Douglas College

EFFECTIVE: JANUARY 2004
CURRICULUM GUIDELINES

A.	**Division:**	**Instructional**	Effective Date:		January 2004		
B.	**Department / Program Area:**	**Language, Literature and Performing Arts / PRINT FUTURES**	Revision	X	New Course		
			If Revision, Section(s) Revised:		F, G, M to R		
			Date of Previous Revision:		November 1997		
			Date of Current Revision:		March 2003		

C: PRFU 310 **D: Writing Technical Manuals** **E: 3**

Subject & Course No. Descriptive Title Semester Credits

F: Calendar Description:

This course develops an understanding of how technical manuals (such as computer end-user manuals and policy and procedure manuals) are planned, written, and produced. Beginning with an analysis of objectives and audience, students will trace the sequence of steps in preparing an effective and professionally produced technical manual, and examine standard writing and formatting conventions using industry-standard software programs.

G: Allocation of Contact Hours to Type of Instruction / Learning Settings

Primary Methods of Instructional Delivery and/or Learning Settings:
Lecture
Laboratory

Number of Contact Hours (per week / semester for each descriptor):
2 hours lecture per week
2 hours laboratory per week

Number of Weeks per Semester: 15 weeks

H: Course Prerequisites:
Acceptance into program or permission of the coordinator

I: Course Corequisites:
None

J: Course for which this Course is a Prerequisite
None

K: Maximum Class Size:
30

L: PLEASE INDICATE:

	Non-Credit			
	College Credit Non-Transfer			
X	College Credit Transfer:	Requested	Granted	X

SEE BC TRANSFER GUIDE FOR TRANSFER DETAILS (www.bccat.bc.ca)

M: Course Objectives / Learning Outcomes

Students will learn the methodology for preparing technical manuals. They will understand, and know when and how to use, the special writing and formatting conventions of technical manuals. They will learn to use Microsoft Word and Adobe FrameMaker to produce revisable technical manuals.

N: Course Content

1. Introduction to Writing Technical Manuals

Successful students will:

a) become familiar with the various types of technical materials produced by technical writers in the local marketplace
b) become familiar with the various companies employing technical writers, the types of products and services they provide, and the types of manuals they produce
c) understand the differences between user, reference, and training manuals

2. Planning and Organizing Manuals

Successful students will:

a) understand the purpose of a technical manual
b) analyze the range of manuals required to support a product, such as a software program
c) conduct user and task analyses, defining objectives and identifying and understanding readers' information needs
d) identify the different ways of organizing technical manuals and the specific uses and applications of each method

3. Technical Writing Process

Successful students will:

a) understand the role of the technical writer in the product development lifecycle
b) interview a subject-matter expert to obtain the information necessary to prepare a technical documentation
c) prepare and evaluate a manual plan, including an outline and a schedule
d) examine the means of ensuring the technical accuracy of manuals, including review and approval cycles
e) examine the need for manual testing and the relationship with product testing
f) write and evaluate a manual based on the prepared manual plan (including a table of contents, index, front matter, and three or more sample chapters)

4. Manual Writing Style

Successful students will:

a) become familiar with the mode of discourse typically employed in technical manuals (i.e., writing to do)
b) evaluate the different means of communicating technical information (e.g., flow charts, decisions, trees, illustrations) and understand the uses and applications of each
c) examine the characteristics of conversational writing and practise writing technical materials in a conversational style
d) understand the uses of examples in technical manuals
e) understand the role of editing in the preparation of technical manuals

5. Writing On-line Documentation

Successful students will:

a) be introduced to the different types and uses of on-line documentation (information that is meant to be read from the computer screen), such as help screens and hypertext systems

6. Project Management

Successful students will:

a) understand the elements of project management (quality, scope, cost, and schedule)
b) estimate the time required to prepare a defined manual
c) prepare a detailed schedule of activities to produce a technical manual
d) understand the options for manual production

7. Basic Manual Production

Successful students will use Microsoft Word to:

a) format revisable and reliable copy
b) structure documents into sections with dynamic headers and footers
c) create and use templates and styles for consistency in a series of manuals

8. Introduction to FrameMaker

Successful students will use Adobe FrameMaker to:

a) apply styles, create tables, insert graphics, and use variables
b) add navigation elements, including a table of contents, chapter and page numbering, and cross-references
c) create a FrameMaker "book" file and prepare a complete manual for publication

O: Methods of Instruction

This course will use a combination of teaching methods, including lecture, demonstration, group discussion, analysis of samples, and in-class and home exercises and projects. The emphasis will be on learning by analysis reinforced with hands-on practice wherever possible. Students will be required to prepare, write, and produce all, or portions of, a technical manual during the course. Students may be required to work collaboratively on selected assignments.

P: Textbooks and Materials to be Purchased by Students

Texts may include:
Microsoft Manual of Style for Technical Publications. 2nd ed. Microsoft Press, 1998
Writing Technical Manuals [coursepack, including articles from the Society for Technical Communication's *Journal* and *Intercom* magazines]

Software may include:
Microsoft Word
Adobe FrameMaker
Adobe Acrobat

Q: Means of Assessment

Students are expected to be self-motivated and to demonstrate professionalism, which includes active participation, good attendance, punctuality, effective collaboration, ability to meet deadlines, presentation skills, and accurate self-evaluation.

Evaluation will be based on this general format:

Short assignments (4 to 6)	30%
Interview (e.g., with subject-matter expert and product manager)	10%
Documentation plan	20%
Manual project	30%
Professionalism (as defined)	10%
	100%

R: Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition: specify whether course is open for PLAR

Yes.

Course Designer(s)

Education Council / Curriculum Committee Representative

Dean / Director

Registrar