

Technical Writing and Communication

Free Online Program Overview

Technical Writing and Communication

Bring your questions and join us for this free seminar about our renowned program for technical communicators. Learn what usability is and how it applies to information; what makes information usable; and how to contribute to your company's success by ensuring information usability.

This overview is conducted using our online course infrastructure, so you will enjoy a short online course experience and discover how convenient and comprehensive the courses are.

Course 0469

Specializations to Suit Your Career

Technical communicators work in a variety of areas and professionals must expand their skills to keep pace with the needs of Silicon Valley's most innovative companies. Whether addressing esoteric topics or grammar basics, our comprehensive program focusing on information usability trains superb technical communicators at all levels in all disciplines.

Our program is structured into five course modules, each catering to a different need and expertise within the professional community:

- Technical Communication Fundamentals
- Project Leadership
- Advanced Topics in Communication
- Tools and Technologies

Take individual courses to expand or update specific skills, or pursue the certificate for comprehensive training from the professionals who have helped define the technical writing profession.



BUSINESS AND MANAGEMENT



Silicon Valley's Leading Preparation for Technical Communicators

As technology becomes more complex, technical writers need to expand their skill sets to ensure that they're meeting the needs of today's fast moving and innovative companies.

UCSC Extension Silicon Valley provides the training and education needed for technical writers to succeed. Our comprehensive certificate in Technical Writing and Communication offers state-of-the-art, customizable course work, as well as specialized courses for engineers who need to improve their written communication skills.

Since 2000, our Technical Writing and Communication program has served more than 3,000 professionals working in or seeking to enter the profession—with nearly 5,000 alumni since the 1990s.

Because the reputation of this program is so strong, in Silicon Valley and nationally, our Technical Writing and Communication certificate has the clout to open doors, win jobs, and positively impact the course of your career.

Custom-Designed Courses

Professionals come to us from the aerospace, automotive, biotech, business management, construction, engineering, financial services, health care, IT, pharmaceutical, and telecommunications industries.

They choose Extension's program because we offer skill-based, non-theoretical content that meets or exceeds all Society of Technical Communicators (STC) requirements. For those with demanding schedules, the full curriculum of Extension's Technical Writing and Communication program is also offered online.

UC-Quality Instruction from Experienced Silicon Valley Veterans

All instructors in UCSC Extension's Certificate Program in Technical Writing and Communication are experienced professionals and recognized leaders in their field. In addition, they have met the rigorous educational and instructional standards of the University of California. They bring unique expertise and knowledge into the classroom, ensuring you receive the latest information and insights into real-world marketing practices.

Audience

- Information developers, engineers or architects
- Career changers
- Documentation project leads
- Engineering managers
- Technical writers, editors or communicators
- User experience designers
- User experience architects
- Usability engineers
- Visual designers



About UCSC Extension Silicon Valley

The vital learning community at UCSC Extension Silicon Valley is well known for its collegial atmosphere and rigorous preparation. Our faculty of expert practitioners teaches state-of-the-art solutions to the everyday problems confronting technology professionals working in Silicon Valley. The professional education programs we offer build expertise, open doors to new opportunity, and deliver tangible value. Our broad portfolio of open-enrollment courses and certificates, affordable pricing, experience-based instruction, and central location in Silicon Valley help turn jobs into careers.

Technical Writing and Communication Certificate

Certificate Requirements

Total: 10 courses

Required: 7 courses

Elective: 3 courses

GPA: 3.0, with a C or better in all courses.

Timeline: Complete all courses within three years.

Note: Courses completed more than five years prior to date of certificate issuance cannot be used to fulfill requirements.

Recommended Course Sequence

It is recommended you start with "Technical Communication: An Introduction to the Profession." You must end with "Final Project: Resume and Portfolio Preparation."

Certificate Application Information

We encourage you to establish candidacy in a certificate program early in your studies. There are substantial benefits in doing so:

- Curriculum changes subsequent to the date your application is received will not affect your course requirements.
- Candidates will be notified of updates or special opportunities related to the program.

How to Apply

Certificate applications can be submitted online. An application fee, listed on the Web page, is required to establish candidacy. Visit ucsc-extension.edu/twcert.

