  |                               |
| <b>Outcomes</b><br>(measured during senior year)   | Professional Portfolio demonstrating skills in <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>writing</li> <li>editing</li> <li>layout/design</li> <li>publication production</li> <li>project coordination and supervision</li> <li>writing in specialty area</li> </ul>   |                            |  |                               |
| Training Internship: gaining experience in and enhancing knowledge of TPC skills and professional practices.   |   |                            |  |                               |
| Capstone course (ENGL499): includes development and presentation of professional portfolio   |   |                            |  |                               |

## Appendix B: TPC Program Student Outcomes Assessment Plan

### TPC Skill Area Goals

---

**Goal #1: Graduates will be able to write effectively for various audiences**

Objectives: a) write for technical and non-technical audiences  
b) write for general and specific audiences

Classes: ENGL 150, 250, 311, 321, 323, and 411

Assessment: professional portfolio (ENGL 499)

Procedure: for the professional portfolio, students collect work from their academic careers, assemble the portfolio in ENGL 499, and present the portfolio for evaluation (in a professional non-class setting) for ENGL 499. If the portfolio does not pass the evaluation at this time, a student must revise and resubmit (to the TPC committee) prior to graduation.

**Goal #2: Graduates will be able to collect and present material for various audiences and situations.**

Objectives: a) collect material using various research strategies (incl. traditional research and interview)  
b) present material using effective oral presentation techniques and appropriate tools and/or software (i.e., Powerpoint)  
c) present material using effective written presentation techniques and appropriate tools and/or software (i.e, word processing, document design programs [i.e., Adobe Pagemaker or Quark Xpress or Adobe FrameMaker], web site construction and/or design programs [i.e., HTML])

Classes: ENGL 150, 250, 311, 321, 323, 380, 411, 499;  
COMM 336 (or OSYS 209), 301, 332;  
PTEC 153 (or 253)

Assessment: professional portfolio (ENGL 499)

Procedure: for the professional portfolio, students collect work from their academic careers, assemble the portfolio in ENGL 499, and present the portfolio for evaluation (in a professional non-class setting) for ENGL 499. If the portfolio does not pass the evaluation at this time, a student must revise and resubmit (to the TPC committee) prior to graduation.

**Goal #3: Graduates will be able to edit their (and others') writing using correct standard written English.**

Objectives: a) present grammatically correct writing in professional and academic situations  
b) revise own and others' writing to meet standards of formal written English

Classes: ENGL 150, 250, 311, 321, 323; ENGL 380, 411, 499

Assessment: • professional portfolio (ENGL 499) and  
• editing test [NOTE: currently being implemented]

Procedure: • for the professional portfolio, students collect work from their academic careers, assemble the portfolio in ENGL 499, and present the portfolio for evaluation (in a professional non-class setting) for ENGL 499. If the portfolio does not pass the evaluation at this time, a student must revise and resubmit (to the TPC committee) prior to graduation.  
• for the editing test, students take the test as a diagnostic when they enter the program; they are then assigned a "mentor" who will monitor and assist them in their progress; they then must take the test and receive a passing grade in order to graduate.

**Goal #4: Graduates will be able to create effective document layout and design**  
Objectives: a) produce effective page layouts using appropriate tools and/or software  
b) produce effective page layouts for various single- and multiple-page documents  
Classes: PTEC 153 (or 253); ENGL 411, 499  
Assessment: professional portfolio (ENGL 499)  
Procedure: for the professional portfolio, students collect work from their academic careers, assemble the portfolio in ENGL 499, and present the portfolio for evaluation (in a professional non-class setting) for ENGL 499. If the portfolio does not pass the evaluation at this time, a student must revise and resubmit (to the TPC committee) prior to graduation.

**Goal #5: Graduates will be able to produce various technical and business formats**  
Objectives: a) produce proposals, reports, business memos and letters, newsletters, informational brochures  
b) also use e-mail, HTML, SGML, multimedia, as appropriate  
Classes: ENGL 311, 321, 323, 411, 499;  
COMM 336 (or OSYS 209); PTEC 153 (or 253)  
Assessment: professional portfolio (ENGL 499)  
Procedure: for the professional portfolio, students collect work from their academic careers, assemble the portfolio in ENGL 499, and present the portfolio for evaluation (in a professional non-class setting) for ENGL 499. If the portfolio does not pass the evaluation at this time, a student must revise and resubmit (to the TPC committee) prior to graduation.

**Goal #6: Graduates will be able to demonstrate their knowledge of publication production cycles and procedures**  
Objectives: a) know how to prepare materials for printing  
b) know how to work with printers (choose paper, ink, etc. and specify printing specifications)  
Classes: PTEC 153 (or 253); ENGL 411, 499  
Assessment: professional portfolio (ENGL 499)  
Procedure: for the professional portfolio, students collect work from their academic careers, assemble the portfolio in ENGL 499, and present the portfolio for evaluation (in a professional non-class setting) for ENGL 499. If the portfolio does not pass the evaluation at this time, a student must revise and resubmit (to the TPC committee) prior to graduation.

**Goal #7: Graduates will be able to create and use effective technical and business visuals**  
Objectives: a) develop and use traditional technical and business visuals appropriately (incl. photos, graphs, clip art, etc.)  
b) develop and use basic computer visuals appropriately  
Classes: ENGL 311; ENGL 411, 499; PTEC 153 (or 253)  
(also optional courses: VISC 212 / PHOT 201)  
Assessment: professional portfolio (ENGL 499)  
Procedure: for the professional portfolio, students collect work from their academic careers, assemble the portfolio in ENGL 499, and present the portfolio for evaluation (in a professional non-class setting) for ENGL 499. If the portfolio does not pass the evaluation at this time, a student must revise and resubmit (to the TPC committee) prior to graduation.

