Program ENGL RP

Department: ENGLISH AND COMPARATIVE LITERATURE

College: A&S

Year: 2013-2014

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I. Program Overview

The Rhetoric and Professional Writing (RPW) is an option within the English degree. Students are required to take a core group of courses, common to all English majors, in which students are introduced to methodology and literary history (British, American, Ethnic and Minority). RPW students then complete seven courses (21 hours) in the RPW track that enables students to practice and hone their advanced writing and editing skills in a variety of media, with a specific emphasis on content generation and information design.

The RPW track emphasizes a fundamental understanding of communication processes, an understanding that puts theory into practice and bridges disciplines and industries. This programmatic orientation affords our graduates the skills necessary to adapt to a range of career opportunities.

Students learn to write in various genres based on specific communication problems found in organizations. The program incorporates an innovative approach to service-learning in the classes that stress students’ roles as professional consultants a role that significantly affects the nature of the work performed and raises special ethical/responsibility issues. Providing individualized attention to students’ interests and innovation in professional communication ensures students’ success in a variety of careers. Recent graduates have job titles as diverse as director of distance learning, health communicator, proposal writer, project manager, technical writer, content specialist, web content manager, instructional designer, communication manager, and digital marketing specialist.

II. Program Outcomes

- Identify, articulate, and focus on a defined purpose for the creation of written texts
- Respond appropriately to the needs of the relevant audience
- Demonstrate an ability to write in multiple genres (using conventions and formats) appropriate to the situation
- Employ flexible strategies for generating, revising, editing, and proof reading texts
- Demonstrate appropriate technologies and softwares to write, design, organize, present, and communicate information to address a range of audiences and purposes
- Analyze rhetorical contexts to identify the relationships among language, information, and knowledge and their connection to social, cultural, historical, and economic issues
- Understand the ethical dimensions of information and technology
- Incorporate design principles into documents (both print and online)
- Understand the role, importance, and methods of conducting research in professional writing
### III. Curriculum/Program Map

Table 1: Curriculum Map of Required Courses for RPW

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program Learning Outcomes</th>
<th>ENGL 3000 Intro to Lit. Studies</th>
<th>ENGL 3059 Spec. Writing</th>
<th>RPW electives</th>
<th>ENGL/5095 capstone</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Identify, articulate, and focus on a defined purpose for the creation of written texts</td>
<td>E</td>
<td>E,D</td>
<td>E,D</td>
<td>E,D,A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respond appropriately to the needs of the relevant audience</td>
<td>E</td>
<td>E,D</td>
<td>E,D</td>
<td>E,D,A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demonstrate an ability to write in multiple genres (using conventions and formats)</td>
<td>E</td>
<td>E,D,A</td>
<td>E,D,A</td>
<td>E,D,A</td>
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<tr>
<td>appropriate to the situation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employs flexible strategies for generating, revising, editing, and proof reading texts</td>
<td>E</td>
<td>E,D</td>
<td>E</td>
<td>E,D,A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demonstrate appropriate technologies and softwares to write, design, organize, present,</td>
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<td>E</td>
<td>E</td>
<td>E,D,A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and communicate information to address a range of audiences and purposes</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Understand the role, importance, and methods of conducting research in professional</td>
<td>E, D</td>
<td>E</td>
<td>E,D,A</td>
<td>E,D,A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>writing</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incorporate design principles into documents (both print and online)</td>
<td>E</td>
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<td>E</td>
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<tr>
<td>Analyze rhetorical contexts to identify the relationships among language, information,</td>
<td>E</td>
<td>E,D</td>
<td>E</td>
<td>E,D,A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and knowledge and their connection to social, cultural, historical, and economic issues</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Understand the ethical dimensions of information and technology</td>
<td>E,D</td>
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<td>E</td>
<td>E,D,A</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
IV. Methods and Measures

The Professional Writing Program uses a variety of assessment methods and measures, which will be discussed in detail below. However, the overarching and most important assessment measure is the program’s required ePortfolio.

ePortfolio Initiative
We have created a knowledge base for students at <writeprofessionally.org/eportfolio>

This site includes comprehensive information on the requirements of the ePortfolio as well as additional information about how to construct the ePortfolio. All documents included in the eportfolio require detailed descriptions and reflective essays, which in addition to the documents themselves are key to the program's assessment. Students are required to include one document/project/assignment from each RPW course in their ePortfolio. They have the option to select what they include, but they have to discuss that rationale in their description and reflections.

