

Professional Writing Program Assessment Report 2022-2023

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I. Professional Writing Program Mission and Educational Objectives

A. Program Mission

Oregon Tech's Professional Writing program (PWR) focuses on professional, technical, business, and scientific writing to prepare students for careers in technical, scientific, medical, government, non-profit, and business writing environments. Course instruction links theory to practice via courses in rhetoric and design, writing, digital literacy, style, multimedia composition and management, documentation development, usability testing, web writing, and publishing in print and electronic media. Courses introduce students to the procedures and practices that professional writers and editors use regularly.

The program rigorously trains students in the best practices common to all fields under its umbrella, including—but not limited to—training in structured authoring and layout software (e.g. MadCap Flare, Adobe InDesign), web design tools (e.g. Wordpress and foundational web-languages like HTML, JavaScript, PHP and SQL), business and management techniques (e.g. Lean) and more. Additionally, students are required to craft their own 33-credit-hour series of emphasis and technical electives, reflecting the specific writing field they intend to join or the practices they will need the most familiarity with.

B. Mission Alignment

The Professional Writing degree is intended to culminate in an externship, offering students a chance to practice their target career with a current professional. Prior to that hands-on experience, Professional Writing courses offer a variety of open-ended projects and opportunities to engage with professional or public communities as objects of study for research (e.g. PWR 330: User Research) or practice (e.g. PWR 355: Project Management for Writers).

As every student's technical and emphasis elective sequence creates a unique degree program, innovation is a regular feature of the curriculum – students' programs of study have the potential to vary as much as the students themselves.

AY 2018 saw the first graduate in Professional Writing following the program's launch in AY 2017. The program is slowly growing, but it did not graduate any students in AY 2019-2020. Due to the program's recent launch and the limited number of major courses offered, little data has been captured on the program so far.

The Technical Elective requirement and many of our program's core courses emphasize the university mission's focus on innovation, hands-on experience, scholarship and applied research.

- **Innovation:** Students actively craft their own professional portfolio of writing and technical objects during their course of study. These projects are often directed entirely by the student using their understanding of the current career landscape in professional writing.
- **Hands-On Experience:** Students in Professional Writing courses regularly apply their academic knowledge to real-life situations and professional tasks, both as a means to

complete homework and as a part of their professional lives outside of school. This includes writing fiction, creating websites or web content, or assisting clients in usability research.

- **Scholarship and Applied Research:** Students in Professional Writing engage with rhetorical theories of written communication, both as a means of understanding the discipline and as a product for broader consumption. Students in PWR 355: User Research use current scholarship in UX/UI design to evaluate the usability of client websites, deepening their understanding of that research area and applying it directly to real-world situations.

C. Additional Information

Oregon Tech's Professional Writing program fills a need in the technical and professional communication world by offering students a chance to not only gain expertise in writing for a variety of audiences and clients, but also in the specific technical languages and tools they will be expected to use. For instance, students intending to take on a career in science or medical writing will find themselves in courses like BIO 200: Medical Terminology and PHIL 305: Medical Ethics, while their peers looking to become document specialists in large companies may enroll in BUS 313: Health Care Systems and Policy and PSY 347: Organizational Behavior to supplement their Professional Writing courses.

II. Program Description and History

Oregon Tech's Professional Writing program uses the mold of many technical rhetoric and writing programs by requiring students to become familiar with a wide variety of composing and publication formats – from traditionally print media (JOUR 211: Student Newspaper) to fully digital media (PWR 315: Advanced Web Authoring). However, it breaks from the traditional format by requiring students to dedicate 33 credits of their program of study to courses offering technical skills or education in a field other than writing and rhetoric. Professional Writing students learn to apply their *how-to* knowledge from the major to specific audiences, clients and communities represented in their technical electives.

The Professional Writing program resides in the Communication department, and its courses are staffed by faculty who also teach Communication Studies courses and general education communication courses.

The Professional Writing program officially launched in the Winter of 2018, after being publicly announced in Winter 2017. The first full cohort graduated in Spring 2021.

