

Degree/Certificate: B.A. in Technical Communication

Major/Option: Technical Communication

Submitted by: Dr. T. Carnegie

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Part I – Program SLO Assessment Report for 2013-14

Part I – for the 2013-14 academic years:

1. Student Learning Outcome:

1. Write, design, and edit a variety of professional documents, both print and electronic, using the principles of information design to create useable documents that address audiences' information and organizational needs and engage users in appropriate action.

2. Overall evaluation of progress on outcome: Indicate whether or not the SLO has been met, and if met, to what level.

_____ SLO is met after changes resulting from ongoing assessments, referencing assessment results from the previous year to highlight revisions;

X SLO is met, but with changes forthcoming;

_____ SLO met without change required

3. Strategies and methods: Description of assessment method and choices, why they were used and how they were implemented.

For this assessment, capstone portfolios (Engl 490) and internship completion reports (Engl 495) were reviewed. Lists of documents were generated from the portfolio to determine the variety of documents students were completing. The Engl 490 portfolio was selected because it is a capstone project. The portfolio documents are completed for courses taken throughout the degree. Thus, the documents have already been assessed by instructors. The documents are then compiled into a portfolio and revised again by the students. The documents are reviewed again to assess how well they represent the students' ability to write, design, and edit. 11 portfolios were reviewed.

The completion reports were also review. Each report was coded by assigning a number to each program SLO. Information contained in the reports was then coded with the numbers of the SLOs. The SLO for this report was coded as 4. Statements in the completion reports would be assigned a number if they matched or provided evidence that the Program SLO had been met. The completion reports were selected for review because they include documents that are produced outside of the academic curriculum. The completion reports also provide information on the level of student confidence with the SLO and overall satisfaction in terms of how what they learn in the classroom connects to what they will do in workplace.

4. **Observations gathered from data:** Include findings and analyses based on the strategies and methods identified in item #3.

a. Findings:

Portfolios included a broad range of documents that demonstrated student's ability to "write, design, and edit a variety of professional documents, both print and electronic, using the principles of information design to create useable documents that address audiences' information and organizational needs and engage users in appropriate action." Samples included grant proposals, instructions, project plans, resource guides, newsletters, brochures, infographics, posters, media releases, logo designs, forms, websites, public relations letters, magazine layouts, handbooks, manuals, and recommendation reports. Evaluation of portfolios indicated an average score of 9/10 with the highest score being 9.8 and the lowest score being 6.4. The primary reason for the lower scores was incomplete portfolios rather than a lack of quality in student work.

In the internship completion reports, students listed news stories, brochures, PowerPoint templates, job descriptions, logos, web page banners, e-newsletters, Prezi presentations, application forms, annual reports, promotional flyers, checklists, social media sites, surveys, manuals, handbooks, web page content, instructions, documentation of databases, and technology incident reports.

In their internship completion reports, students expressed high levels of confidence with their ability to write, edit, and create documents, and a high level of satisfaction with how the skills they learned in the classroom applied to the workplace. Coded statements included the following:

"During my internship my primary responsibilities were to draft and revise existing documentation for the department database. The database houses records of EWU alumni, parents and donors to the University. Many departments at the university utilize these records for different purposes and are not always trained on how to navigate or input data into the database. . . . During this internship I developed skills that I know I will take with me. The first on how to write, edit, and develop documents that focus on instruction and process."

“Since I became a technical communication major I've been exposed to a vast amount of knowledge. That knowledge has helped me develop a variety of skills. The benefit of being a Technical Communication major as opposed to any other major is the hands on aspect. Instead of simply learning how to write a grant, we actually got to help an organization named SNAP write grants and submit them to foundations. That hands on style has been an integral part of every class I've taken. I have gained experience in writing grants, recommendation reports updating general operating procedures, redesigning manuals, and user design and experience.”

“The outcomes of my internship far exceeded my original objectives. I was able to complete the content for the handbook in enough time to assist in the final editing process, and assist the design team with content placement within the InDesign template. In addition to completing the original handbook, I was also able to make updates to the original content so that it would accurately reflect changes in the Running Start program (personnel and program labeling). . . . Aside from the Handbook, I was also able to participate in and complete a number of smaller projects for the Extended Campus. These projects included: Extended Campus web content development and management for the Running Start program and the International Field Studies program; promotional and informational video clips for the Running Start website; EWU online course information management using Mod-x content management system; and two faculty perspective profiles with EWU-online faculty to be featured on the Extended Campus webpage.”

“Planning, designing and editing are a large portion of what I am doing at Sterling. There is not much usability testing, other than what they do as a department once the documents I correct are published. Most of what I did was updating and standardizing documents that applied to everyday work among the department and its sub-departments. I was given a standards sheet at the beginning of the internship and based on this sheet, rewrote, designed and corrected different processes and procedures with ongoing updates. These procedures are placed on a company-wide, shared hard drive, so that anyone can edit and update them as necessary.”

“My role at Airway Heights was to design documents and logos, help plan a website redesign, and write and edit content for print and web materials.”

“I had to work on a newsletter for the office. I had to write short articles in the newsletter and type in information regarding grants and awards. . . . I had to condense an annual report and turn it into a brochure. I also had to condense the same document into about a five-page report . . .At the end of my

internship, I ended up working on a three page application; it was my job to make improvement on this application from a design standpoint.”

“I helped brand the WOC Connections program that is being launched, I designed logos, edited banners, usability tested newsletter templates, usability tested the Prezi presentation several times, edited job descriptions, attended several planning meetings, and designed a booklet for Our Sister’s Closet. . . . I created two brochures, two powerpoint templates, wrote nine job descriptions, designed three logos, edited a banner to create two new banners, created a style journal (except photos, which haven’t been taken yet), wrote content for the brochure, created a Prezi presentation, and created templates for e-newsletters.”