Program Contact

Business and Management Department,
(408) 861-3860 or e-mail
program@ucsc-extension.edu

Curriculum

Required Courses

Units Course

Technical Communication Fundamentals

Developing Technical Information from Plan to Completion	2.0	1947
Grammar and Style for Technical Communicators	3.0	4360
Technical Communication: An Introduction to the Profession	1.5	5931
Technical Writers' Workshop	1.0	2145
Writing Successful Instructions, Procedures and Policies	1.5	1931

Advanced Topics in Communications

Final Project: Preparing Your Job Search	1.5	6181
Information Architecture and Design Basics	1.5	2662

Elective Courses (Choose three)

Units Course

Project Leadership

Managing Technical Documentation Projects	1.0	1025
Role of the Project Manager	1.5	0306

Advanced Topics in Communications

Content Management	1.0	6117
Minimalist Design for Documentation	0.5	3981
Usability Testing Documentation	1.5	0684

Tools and Technologies

DITA Authoring, Introduction	2.0	20830
DITA Information Architecture	1.5	21971



Program Coordinator

ANDREA L. AMES, M.S., is a senior technical staff member (STSM) and information experience strategist and architect

at IBM. She specializes in user-centered information usability, strategy, architecture, and design. Ms. Ames' specialty is architecting and designing information for software user interfaces—such as labels, embedded instructional text, and hover help—and making the interfaces deploying that information as easy to explain as possible before developing traditional documentation. She teaches at the university level and is in demand as a conference speaker internationally. She is a fellow and past president (2004–05) of the Society for Technical Communication and a distinguished engineer of the Association for Computing Machinery.

UCSC Extension Silicon Valley is #1 in graduate business enrollment according to the *San Jose/Silicon Valley Business Journal* (2/2010).



Course Descriptions

Required Courses

Technical Communication Fundamentals

Developing Technical Information from Plan to Completion

This introductory course focuses on technical-communication skills and covers the types of information commonly produced by technical writers. Participants learn to integrate fundamentals of technical-writing strategies with the principles of print and online document design to create effective, audience appropriate information. Practical experience is provided in writing technical information, analyzing tasks, negotiating with subject-matter experts, setting production schedules, and managing multiple projects.

Course 1947

Grammar and Style for Technical Communicators

This course provides an intensive review of modern English grammar, style, and punctuation, and examines how these subjects pertain to current technical writing. We review parts of speech, clauses, phrases, subjects, and predicates; discuss sentence patterns, forms, and voice; and review sentence errors such as comma splices, fragments, pronoun and verb agreement, and dangling and misplaced modifiers. This course also examines wordiness, parallelism, and word choice.

Course 4360

Technical Communication: An Introduction to the Profession

This workshop helps participants determine how their skills fit the field of technical communication. The first half of the course reviews the history of technical communication, the top 10 indicators of success, and the roles of technical communicators in Fortune 500 companies, startups, government labs, and freelance consulting. The second half examines the key processes of technical communications, including information design and development, user-centered design, and the fit in a product or research life cycle. Throughout the class, participants learn tangible skills, including how to interview subject-matter experts and users, define the pieces of an information set, write parts of typical documentation, and determine how to measure the work product.

Course 5931

Technical Writer's Workshop

This course is an introduction to creating short technical documents such as reports and correspondence. The final project will be portfolio-worthy. Through lecture, in-class exercises, reading and homework, students will demonstrate their ability in these areas: the basics of good writing; formatting of technical documents; rhetorical modes; clear, grammatically correct writing at the sentence and paragraph levels; appropriate styles for a diverse technical audience; and punctuating technical information. Included are four writing assignments, which consist of different types of documents, such as descriptive or instructional reports.

Course 2145

Writing Successful Instructions, Procedures, and Policies

This course focuses on the role of the writer in eliciting software requirements supporting iterative development; creating step-by-step instructions suitable for user guides; and writing policies, processes, and procedures for corporate governance. Students will download lecture notes, join discussions, take quizzes, and write in these genres.

Course 1931

Advanced Topics in Communications

Final Project: Preparing Your Job Search

This final course in the Technical Writing and Communication certificate program prepares students to secure employment as technical communicators. Each student develops an industry-appropriate portfolio and resume that are tailored to the job market and the type of job desired. Students also learn how to make the most of social networks and prepare for interviews.

Course 6181

Information Architecture and Design Basics

This course focuses on data used in information-rich user interfaces including multimedia, software products and interfaces, product help, and Web sites. It also addresses the technologies used to create the underlying infrastructure for presenting online information and the tools used for developing information using those technologies. Through lecture, computer demonstrations, group discussion and exercises, students will concentrate on the past, present, and future of online information development; presentation of a process for developing online information; basic information architecture and design concepts; basic user interface and interaction design concepts; an introduction to Web-based technologies with an emphasis on HTML; and the benefits and constraints of those technologies related to online information development.

Course 2662

Elective Courses

Project Leadership

Managing Technical Documentation Projects

This course equips technical communicators with the knowledge, tools, and techniques necessary to develop information and project plans; documentation project budgets that are reasonable, accurate, and detailed; and schedules to meet due dates and control costs. In addition, students learn to track and close out projects and manage documentation projects in Agile environments.

Course 1025

Role of the Project Manager

The primary objective of this course is to acquaint students with a broad overview of project management and the roles that a project manager plays in the five primary processes involved in managing projects: how to write an effective project plan; how to develop successful project schedules; how to execute and control the project plan; the "triple constraint" and how it affects the project manager; and understanding project phases and project life cycles. The skills needed to successfully play these roles are identified and discussed. Learning the life cycles of typical projects provides a basis for understanding the variety of skills needed, how these skills can be assembled, and how they relate to each other.