III. Program History: AY 2017 to Present

The Professional Writing program was approved by HECC in Winter 2018. As of this reporting date, most of the proposed new courses have been taught at least once. Many upper division courses are or will be offered on a two-year rotation, due largely to program staffing.

A. Program Locations

All Professional Writing courses are currently located on the Klamath Falls campus. Faculty are actively developing plans to hybridize or offer these courses fully online in order to recruit students from the Portland-Metro area or other fully online populations. The program continues to pursue appropriate incorporation of online and hybrid courses, but a proposal for an online and/or face to face certificate in Professional Writing was tabled after a round of administrative feedback was received in Fall 2021.

The Professional Writing program was approved by HECC as a 49% online program. As competitor programs across the state have moved more of their curriculum online following COVID, the Professional Writing program at OIT is more earnestly pursuing greater hybrid and online modality options to better address student and staffing needs.

B. Enrollment and Retention Trends

Professional Writing has continued to grow every year. It recruits students from the Digital Media Design program at Klamath Community College, and it retains OIT students who do not persist in their majors chosen at enrollment. The technical focus aspect of the program allows students to apply many credits from their former major (or their previous degree program at another school) toward graduation, and the program's emphasis on connections between written communication and technical fields creates significant in-class and program-wide value from these backgrounds. (See Table 1.)

	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Professional Writing	4	5	11	13	11
Full-Time	3	4	10	11	10
Part-Time	1	1	1	2	1

Table 1: PWR Enrollment and Retention Data

C. Program Graduates

In AY 2023, two students were awarded a B.S. in Professional Writing.

D. Industry Relationships

The Professional Writing program's advisory board consists of members with professional backgrounds in technical writing, web content writing and journalism.

The advisory board was not convened in the 2022-2023 school year.

The following industry partners have been involved in the noted courses in our curriculum:

- BlueZones (WRI 410)
- Klamath Film (WRI 410)
- Ponderosa Middle School (WRI 410)
- CASEDA (WRI 410)
- Downtown Association (WRI 420)

- iFixit (WRI 327)
- STC Puget Sound Chapter (PWR 330)
- OIT Library (PWR 330)
- Friends of the Children (WRI 410)
- Klamath Soil and Water Conservation District (WRI 499)
- Related in Recovery (WRI 410)
- Klamath Tribes (WRI 420)
- Transformations Wellness Center (WRI 410)
- Klamath Health Partnership (PWR 499)
- Toys for Tots (WRI 410)
- Oregon Institute of Technology Sustainability Committee (WRI 410)
- Sol Luna Yoga (WRI 420)
- Sigma Tau Delta (WRI 420)

E. Program Changes

No program changes were initiated during the 2022-2023 school year. While the 2020-2021 action plan recommended that the emphasis elective sequences be simplified, there was not sufficient people power in the department to take this on after multiple resignations.

IV. Program Education Objectives and Program Student Learning Outcomes (PSLOs)

A. Program Education Objectives

Upon completion of the Professional Writing program, students should be able to:

1. Design and create documents appropriate for professional and consumer audiences using a variety of industry-standard tools.
2. Use accepted rhetorical, linguistic and design theories to craft user- and reader-centered documents.
3. Demonstrate professionally appropriate practice in working with clients/stakeholders and teammates.
4. Demonstrate professionally appropriate ethical reasoning, including awareness of intellectual property in the creation and management of documents.
5. Analyze their position within the fields of publishing, technical communication, professional writing, and allied disciplines.
6. Manage the production of complex, large-scale projects and their related documentation.

B. Origin and External Validation

The PSLOs above were discussed with our Industry Advisory Board in Winter 2021. Advisory Board members agreed that these outcomes were valuable across all of their fields.

V. Curriculum Map

The following curriculum map indicates PWR programmatic outcomes as well as institutional ISLO outcomes. (See Table 2.)

PWR outcomes 1 and 2 both map to ISLO 1, Communication. PWR outcome 3 maps to ISLO 4, Teamwork. PWR outcome 4 maps to ISLO 3, Ethical reasoning. ISLOs 2, 4, and 6 are indicated in separate right-hand columns. F indicates foundational level, p indicates practicing level, and c indicates capstone level.