Statements of success:

In addition to statements about ability to write, design, and edit a variety of documents, the reports were also reviewed for statements that indicated the degree of students’ confidence in transferring skills to the workplace. The majority of comments indicated high levels of confidence. Only one statement indicated a lack of confidence. The student indicated that she had gained considerable knowledge in terms of writing for a journalistic context but was concerned that her internship was too specific to develop other skills for technical writing. The following statements provide a sample of students’ indication of confidence and success.

“I think that the internship was a success. I feel that I learned a good deal working with an organization that has few resources, which limits the quality of items or access to certain tools that other organizations may have. . . . I achieved my personal objectives and I hope to work in the non-profit sector once I have graduated. I think that learning how to communicate with people and perceive their hopes and desires for a project without having them clearly articulated is an extremely useful skill that will be helpful in my professional career. “

“I think it [internship] has been successful because I finished the assignments that my supervisor gave me on time before the quarter ended. I also had good communication with my supervisor and I was able to fully cooperate with everyone in the office. I think I am satisfied with how the IRB forms came out in the end. I think they are way better than the original forms, and the users should have an easier time filling them out. I also thought the newsletter that I worked on has some good articles, and I am proud with the RAMP-A math article that I wrote for the newsletter.”

“This internship was a complete success for me. I was able to make it a paid internship, the internship was full-time, and I've been hired as a permanent employee. I went into the internship with the goal of learning more about user design and user experience. After completing the internship, I feel that goal was met. I got to see how providers interacted with EPIC and what they thought of the design and layout of the software and their experiences as well.”

“As I mentioned before, going into this I had no idea I would like it so much. I applied for this job last year . . . I came to the interview not expecting to get it as I had no experience in the banking world and was sure there was someone more qualified than me. I walked into a board room among six managers that interviewed and sort of grilled me for about half an hour as they examined a physical copy of my portfolio. They told me it was a paid position (bonus!) and they wanted me for 30-35 hours a week on a six-month contract. I walked out feeling suddenly very good about the opportunity, and they called me the same day with a job offer. It really has changed my life and I can honestly say it is the most rewarding experience I have ever had. Thus far I have achieved all of the objectives I set for myself at the beginning of the process and really am surprised I've used as much as I have from my classes. The experiences in those classes (as grueling as they were sometimes) really prepared me for the workload and minimized any potentially stressful situations that arise in the bank. I am wholeheartedly satisfied with this whole experience.”

- b. Analysis of findings:
2. Overall, the technical communication program appears to be doing an exceptional job preparing students to “write, design, and edit a variety of professional documents, both print and electronic, using the principles of information design to create useable documents that address audiences’ information and organizational needs and engage users in appropriate action.” However, one concern did arise from the assessment. Longer individual pieces of writing were limited. Only four students include larger writing samples. Two were recommendation reports and two were academic essays. This raises the question of whether or not students are getting the opportunity to write longer reports or whether or not students are not including longer reports in their portfolio because the reports do not meet acceptable standards.

5. **What program changes will be made based on the assessment results?**

- a) Describe plans to improve student learning based on assessment findings (e.g., course content, course sequencing, curriculum revision, learning environment or student advising).

We have recently revised the English 305 (now TCOM 305). The course will focus more on research and provide students with the opportunity to write individual research reports and recommendation reports. In addition, the assignments in the TCOM 490 course will be streamlined to provide more time for students to prepare their portfolios.

- b) Provide a broad timeline of how and when identified changes will be addressed in the upcoming year.

The new curriculum for TCOM 305 will be implemented in Winter 2015. The TCOM 490 will be revised Spring 2015.

6. Description of revisions to the assessment process the results suggest are needed and an evaluation of the assessment plan/process itself.

The program needs to reevaluate its Student Learning Outcomes, especially since there have been several changes made to the major requirements. SLOs need to be aligned with the specific courses and rubrics developed to provide ongoing assessment information. Unfortunately, the resources for our program are extremely limited. There are only two faculty members to direct, advise, and teach in undergraduate and graduate degree programs. It is very difficult for faculty to find time outside of their teaching, advising, service and scholarship to work on the administration of assessment.

NEW: PART II – CLOSING THE LOOP
FOLLOW-UP FROM THE 2012-13 PROGRAM ASSESSMENT REPORT

In response to the university's accrediting body, the [Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities](#), this section has been added. This should be viewed as a follow up to the previous year's findings. In other words, begin with findings from 2012-13, and then describe actions taken during 2013-14 to improve student learning along, provide a brief summary of findings, and describe possible next steps.

Working definition for closing the loop: *Using assessment results to improve student learning as well as pedagogical practices. This is an essential step in the continuous cycle of assessing student learning. It is the collaborative process through which programs use evidence of student learning to gauge the efficacy of collective educational practices, and to identify and implement strategies for improving student learning.* Adapted 8.21.13 from <http://www.hamline.edu/learning-outcomes/closing-loop.html>.

1. **Student Learning Outcome(s)** assessed for 2012-13
I do not have a record of the 2012-2013 assessment.
2. **Strategies implemented** during 2013-14 to improve student learning, based on findings of the 2012-13 assessment activities.

We have revised our program to add more research in TCOM 305 and add a grammar course TCOM 309 to better prepare student for the editing course TCOM 409.

3. **Summary of results** (may include comparative data or narrative; description of changes made to curriculum, pedagogy, mode of delivery, etc.): Describe the effect of the changes towards improving student learning and/or the learning environment.

We have revised our program to add more research in TCOM 305 and a grammar course TCOM 309 to better prepare student for the editing course.

4. What **further changes to curriculum, pedagogy, mode of delivery**, etc. are projected based on closing-the-loop data, findings and analysis?
None