## Technical Specialty Area Goals

---

- Goal #8: Graduates will be able to demonstrate their knowledge of information, terminology, technology, and expectations of their chosen technical specialty**
- Objectives:
- a) present information from specialized field using the terminology (jargon) of the field appropriately
  - b) present information from specialized field using presentation methods appropriate to the field
  - c) present information from specialized field demonstrating knowledge of the specialized audience
- Classes: 21 credits of technical / content specialty
- Assessment: professional portfolio (ENGL 499)
- Procedure: for the professional portfolio, students collect work from their academic careers, assemble the portfolio in ENGL 499, and present the portfolio for evaluation (in a professional non-class setting) for ENGL 499. If the portfolio does not pass the evaluation at this time, a student must revise and resubmit (to the TPC committee) prior to graduation.

## Behavioral Goals

---

- Goal #9: Graduates will be able to demonstrate effective collaborative skills.**
- Objectives:
- a) work collaboratively with others to problem solve, to identify the needs of the audience, and to determine an appropriate presentation method
  - b) work collaboratively with others to prepare written documents
- Classes: ENGL 311, 321, 411, 499
- Assessment: behavior observation
- Procedure: instructors in all upper-level TPC requirements will require collaborative projects and evaluate students for their successful completion of collaborative projects and their demonstration of effective collaborative skills
- Goal #10: Graduates will be able to demonstrate effective teamwork strategies.**
- Objectives:
- a) work as a team with others to problem solve, to determine potential approaches to problems, to set project goals, and to work constructively to meet goals
  - b) work as a team to complete tasks efficiently
- Classes: ENGL 311, 321, 411, 499
- Assessment: behavior observation
- Procedure: instructors in all upper-level TPC requirements will require collaborative projects and evaluate students for their successful completion of collaborative projects and their demonstration of effective collaborative skills
- Goal #11: Graduates will be able to demonstrate effective leadership skills.**
- Objectives: serve as a catalyst to action in team work and collaborative efforts
- Classes: ENGL 411, 499
- Assessment: behavior observation
- Procedure: instructors in English 411 and 499 will assign and evaluate collaborative projects that require each student to assume project leadership roles

**Goal #12: Graduates will be able to demonstrate project management skills.**  
Objectives: a) demonstrate effective project organizational skills  
b) demonstrate effective project resource (time and budget) management skills  
c) demonstrate effective project human resource management skills (including assigning tasks and assessing project members' work)  
Classes: ENGL 411, 499 (possibly ENGL 311, 321)  
Assessment: behavior observation  
Procedure: instructors in English 411 and 499 will assign and evaluate collaborative projects that require each student to demonstrate effective project management skills.

#### Entry-level Skills Goals

---

**Goal #13: Graduates will have career entry-level skills: write using standard written English.**  
Objectives: a) write for technical and non-technical audiences  
b) write for general and specific audiences  
Assessment: • internship assessment (ENGL 491)  
• placement surveys, employer surveys (to be developed)  
Procedure: internship evaluation form and closing interview will identify areas of strength, including writing and editing ability, software knowledge, and other job skills

**Goal #14: Graduates will have career entry-level skills: be able to edit their (and others') writing using standard written English.**  
Objectives: a) present grammatically correct writing in professional and academic situations  
b) revise own and others' writing to meet standards of formal written English  
Assessment: • internship assessment (ENGL 491)  
• placement surveys, employer surveys (to be developed)  
Procedure: internship evaluation form and closing interview will identify areas of strength, including writing and editing ability, software knowledge, and other job skills

**Goal #15: Graduates will have career entry-level skills: use word processing programs effectively.**  
Objectives: demonstrate ability to use Microsoft Word (or other dominantly used word processing program)  
Assessment: • internship assessment (ENGL 491)  
• placement surveys, employer surveys (to be developed)  
Procedure: internship evaluation form and closing interview will identify areas of strength, including writing and editing ability, software knowledge, and other job skills

**Goal #16: Graduates will have career entry-level skills: use desk-top publishing software programs effectively.**  
Objectives: demonstrate ability to use Pagemaker, Quark Xpress, and/or FrameMaker (or to use new dtp software based on ability to use another program)  
Assessment: • internship assessment (ENGL 491)  
• placement surveys, employer surveys (to be developed)  
Procedure: internship evaluation form and closing interview will identify areas of strength, including writing and editing ability, software knowledge, and other job skills

- Goal #17: Graduates will have career entry-level skills: demonstrate as many specialized technical communication skills as possible, including HTML / SGML / JAVA, basic technical illustration, multimedia.**
- Objectives: demonstrate ability to use specialized technical communication skills, as required, including HTML, SGML, JAVA, XML, illustration software programs, multimedia software programs, etc.
- Assessment:
  - internship assessment (ENGL 491)
  - placement surveys, employer surveys (to be developed)
- Procedure: internship evaluation form and closing interview will identify areas of strength, including writing and editing ability, software knowledge, and other job skills

#### Program GPA Requirements

---

- Goal #18: Graduates will meet all GPA requirements of the program.**
- Objectives:
  - a) min. 3.0 cumulative gpa in English-prefix courses (150, 250, 321, 311, 323)
  - b) min. 2.0 gpa in each course in the TPC Program sequence (ENGL 380, 411, 491, 499)
  - c) min. 2.0 cumulative gpa overall
- Assessment: individual student grade reports
- Procedure:
  - checked by the program coordinator each semester
  - notices sent to students when objectives aren't met