PSLO/ISLO MAPPING BY COURSE									
	PWR 1: Design and create documents appropriate for professional and consumer audiences using a variety of industry-standard tools.	PWR 2: Use accepted rhetorical, linguistic, and design theories to craft user- and reader-centered documents.	PWR 3: Demonstrate professionally appropriate practice in working with clients/stakeholders and teammates.	PWR 4: Demonstrate professionally appropriate ethical reasoning, including awareness of intellectual property in the creation and management of documents.	PWR 5: Analyze their position within the fields of publishing, technical communication, professional writing, and allied disciplines.	PWR 6: Manage the production of complex, large-scale projects and their related documentation.			
	ISLO 1: Communication	ISLO 1: Communication	ISLO 4: Teamwork	ISLO 3: Ethical Reasoning			ISLO 2: Inquiry and Analysis	ISLO 5: Quantitative Literacy	ISLO 6: Diverse Perspectives
PWR 101: Introduction to Professional Writing	f	f	f	f	f	f	f		
PWR 102: Introduction to Web Authoring	f	f				f		f	
PWR 206: Social Media	Not yet offered								
PWR 215: Writing in the Public Interest	f	f	f	f		f	f		f
PWR 220: Writing for Interactive Media	Not yet offered								
PWR 306: Writing for the Health Professions	p	p	p						
PWR 310: Professional Writing for International Audiences	p	p							p
PWR 315: Advanced Web Authoring	p	p				p		p	
PWR 320: Structured Authoring	p	p				p		p	
PWR 330: User Research	p	p	p	p		p	p	p	p
PWR 355: Project Management for Writers	p	p	p	p		p			
PWR 490: Portfolio Development	c	c			c	c	c		
PWR 499: Internship in Professional Writing	c	c	c	c	c	c	c	c	c
COM 109: Intro to Communication Tech	f	f		f				f	f
COM 115: Intro to Mass Communication			f	f	f		f		
COM 225: Interspersed Communication			f						f
COM 237: Intro to Visual Communication	f	f		f			f		f
COM 248: Digital Media Production	f	f				f		f	
COM 255: Communication Ethics				f	f				f
COM 301: Rhetorical Theory & Application	p	p		p			p		
COM 345: Organization Communication I			p	p	p				
COM 358: Communication and the Law				c	c				
COM 424: Capstone	c	c	c	c	c	c	c	c	c
JOUR 211: Pub/Student Newspaper	f	f	f	f		f	f		f
SPE 314: Argumentation	p	p		p					

Table 2: PSLO Map by Course

VI. Assessment Cycle of Student Learning Outcomes

Following the PSLO revision, a three-year assessment cycle was developed to adequately capture student performance in each PSLO. (See Table 3.)

PSLO ASSESSMENT CYCLE					
	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25
PWR 1: <i>Design and create documents appropriate for professional and consumer audiences using a variety of industry-standard tools</i>			✓		
PWR 2: <i>Use accepted rhetorical, linguistic and design theories to craft user- and reader-centered documents</i>			✓		
PWR 3: <i>Demonstrate professionally-appropriate practice in working with clients/stakeholders and teammates</i>		✓			✓
PWR 4: <i>Demonstrate professionally-appropriate ethical reasoning, including awareness intellectual property in the creation and management of documents</i>		✓			✓
PWR 5: <i>Analyze their position within the fields of publishing, technical communication, professional writing, and allied disciplines</i>	✓			✓	
PWR 6: <i>Manage the production of complex, large-scale projects and their related documentation</i>	✓			✓	

Table 2: PSLO Assessment Cycle

VII. Summary of 2022-2023 Assessment Activities

Due to the resignation of all faculty who had previously conducted program assessments, no assessment data was collected during the 2021-2022 school year. After the installation of a new department chair, a retrospective analysis of several programmatic courses was conducted during Fall 2022, made possible by the retention of student materials on Canvas.

Fortunately, a clear assessment plan was left by the departed assessment coordinator, which allowed us to assess Communication Studies outcomes, Professional Writing Outcomes, and ISLO Professional Writing Assessment Report 2022-2023

outcomes at the same time through appropriate outcomes alignment. For this reason, where one course was assessed for both Professional Writing and Communication Studies, that analysis will be repeated between both reports.

