

Addendum to IAT209 W Proposal

1. The WSG found the methodology for teaching writing was somewhat unclear. How will the students be instructed for the activities described in the request? For example, how are students taught how to peer review, how to make links between what they read, and how to "explore the thinking process"?

How will students be instructed for the activities described in the request?

- Classroom instruction: discussion of the weekly writing activities and feedback process will frame the content of the weekly classroom sessions
- Modeling: Discussion of annotated examples of student work

Class sessions are held early in the week, before students begin their weekly writing assignment. The purpose of the writing activities, the processes for composing/revising them, and the grading criteria are discussed in class. Writing is discussed as a practice, but it is also used as the vehicle to explore and demonstrate critical thinking.

The beginning of each class session is designated for review of the previous week's course material and writing activity. Where appropriate, annotated examples of strong work and weak work will be compared and contrasted. This form of feedback (1) helps generate a dialogue around writing and revision in the classroom, (2) allows students to ask questions and clarify key concepts, (3) helps students measure their own performance and to clearly locate areas for revision and improvement for the next writing activity, (4) allows the instructor to provide specific feedback efficiently (especially if student assignments are still being marked).

*Please note that strong examples may be selected from actual student work. Examples of weak writing are *based* on student work but are not actual samples of student work. They are constructed by the course designer/instructor to look familiar to and representative of student work—without the possibility of alienating any students.

The following example (from a first year W course) demonstrates how the instructor's feedback is based on and reinforces the assignment expectations.

Compare and Contrast:**Example of Weak Argument that shows little Critical Thinking:**

For teamwork it is important to be a good listener. We learned this in the Tech100 class in week 3. Listening is very important if people want to work together. Team members must have good listening skills if they want to succeed in university. If teammates don't listen to each other, there could be a misunderstanding and a conflict could occur. I think I am a good listener because I always look at teammates when they are talking to me. Sometimes I nod my head to show them I am listening and that I understand their message. Artifact 1 shows my listening skills. I repeat back what the person said so they know that I read their message and understand it. This is why my teammates get along and we are in the norming stage.

Comment [CTG1]: Skill to be discussed is not clear. The skill is the TOPIC of the paragraph. Reader does not know the focus of the P.

Comment [CTG2]: This information is general and says nothing about the writer's listening skills—the topic.

Comment [CTG3]: Vague statement. Would be more effective if it actually related to a real team experience. The paper is supposed to be about the student's skills and learning process.

Comment [CTG4]: The writer is generally aware of using non-verbal cues but does not think about the names and purposes of the cues. Why would we study them in class if they were not relevant? Does not show strong understanding of week 3 course material or class session exercises.

Comment [CTG5]: Writer provides no context (does not explain) for the artifact. Reader has no idea where the artifact came from and why it is important. Analysis of artifact is vague.

Comment [CTG6]: THIS summarizing statement is not clear, and the writer makes a HUGE claim without about her team's interactions without providing any evidence. Student appears to throw in a key term (GLITTERING WORD) at the end without any explanation. Does not show understanding of the course material or the assignment instructions.

Example of a Stronger Argument that demonstrates Critical Thinking:

After reviewing my Tech100 online and face to face activities, I learned that I have developed good listening skills. According to MacLennan (2003), "[c]ommunication is not simply an exchange of ideas or information, but an interaction between people." This means that the speaker's message can only be received effectively if the listener is paying attention and engaged in the communication process. I've learned that just because I am not speaking does not mean I am not communicating. For example, when I was in a team meeting last week, I showed Jared and Sonia, our team leaders, that I was listening to

Comment [CTG7]: Focused topic sentence that tells the reader what the P is about.

Comment [CTG8]: Student uses course material to state why listening is important. Shows the writer has been reading the course material and can integrate theory into her work.

Comment [CTG9]: Writer explains quote in her own words to demonstrate her understanding. Does not let the quote do all the talking. Quotes should not be plopped into a paper; they MUST be contextualized (explained why they are there).

them by using various non-verbal listening cues. I used regulators such as maintaining eye contact and nodding my head in agreement, to show I was paying attention and to encourage them to keep speaking. I also used two emblems, a thumbs-up and an OK sign, to show I enthusiastically agreed with their ideas. I believe I also demonstrate strong listening skills when I am communicating with my team online. Artifact 1 is a posting by Sonia stating her suggestions for our team guidelines. I thought her ideas were really good, so, in Artifact 2, I repeated the key points I agreed with before I elaborated on her ideas and added my own. By taking the time to repeat what she said, I was able to show Sonia that I “listened” carefully to her message. As a result, Sonia acknowledged me for paying attention to her and suggested we combine our ideas for the final team guidelines (Artifact 3). By listening to Sonia, I believe I showed respect for her (one of our team guidelines), which made her want to work with me to complete the final guidelines.

