

After the last speeches, or along with them, a social event to mark the end of the course is welcomed by members of the class. Because the class is mostly oral, students get to know, to empathize with, and to support one another. They realize they are all in this experience together, either as listeners or speakers, and this draws the group together. A final get-together such as a pot-luck supper at someone's house, just puts the finishing touch on an experience most students will long remember. Not only have they learned a new skill, but they have faced up to, and overcome, an old fear: speaking in public. Although in future course graduates may still be nervous when they must speak to groups, that nervousness will be tempered by the knowledge they have gained: ultimately, all can look forward to dealing more effectively with business, professional, or social situations requiring public speaking. This is an achievement indeed.

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A CUMULATIVE AND CO-OPERATIVE APPROACH TO WRITING DEVELOPMENT IN A FORESTRY FACULTY

M.T. (Jean) Dohaney

When faculty members in Forest Resources, a department within the Faculty of Forestry at the University of New Brunswick, made the decision to commit their Department to a program of "in-house" written communication, they were cognizant of the need to integrate this program in some manner with their existing curriculum. They realized that the course or courses in communication should not be perceived by the students as being peripheral to their central course load. They also realized that it would take more than one semester of work to bring the students up to the professional level of writing that the Department desired.

This decision on "in-house" writing was made in the mid-seventies and it was made for two reasons:

1. Complaints from employers that the graduating students did not have sufficient skills in writing to write effective reports, proposals, and letters and
2. An awareness that an increased emphasis on forest management practices both within the Department and in the market place was demanding higher levels of writing than previously needed. An "in-house" program was chosen because of the unique structure of the program.

The program design was structured so that it would be both a cumulative and a co-operative approach. The design was cumulative in that students' up-grading in writing skills was to begin in their second year with a three credit hour course in functional writing. This course was to be followed by a technical report to be written in the third year and another technical report to be written in the fourth year. In fifth year, the writing skills growth was to culminate in the presentation of a senior thesis.

The design was co-operative in that each faculty member evaluated the reports for content and the writing instructor evaluated them for writing. Each faculty member took responsibility for topics which were in his area of expertise. Just as the second year course was the sole responsibility of the writing instructor, the fifth year thesis was the sole responsibility of the faculty member whose area of expertise was covered by the topic of the thesis. Here, the writing instructor acted as a resource person only, aiding students with specific problems, such as how to place a visual effectively, or how to arrange an appendix so that it not only conforms to Forestry format, but is also convenient for the reader.

CHARACTERISTICS OF FOR 2901

This course covers basic writing skills, abstracting techniques, practice in researching, elements of the formal proposal, elements of the formal report and introduction to writing the journal article. The students themselves are responsible for upgrading their "basics." This is done through a programmed learning approach and accountability is arranged for

on the final examination. Bi-monthly minor assignments, plus two major term assignments are required. The major assignments consist of writing a journal article on a forestry-related subject and constructing a proposal to initiate a project or to modify an existing one. This proposal does not have to deal with a forestry-related activity.

CHARACTERISTICS OF REPORTS

The reports are technical and formal. The topic must be forestry-related. Reports which present data arising from field work or laboratory work during a student's summer employment are strongly encouraged, but descriptive-type reports based upon literature search are accepted, providing the student's summer employment did not lend itself to being suitable as a topic for a technical report.

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE THESIS

This is an exercise in conducting an independent research project that addresses a particular forestry problem or question. It is designed to demonstrate the student's writing ability, his analytical skills, his competency with scientific approach and his capabilities for using independent, critical judgement.

EVALUATION OF REPORTS

A copy of the evaluation form used by both the writing and the content evaluators is attached. Although each section is given equal weight (fifty percent), a fail in either section means a failed report. It is seldom that this rule has to be applied because it is rare that a report has pronounced strengths in one section and pronounced weaknesses in the

Although each report has certain amount of internal markings, the main criticism is given through an overview sheet which details the strengths and weaknesses of the work and suggests techniques for improvement. Previously when a student failed a report he was required to select a new topic for his re-submission. Beginning this year, he can re-work the failed report. It is now believed that re-working the failed report and using the criticism given by the writing instructor and content evaluator is a more educationally sound way to proceed. In this way, the reports can more truly be the teaching tools they were intended to be.

Deadlines are firm for all assignments, although bonafide compassionate and medical excuses do permit justice to be tempered with mercy. An assignment which does not meet a deadline is a failed assignment.