Course 0306

Advanced Topics in Communications

Content Management

This course addresses the challenge of constructing a single, coherently organized architecture from hundreds or even thousands of paper documents, CD-ROMs, help modules, and Web pages. Following an object-oriented approach, participants explore how developing a structural model prepares the way for the repurposing of legacy documents, single sourcing, and content management. Students walk through an XML template defining a standard approach to solving critical problems including unifying poor tables of content to form a single-menu system, developing metadata to increase efficiency and speed of access, reducing and reorganizing conceptual overviews into manageable parts, defining a single-source model for a new documentation set to be delivered, and developing a team and process to define standard architectures for content.

Course 6117

Minimalist Design for Documentation

Developed by Dr. John Carroll, the minimalist model is the subject of many recent papers in the human factors and documentation fields. The minimalist design model holds that computer users learn more efficiently and use products more successfully by working more with the system and less with the documentation. This class focuses on the principles of minimalist design and how it can be applied to complex technical documentation as well as to introductory training materials. Minimalism and techniques for applying minimalist design to online documentation and Help systems are presented. In addition, the course also addresses minimalist design focusing on: slashing the verbiage by omitting expository text, creating modules or chunks that can be used in any order, expecting user errors, and providing recovery tips. Students will concentrate on the user's own tasks and analyze how to shorten documentation and training materials while increasing their effectiveness.

Course 3981

Usability Testing Documentation

This introductory course in usability is designed for beginning technical communication students. The user-centered design process, from analysis through design and validation, is described in detail, with emphasis on where and how usability testing fits into the development cycle. Participants engage in a simulation in which they apply the principles of usability to plan and design a usability test to validate documents, conduct testing on classmates, then compile and analyze the test results for presentation to the class. Topics include the basic concepts, terminology, and goals of quality, usability, and audience analysis; the limitations of usability testing; understanding users and their needs, tasks, and environment; and the relationship between audience analysis data and design decisions.

Course 0684

Tools and Technologies

DITA Authoring, Introduction

Understanding the DITA standard topic types and the content that is included in each type is crucial to getting the most from DITA-authored content. This course covers the basics of the DITA standard (topics and maps), guidelines and best practices around the standard, and the building blocks of good topic-based information. Participants will learn to produce re-usable topics and usable, user-centered content that can be quickly configured to meet new product, user, or media requirements. Topics include a basic introduction to XML; topic-based authoring and the DITA standard; DITA content types (concept, task, reference, and glossary); creating titles, short descriptions, and other content appropriate for each DITA type; designing information deliverables using maps; re-using content within a topic or map; and applying principles of task orientation, organization, and retrievability to topics

Course 20830

DITA Information Architecture

The value of DITA is expressed in its enforcement of a topic-based architecture. DITA provides specific mechanisms including DITA maps and relationship tables that enable information architects to provide a valuable and usable information experience with those topics for their users. In this course, you will learn about the structure of each of the DITA architecture mechanisms, and how you can use them to enhance your information delivery to your customers.

Course 21971

Enrollment Information

Visit ucsc-extension.edu/twcert, for the most up-to-date information about our technical writing program, including textbooks, instructors, schedules and locations.

Enroll online at ucsc-extension.edu.



UCSCextension
Silicon Valley

**Silicon Valley's #1
Graduate Business
Educator**

Dynamic, Highly Educated Student Body

Nearly 100 percent of the students who enter our programs have Bachelor's degrees—and more than 40 percent already hold graduate degrees. So when studying at UCSC Extension Silicon Valley, you will learn and network with the best and brightest. Working professionals come here to build their careers rather than earn a degree—yet our certificates' quality and recognition have proven instrumental in helping them gain admittance to Master's programs throughout the Bay Area and nationally.

Wide Variety of Flexible, Competitively Priced Learning Options

We offer highly practical, real-world instruction in dozens of disciplines of high interest and demand in Silicon Valley. Our applied courses provide a theoretical foundation as appropriate to enhance on-the-job performance. In addition, our programs are very competitively priced—often less than half that of comparable training available elsewhere—with many offered both in classrooms and online. You can take individual courses in any program, earn a full certificate, or, in many cases, build a customized certificate program to suit your needs.

Premier Professional Educator with High Certification Pass Rates

In Business and Management and Engineering and Technology, our programs each enroll more than 4,000 students annually—ranking us Silicon Valley's largest provider of postgraduate professional education. Over time, we have proven exceptionally effective at improving the performance, status and advancement of our graduates. Our training and examination preparation have helped our students perform above national norms on certification exams, prepare for graduate school, and gain entrance to respected degree programs nationwide.

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How To Get Started—Program Contact

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