Comment [CTG10]: Writer presents a SPECIFIC example from a team experience to support her claim.

Comment [CTG11]: The writer uses two key terms from the readings and the class session on non-verbal communication and defines the key terms through explanation of her actions. Shows that the writer understands the theory and can integrate it into her own communication practices.

Comment [CTG12]: Writer shows depth of argument by relating her skills to another communication context.

Comment [CTG13]: Writer presents evidence of her skills by CLEARLY explaining her artifacts to the reader.

Comment [CTG14]: Writer clearly summarizes the paragraph topic by relating her skill strength to building a relationship with a teammate.

The end of the class session is designated for discussion of the current writing activity, where the instructor will go over the expectations for the activity and the evaluation criteria. Discussion will also focus on linking the key ideas from one week to the next. Where appropriate, short examples with annotated comments will be provided for students to help them start the writing process. This practice (1) reinforces the assignment expectations (2) demonstrates “good will” on behalf of the course (this is a key part of inventing an ethos for a course that wants students to succeed) (3) anticipates common student questions around “doing it right” (4) and helps students assess their ability to demonstrate their knowledge of the course material, their critical thinking skills, and to encourage the writer’s development (use a skill you learned last week in this week’s activity).

The following is an annotated example used to prepare students for a specific Peer Feedback Activity and to model an appropriate feedback process:

Activity Instructions: Visit your teammates' discussion threads and review each topic paragraph. Offer feedback and suggestions to your teammates **based on what you know about their topics**. Do you have experience with the topic? Do you know something about the topic that may be of interest? Can you recommend a resource (book, website) that might be helpful? Do you know who else might be interested in the topic? Do you have a helpful question to add?

The point here is that you are to make a helpful contribution to your teammates, to assist in this early stage of the research process. You do not have to write a lot, but **your suggestions must show critical thinking**. Avoid stock answers like "this looks good to me" or "I can't think of anything to add here." These kinds of responses are not helpful. Focus on using **positive-specific feedback** (as we discussed in class) to give your teammates direction. As you read the feedback from all of your teammates--you may benefit from the contributions of others.

Example of Weak Feedback that shows little Critical Thinking

Jared, your topic sounds really interesting. It looks like you've already done a lot of research on your topic. I don't know much about Online Learning, but, since everyone's using computers these days, you should be able to find a lot of information. I think your topic is really interesting because you are an online learner yourself here at SFU Surrey. You've done such a good job with your topic, I don't really have anything to add.

Comment [CTG15]: While these statements may be encouraging, these statements are not very helpful and do not address the assignment instructions.

Comment [CTG16]: Logic? The writer of this post is a student working online.

Comment [CTG17]: Big generalization. There is not evidence to support this claim.

Comment [CTG18]: Good Point! But the idea is not explained clearly. What kinds of questions could Jared ask himself?

Example of Strong Feedback that demonstrates Critical Thinking

Is online learning more effective than face to face learning? Jared, this is a great topic. You are a student taking classes online, so think about all the resources around you! Since TechOne uses online learning, it must have some benefits—or the instructors wouldn't use it. You could talk to instructors to find out why they use it. You could talk to the library to find out about research. You could even talk to students to find out what they like and what they don't like about working online. Personally, I like face to face classes because I like the spontaneous interaction with students and teachers. On the other hand, I live in West Vancouver and it takes me a long time to get to school. I appreciate that I don't have to come to school on Tuesdays because my class is online.

Comment [CTG19]: The writer makes the logical connection by looking at the obvious—her own situation and Jared's.

Comment [CTG20]: Logical connection between the program, online learning and the people who teach online learning.

Comment [CTG21]: Logical connection between the stakeholders who would have information or an opinion on the issue.

Comment [CTG22]: The writer looks at her own situation and states what she likes and doesn't like. This information may help Jared with his research. How might other online learners feel? Perhaps studies and research in this area will answer this question.