The following direct assessment questionnaire was sent to faculty who teach WRI 420, COM 225, and PWR 215.

All retrospective reports have been included in their entirety as attachments to this report (see appendices A through I) though some were lightly redacted to remove individual student names. Faculty were encouraged to describe their expectations and how students met them, as well as describe what artifacts were analyzed. A summary of their findings can be found in the table in the next section.

Furthermore, we also directly assessed quantitative data on final course grades in all courses that were assessed using the questionnaire (although our numbers are for all teachers and all sections for the school year in addition to the sections that had content assessed); our target was an average final grade point of 3.0 or above for all classes.

Indirect assessment was conducted using the programmatic exit survey; however, it used a previous version of our outcomes so it doesn't match one to one with the current outcomes.

Finally, data was collected on our retention rate and our DFWI rate. We do not yet have 6-year graduation rate data for the Professional Writing degree because it hasn't been in existence long enough.

VIII. Assessment Data Summary

A summary of assessment data for this evaluation period is provided in the following tables. (See Tables 4, 5)

PROFESSIONAL WRITING PROGRAM					
Assessment Area	Course	Assessment Methods	Performance Targets	Results	Met?
DP	COM 225	Instructor Questionnaire		[PLACEHOLDER FOR RILEY COMMENTS]	
	COM 225	Final Grades	>3.0	3.37	Yes
PWR 1 <i>Design & create documents appropriate for professional & consumer audiences using a variety of standard industry tools</i>	WRI 420	Instructor Questionnaire	Demonstrate competence	* Students completed 2 assessment projects; a design analysis and a tutorial summary *Assignment 1 median score was 134/150; Assignment 2 median was 100/100 - better than expected	Yes
	WRI 420	Final Grades	>3.0	3.9	Yes
	PWR 215	Instructor Questionnaire	Demonstrate competence	*Students completed 2 assessment assignments, an identity sampler and a fundraising sampler. *Avg score was 93% for identity sampler, 82% for fundraising sampler; as expected for 1, below expectations for 2	Yes/No
	PWR 215	Final Grades	>3.0	3.25	Yes
PWR 2 <i>Use accepted rhetorical, linguistic, and design theories to craft user- and reader-centered documents</i>	WRI 420	Instructor Questionnaire	Demonstrate competence	*Students completed 3 assessment assignments: bad design analysis, 1-page design project, and group design project. *Assignment 1 median 141/150; Assignment 2 median 185/200; Assignment 3 median 300/300 - better than expected	Yes
	WRI 420	Final Grades	>3.0	3.9	Yes
	PWR 215	Instructor Questionnaire	Demonstrate competence	*Students completed 2 assessment assignments, an identity sampler and a fundraising sampler. *Avg score was 93% for identity sampler, 82% for fundraising sampler; as expected for 1, below expectations for 2	Yes/No
	PWR 215	Final Grades	>3.0	3.25	Yes

Commented [KL1]: This table is not editable, so a summary of the COM 225 instructor's comments is provided here.

Students completed 1 assessment project: a life-story interview. 11/25 students scored a B and 5/25 students scored an A.

Students performed better than expected at DP.

Instructor will make more instructions for assignment more explicit.

Table 4: 2022-2023 Assessment data for PWR classes

COMBINED - EXIT SURVEY & DFWI					
Assessment Area	Course	Assessment Methods	Performance Targets	Results	Met?
All PSLOs	N/A	Exit Survey	All students rate themselves as at least a the level of "proficiency" in all outcomes	1 Student completed the survey, and rated him/herself to be proficient in all outcomes.	Yes
Student Satisfaction	N/A	Exit Survey	100% positive student comments	One Student completed the survey, and communicated a high degree of satisfaction.	Yes
Graduation Rate	N/A	University Dashboard	6-year rate >50%	100%*	Yes
Retention	N/A	University Dashboard	1-year rate >75%	75%	Yes
DFWI PWR	N/A	University Dashboard	All program <12%	8.3%	Yes
DFWI WRI non-gen-ed	N/A	University Dashboard	All program <12%		Yes
DFWI WRI gen-ed	N/A	University Dashboard	All program <12%	9.5%	Yes
DFWI all WRI prefix	N/A	University Dashboard	All program <12%	9.5%	Yes
DFWI Equity Gap all WRI prefix	N/A	University Dashboard	All program <12%	Af-Am: 21.1% 2 or more races: 13.3% Hispanic: 12.9% International: 12.0% Pell 15.4%; Non-Pell 7.9% 1G: 11.3%; Non-1G 10.8% Male 11.2%/Female 7.1%	No