The ePortfolio is introduced in the required ENGL 3059 Introduction to Rhetoric and Professional Writing. For each of the remaining courses in the track, students must include a document from that course in their ePortfolio. Instructors may require certain documents to be included (e.g., the final report from ENGL 4092 Technical and Scientific Writing). Students are also required to include an assignment from ENGL 3000, Introduction to Literary Studies, since this course is required of all English majors.

ePortfolio coordinators review the ePortfolios in December and May and provide students with an overall assessment of their document choice, descriptions, and reflections. If students are not rated as satisfactory, then they are required to make revisions.

In addition to descriptions and reflections of each document, students are also required to write a critical essay (assigned in ENGL 5095 Capstone course) that looks at the ePortfolio as a body of work and discusses ways in which the student has grown as a professional writer. This critical essay is a prime example of a summative assessment instrument. As outlined in the infrastructure section below, student ePortfolios are examined by PW faculty twice a year, and students are given feedback on the structure, as well as the descriptions and reflections.

What is not completely evident in the curriculum map above is the fact that students are assessed on a sliding scale or a progression toward the program outcomes. In other words, the level of that assessment incrementally goes up. For example, we do not expect students to have mastered the concepts of purpose and audience (two of our program outcomes) in ENGL 3059 Introduction to Rhetoric and Professional Writing, but we are still assessing that work based on what was covered and student’s understanding of the terms in general. As the students progress in the curriculum, the assessment is incrementally more rigorous.
with an expectation of a greater competency, fluency, and ability. By the time students are in ENGL 5095 Capstone in Professional Writing, the expectations are much higher so that faculty would feel comfortable with students applying for entry level professional writing jobs. Thus, Table 2 uses a field specific curriculum outcomes matrix that assesses student learning on a scale of 1-4, with 4 being high proficiency.

Table 2: Assessment Type and Progression Proficiency

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course</th>
<th>Assessment Type</th>
<th>Progression Proficiency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ENGL 3059 Intro</td>
<td>✔ Student Produced Artifacts ✔ Portfolio evaluation</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>✔ Culminating Assignment</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ENGL 40-- Spec. Writing</td>
<td>✔ Student Produced Artifacts ✔ Oral Group Presentation</td>
<td>2-3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>✔ Culminating Assignment</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ENGL 5095 Capstone</td>
<td>✔ Client based capstone project ✔ Culminating Assignment</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>✔ Oral Group Presentation ✔ Critical Essay ✔ Final Portfolio Evaluation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**ENGL 5095 Capstone: Client based (service learning) project artifacts**
The capstone course is designed around a client-based project that usually includes several different components for both online and print delivery. The student produced documents are presented to the client at the end of the term and explained in a formal presentation.

*Note:* Many of our courses include client-based (service learning) projects, which are incorporated at the discretion of the instructor.
Other assessment types

While the overall program assessment is keyed to required courses in the curriculum, the PW program also includes other assessment types as a way to further program assessment. Following are the kinds of additional assessments that are completed in other courses in the program.

**All Courses: Student produced artifacts**
Since students are only required to place one document from each course into their portfolios, the PW program also uses student created artifacts as a way to assess course and program learning outcomes.

Students will complete a critique artifact and/or a production artifact. A critique artifact is an analysis of a specific document that evaluates its quality/effectiveness in terms of the course content. This type of assignment helps instructors see how well students understand the information being discussed. Examples of this assignment may include a critique of a workplace document in relation to a specific reading or chapter from the textbook. Student may also be asked to produce an artifact, which is the natural progression after critiquing and existing document. In this case, the students will produce a specific type of document. An example of this may be a negative information letter or the creation of a brochure.