Though this example demonstrates how an annotated example can be used to give clarity to expectations and help students begin a writing activity, it also demonstrates *how* students are instructed and prepared to engage in the peer critiquing process. For all peer feedback exercises, students are asked to base their suggestions on what they know about the work and to avoid making assumptions about the writer. Also, students are asked to base their suggestions on the assignment criteria and to avoid statements based on personal tastes. In the example above, the instructor models this practice by following the same guidelines for peer feedback.

Through the practice of providing peer feedback students will:

- Learn to critique work and not the writer
- Learn to offer constructive criticism based on prescribed criteria
- Become acquainted with the assignment expectation and grading criteria
- Learn to reflect on their own writing strengths and areas for improvement

Note: To ensure consistency across all sections of the course, all instructors and TAs will use the same grading criteria and peer feedback guidelines.

2. On assessment and assignment issues, are students engaged in revision of their assignments? How are assignments linked or building on each other?

Yes.

The weekly examples mentioned above are meant to help students develop their writing skills in more “student specific” ways. For example, after completing Activity 1 (The Self Reflection Chart) a student may learn from the examples that she should define key concepts from the course material to demonstrate her understanding of concepts or that she should not use a comma to separate two independent clauses. Though Activity 1 does not require revision, Activity 2 (Fallacious Thinking Exercise) becomes the new learning space for the writer to practice using the course material more effectively and using correct punctuation.

Assignment 3 is a more scaffolded revision process. In week 3, students are required to do the de Bono online exercise to gather the information required for the 1st draft of the website critique. Students reformat that information into the essay structure outlined in the assignment instructions and bring that 1st draft to class in week 4. In class, students will work with a learning partner to revise their essays. Guided by the instructor, student editors will deconstruct key elements of their colleague’s draft and make suggestions based on the assignment criteria and feedback guidelines (as mentioned above). When writers receive their work back, they will review the feedback and make a case for whether they agree or disagree with the suggestions. The topic for the week is “Testing and Evaluating

Arguments” and this is what students will do in class during the editing/revision process. The instructor and TA will be on hand to encourage discussion between partners and to keep the revision process focused on the assignment instructions. Students will hand in their revised draft for grading and evaluation at the end of week 4.

Assignment 9 is a four week scaffolded process requires weekly revision until a final presentation is completed. (Revision in this exercise does not mean getting feedback on a work and rewriting the exact work for resubmission. In this exercise the key elements of the writing (quality of ideas, research, organization, format, etc.) are revised and reworked for the next stage of the project development process.

Revision and Scaffolding Example:

- 1) Week 10: Each student in a team will develop a research proposal for which each student will receive feedback.
- 2) Week 11: Teammates will review their proposals and pick one (based on their own decision making process) to further develop for the team project. Teammates will divide the proposal into key components and develop a team outline. Each team member is responsible for researching and writing a portion of the outline. One purpose of this exercise is to have students recognize the strengths of the first proposal and to continue to build on those strengths in their own writing. As well, students will have to provide feedback to each other in the online conference as all the components are formatted and edited together into one document. Teams will receive feedback from the instructor or TA on the work and suggestions for revision will be made.
- 3) Week 12: Teams will use the information synthesized from the outline to do a short oral/visual presentation. Feedback will be offered in class from the instructor and the class.
- 4) Week 13: Final project is completed. Grading criteria will reflect the following grade breakdown: 20% writing, 10 % visual presentation, 10%, peer assessment

What examples are students given when beginning an assignment, and how are models being used to instruct students in the discipline?

As stated earlier, models of writing assignments and annotated examples will be used to support the writing activities. Here is another example: In week 5 students are asked to deconstruct a paper that tries to be scientific/technical (model weak argument) and then in week 6 analyze a more “credible” piece of scientific/technical work (model strong argument). In the Compare and Contrast exercise, teams will be asked to use the elements and structures of credible scientific/technical writing found in the models *in* their analysis.

3. It states that 70% of the course grade is for writing. Could you be more specific and break out what each element or assignment is worth for this 70%?

Please see more detailed breakdown below:

Assignment	Writing marks	Oral/Visual Del	Team
1. Self Reflection Chart	5		
2. Fallacious Thinking Id.	5		
3. Website critique	20		
4. Art Critique	10		
5. Oral Presentation	10	5	5
6. Team Project	20	10	10
Total:	70	15	15