Table 5. Exit Survey and DFWI Data for PWR

IX. DFWI tables for all WRI prefix classes including gen ed:

FIRST_GENERATION	DFWI	TOTAL	% DFWI
First Generation	26	232	11.3%
Not First Generation	71	662	10.8%
Unknown	43	772	7.3%
Total	140	1,666	9.5%

GENDER	DFWI	TOTAL	% DFWI
Female	44	732	7.1%
Male	96	934	11.2%
Total	140	1,666	9.5%

RACE	DFWI	TOTAL	% DFWI
African American	4	19	21.1%
American Indian	1	19	8.3%
Asian	4	75	5.8%
Hawaii/Pacific Islander	0	6	0.0%
Hispanic	29	251	12.9%
International	3	26	12.0%
Two or More Races	12	94	13.3%
Unknown	1	28	5.9%
White	86	1,148	8.5%
Total	140	1,666	9.5%

PELL	DFWI	TOTAL	% DFWI
No Pell Awarded	156	1,466	11.8%
Pell Awarded	70	384	18.2%
Total	226	1,850	13.3%

Tables 6-9: DFWI Data for All WRI courses

X. Data-Driven Action Plan

The chair recommends the following action plan for the Professional Writing program.

1. Address WRI-related DFWI rate and equity gaps.

A cursory analysis of the DFWI dashboard shows a higher than acceptable rate of DFWI in our WRI prefix classes in general, specifically noting our WRI gen ed classes as problematic.

This includes WRI 121, WRI 122, WRI 227, WRI 327, WRI 328, WRI 345, and WRI 410.

- Proposed Action:** Hire new faculty to develop a writing center to provide outside-of-class tutoring and supplemental instruction in writing.
- Proposed Action:** Work with Advising and Retention to assess current availability of supplemental instruction and barriers to students using it.
- Proposed Action:** Continue to invest in Open Academic Resources to reduce the cost of attendance for our writing classes, to increase equity for Pell Grant awardees.
- Proposed Action:** Conduct equity assessment of WRI classes with specific focus on international students, racial minorities, and economically disadvantaged students.

2. Address data gathered on WRI 328 by addressing desired role of grammar in both Communication Studies and Professional Writing curriculum.

(While the content that was assessed in WRI 328, Style, looked great, WRI 328 final grades were lower than expected. Any concerns about this class are related to anecdotal concerns shared about COM 216, Grammar and Punctuation, as well as WRI 415, Technical Editing.)

- a. **Action:** A new instructor will be preparing COM 216 for Spring 2023. We missed a year of offering this class (Fall 2021) due to staffing shortages, and we hope offering this feeder class will help.
- b. **Proposed Action:** Hire more faculty so we avoid staffing shortages in the future.

XI. Closing the Loop

The following action plan items were created in the 2021-2022 assessment report; we are still early in the process of building an inquiry loop but we can provide a brief update here.

A. Revision of Technical Emphasis Sequence

No revisions were made so this will continue to be a goal for the future, pending staffing.

B. Curriculum Map

A draft curriculum map was assembled and is included in this report. This year we will be working to more transparently associate our program courses with the program outcomes they fulfill.

C. Portfolio Development and Active Reflection

Portfolio and Capstone reflection re-development is ongoing but not yet completed.

D. Hire More Faculty

Our 2023-2023 search for a full-time tenure-track PWR faculty member failed despite bringing three excellent candidates to campus. All three candidates turned down our offer and accepted positions elsewhere, which suggests that factors beyond our control as a department affected the success of this search. A new search was initially approved for 2023-2024 but has since been frozen. This means we are continuing to operate at a deficit, which impacts our ability to offer classes and innovate in assessment.