**All courses (except ENGL 40-Specialized writing): Critical essay**
Critical or reflective essays provide students the opportunities to demonstrate what they have learned and to discuss how skills and ideas from each RPW course fit together. These essays offer faculty an important opportunity to be reflective of the curriculum and make stronger ties across courses.

**Alumni surveys**
The Professional Writing program maintains a good relationship with many of its alumni, and we do informal information gathering from them on a regular basis to ensure a match between the curriculum and workplace practices. (e.g., We recently (Fall, 2013) completed a short survey asking for feedback on technological competencies.)

**Advisory Board**
Currently (Spring, 2014), the Professional Writing program is in the process of forming an external advisory board whose purpose will be to routinely assess student work as it relates to current trends in the workplace.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program Outcome</th>
<th>Assessment Tools</th>
<th>Course/Experience</th>
<th>Time Line</th>
<th>Responsible Person</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Identify, articulate, and focus on a defined purpose for the creation of written texts</td>
<td>ePortfolio student artifacts critical essay</td>
<td>3059 40--5095</td>
<td>ePortfolio: may/dec critical essays and student artifacts: Annual curriculum review</td>
<td>Eportfolio: eportfolio coordinators Student artifacts: Course instructor Critical essay: course instructor Random samples: PW faculty</td>
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Demonstrate appropriate technologies and softwares to write, design, organize, present, and communicate information to address a range of audiences and purposes  

Understand the ethical dimensions of information and technology  

Incorporate design principles into documents (both print and online)
**IV. Assessment Infrastructure**

A strength of the Professional Writing program is the faculty's communication. We have developed regular routines of keeping one another abreast of program developments. For example, the faculty meet at least once every term to discuss curricular and assessment issues and then meet again at the end of every academic year. We have also created a shared Bb site that includes common materials, such as syllabi, assignments, rubrics, and exercises, for each of the courses in the curriculum.

**Annual Curriculum Review**

The meeting at the end of term specifically includes discussions of areas within the curriculum that need greater attention to connections and learning outcomes. For example, we recognized through discussion that we were not all using the same terms to refer to the same practices and principles. The end of term meeting helped us to address this issue and find a common terminology. The information from PW meetings are stored in our shared Bb site and shared with the undergraduate studies committee as a means to maintain some consistency in assessment. Any recommendations for changes and improvements in the curriculum are discussed.

The annual curriculum review includes a random sample of student artifacts and critical essays from each course that are used as discussion points for faculty to assess what changes may need to be made to help students better achieve the program learning outcomes. At this meeting, a random sample of ePortfolios are also reviewed.

By the process and structure of our assessment plan, RPW faculty are constantly performing a curriculum analysis to ensure that the elements of courses (readings and assignments and projects) are meeting the course outcomes and program outcomes.

A report of the strengths and weaknesses of the sample will be produced.

**Portfolio Evaluation**

In May and December, the coordinators evaluate the ePortfolios to ensure students are making satisfactory progress, which means students are including documents from each course. When we have several years with of data, we will also be doing a content analysis of the ePortfolios every two years (the first to occur in the spring of 2016).

ePortfolios of graduating students are included as part of the capstone course and are viewed and commented on by two faculty of the program.

A report of the strengths and weaknesses of the sample will be produced.
Advisory Board
By 2015-2016, we will have an established internal assessment record to be able to present our external advisory board with student ePortfolios and artifacts for their feedback and suggestions.
V. Findings

Assessment data has not yet been collected to adequately report on findings. We will be generating our first set of assessment reports in Spring 2014 that will help us shape the curriculum for the next year.

VI. Use of Findings

Since all PW faculty participate in the annual curriculum review, they will all be privy to the discussions of assessment data. In addition, the reports will be disseminated to all faculty and any recommendations from the data will be discussed by all the faculty before implementation.