**Occupational Endorsement Certificate in**

**Professional Writing**

**Academic Assessment Plan**

**University of Alaska Anchorage**

**College of Arts & Sciences**

**Adopted by:**

**The English faculty, March 2022**

**Submitted to:**

**Jenny McNulty, College of Arts & Sciences Dean, March 2022**

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# Mission statement

The Department of English’s mission is to prepare students to succeed in an increasingly diverse world. The Department is devoted to an innovative curriculum that encourages lifelong learning, critical thinking, and effective writing. We teach students to see textual work as an engagement with history, convention, culture, and place so that they can participate responsibly in a changing regional and challenging global environment. In particular, the Department is concerned with Alaskan cultures, the North Pacific Rim environment, and the intersection of networked technologies and forms of textuality. At the undergraduate and graduate levels, the English Department also strives to familiarize students with a full range of literacies—written, digital, and visual—so that they may become active and well-equipped citizens.

# Program overview

To support this mission, the Department offers an Occupational Endorsement Certificate in Professional Writing designed to foster students’ capacities to create and interpret texts while engaging diverse communities. The Occupational Endorsement Certificate in Professional Writing provides an opportunity for students to strengthen their skills in writing, which consistently ranks as one of the most desired skills by employers. The curriculum begins with foundational courses in writing, which are then built upon with more advanced courses in writing, including the opportunity to include coursework in rhetorical structure or to include a writing-focused internship.

# Assessment process introduction

This document outlines the assessment process for the Occupational Endorsement Certificate in Professional Writing. Since the upper division courses in the Occupational Endorsement Certificate are offered by the Department of English, this assessment plan is designed so that it can be implemented in a straightforward way in conjunction with assessment of the Bachelor of Arts in English. In this way the assessment of each program can feed into future revisions of not just the one program, but both of them.

The Academic Assessment Plan for the Department of English contains rubrics for evaluation of student artifacts, and those are not reproduced here, but should be considered incorporated into this plan by reference.

# Program outcomes

At the completion of the program, students will be able to:

* Construct texts that are responsive to audience, purpose, genre, and voice
* Engage in written discourse in diverse communities
* Revise texts based on evidence and style

# Assessment measures

The program’s student learning outcomes measure both knowledge and skills. To assess achievement in each outcome, a random sampling of written artifacts will be evaluated on an annual basis (that is, one outcome per year).

## *Construct texts that are responsive to audience, purpose, genre, and voice*

This student learning outcome reflects the capacity to work in a range of situations, genres, and styles with an understanding of how those various elements shape one another. Evaluation of this outcome focuses on how specific written work responds to specific contexts.

Department faculty will assess written artifacts with an eye toward the following, evaluating those artifacts in relation to how well these are achieved given the level of the course that they were selected from:

* Context of and purpose for writing (audience, purpose, and the circumstances surrounding the writing task)
* Genre and disciplinary conventions (formal and informal rules inherent in expectations for writing)
* Sources and evidence (drawing on others’ work for a variety of purposes—e.g., to extend, argue with, develop, define, or shape ideas)

## *Engage in written discourse in diverse communities*

This student learning outcome prepares students for their professional lives as well as their public lives as citizens and members of communities. It calls for intercultural knowledge and competence so that students can become informed, responsible individuals who are able to communicate with diverse audiences.

Department faculty will assess written artifacts with an eye toward the following, evaluating those artifacts in relation to how well these are achieved given the level of the course that they were selected from:

* Civic communication (reciprocal and dialogic communication with appropriate audiences)
* Disciplinary knowledge (relevant knowledge allowing connections between contexts)
* Knowledge diversity (recognizing multiple ways of knowing allowing adaptation to knowledge frameworks across natural and human systems)

## *Revise texts based on evidence and style*

This student learning outcome reflects the need for active reading and revision strategies that make written communication clearer. Revision calls for reflective curiosity and the application of conceptual and interpretive epistemological lenses to make one’s writing as effective as possible.

Department faculty will assess written artifacts with an eye toward the following, evaluating those artifacts in relation to how well these are achieved given the level of the course that they were selected from:

* Design (the literal and figurative purposes of the text)
* Evaluation (critical examination of the text and its sources)
* Revision (making changes to a text to increase its effectiveness and appropriateness)

# Assessment process

To measure the three program student learning outcomes, the Department’s Assessment Coordinator will conduct an annual assessment, collecting data from Department faculty teaching the various courses making up the Occupational Endorsement Certificate curriculum. Faculty will be directed to randomly select a sample of written artifacts from their courses, and for ease of data collection, a Google Form will be used to collect their assessments of student achievement. Evaluations will be obtained using five-point scales with regard to whether expectations appropriate to the course level are met (*does not meet*, *approaches*, *marginally meets*, *meets*, *exceeds*).

Each program learning outcome will be evaluated on a cyclical schedule, one per year, as follows:

* 2022–2023 (and every third year thereafter): Engage in written discourse in diverse communities
* 2023–2024 (and every third year thereafter): Revise texts based on evidence and style
* 2024–2025 (and every third year thereafter): Construct texts that are responsive to audience, purpose, genre, and voice

# Continuous improvement process

Cross-sectional yearly snapshots will provide evidence of program effectiveness or deficiency. The method of acquiring assessment data means that the Department will be using overall achievement rather than individual student progress, thus requiring a focus on program effectiveness.

Each year the Assessment Coordinator will compile the assessment results in a report for the Academic Assessment Committee and will present the results to the Department faculty. (Since courses in the Department of Writing are foundational to the Occupational Endorsement Certificate, they will be provided an opportunity to react to the results of the report, as well.) At the beginning of each Fall term, faculty will share and discuss strategies for developing knowledge and skill of the program outcome to be assessed in the coming year, as well as how to implement knowledge gained from the previous year’s results to reinforce the outcome that has been recently assessed. In particular, faculty will identify any potential areas of weakness in the program that need to be addressed and devise a plan for development in the following year.

# Modification of the assessment plan

When the faculty review the collected data from each year’s assessment process, they may decide—separately from any decisions about the program itself—to alter the assessment plan. Changes may be made to any component of the plan, including the outcomes, assessment measures, or any other aspect of the plan. In such an eventuality, the changes will be approved by the faculty of the program, after which the modified assessment plan will be forwarded to the office of the Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences and the Office of Academic Affairs.