The cumulative nature of this program permits guided and developmental growth in student writing. The co-operative nature keeps writing a priority subject within the Department, and consequently, in the minds of the students. The co-operative nature also permits faculty interest in student writing to be carried over into other courses. As well, both communication evaluator and content evaluator learn from each other and learn to appreciate each other's area of expertise. Each fall I administer

Each fall I administer a preliminary test in basic writing to my new 2091 students. After I correct this test, I am convinced that this year's

students are too unmotivated and too poorly prepared to benefit from my teaching. I am equally convinced that I am too unmotivated and too poorly prepared to be of any benefit to them. However, when these students' fourth year reports land on my desk I am amazed at the professional-looking manuscripts that have been submitted. These reports bear little resemblance to the crumpled, tortured sheets of loose foolscap that have been shoved under my door or stuffed in my mailbox by way of assignment submission in the beginning days of 2901. As I cull through these reports and note the unified paragraphs in this one, and the good abstract in that one, and sometimes I'll find one which has both of these characteristics plus well-placed numbered and captioned visuals, I take heart that writing, particularly technical writing, can indeed be taught.

REPORT EVALUATION SHEET: WRITING

PRESENTATION

Is each page of the report neat, well-balanced and clearly legible? Does each page have proper margins and a page number? Is there a title sheet, an abstract, a table of contents, a list of references, appendices which are named and numbered for easy reference?

No grade points are assigned for presentation. However, grade points are deducted for poor presentation.

ORGANIZATION

1. Is the topic suitably limited? Is the title specific and precise?
2. Introduction? Is the problem defined? Is the purpose stated?
3. Is the thesis of the report clear? Does the report adhere to a central theme?
4. Headings? Are they properly worded and properly subordinated? Are more headings needed?
5. Does the Abstract clearly indicate the content of the report?
6. Visuals? Are they placed properly? Properly mentioned in the text? Are they suitably numbered? Suitably captioned?
7. Does the report fulfill the commitment of its title?

Grade for Organization _____

WRITING STYLE

1. Are the paragraphs arranged in a connected easy-to-follow sequence?
2. Does all the material under each sub-heading belong there?
3. Is any of the material in the report irrelevant to the report's topic?

4. Is all the wording concise and lucid? Is it verbose, pompous, ambiguous?
5. Where facts are being stated, does any of the wording indicate opinion, bias or emotion?
6. Is each item in the List of References properly referred to in the text? Is reference made in the text to any publication that is not included in the List of References?
7. Word Choice. Deadwood? Jargon? Abstract words?

Grade for Style _____

MECHANICS/GRAMMAR

1. Do all the paragraphs have a topic sentence? Unity? Coherence? Should some paragraphs be combined and others divided?
2. Are all sentences correct? Are they punctuated properly?
3. Has the writer avoided: dangling or misplaced modifiers? non-parallel construction, disagreement between subject and verb or between pronoun and antecedent? Shifts in point of view? Colloquialisms?
4. Spelling errors?

Grade for Grammar _____

Total Grade for Writing _____

CONTENT

1. Is the content of the report suitably substantial for a report of this nature?
2. Is the purpose fulfilled in the report?
3. Are the visual aids effective?
4. Are all questions answered?
5. Are the conclusions supported by the evidence presented in the report? Are the conclusions relevant to the stated purpose of the report?
6. In view of the stated purpose of the report and of any conclusions that are drawn in the report, has the subject been adequately researched? Is the research dated?

Grade for Content _____

Grade for Report _____

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TEACHING CAREER WRITING A Teaching Tool for the Process Approach

Diana Wegner

As a former instructor of career writing at a university I read Lilita Rodman's two-part article with some awareness of the different kinds of students learning the formal report in her classes (1983, Nos. 1 and 2). Teaching this particular writing task as part of a university level career writing course was my first classroom encounter with report writing, as it was I am sure for many other instructors.¹ While my initial efforts were not as informed or comprehensive as Lil Rodman's current approach, I was struck as I read her article by the great extent to which I have modified my initial approach to the instruction of formal report writing, and to the teaching of writing in general. These changes have been largely in response to two influences: the needs and characteristics of my community college students, which are different from those of the students I taught at university--my writing classes are usually homogeneous and a required component for a Human Services Program (Child Care Counselling, Early Childhood Education, Mental Retardation Worker, and Community Social Services Worker) or for the Nursing Program; and recent composing theory. While my remarks here address the teaching of writing in general, I have tried briefly to address formal report writing as well.

Whenever representatives of the various publishing houses come calling with an array of the newest textbooks on career writing, I raise what has now become a familiar lament of mine. For the most part these texts are geared for business and engineering students and, while some have diverse applications, I have yet to see one that is specifically geared for the Human Services student.²

The general philosophy of this field is humanistic--"profit" is definitely not a value--and students in these programs perceive and esteem themselves as caregivers. (The absence of such texts is, I suspect, somehow related to current political trends and priorities.) One of the problems, of course, is the connotation of "Technical Writing," the rubric that now seems to encompass