

Writing Development Initiative 2017-
2018

Proposal Application
Form

Please answer the following questions as clearly and concisely as possible. When you have answered the questions, please indicate Chair approval in the space provided at the end of the form, and send the completed pdf version of the form to academicskills.utm@utoronto.ca. If you have questions, please do not hesitate to contact Michael Kaler (michael.kaler@utoronto.ca). Proposals must be submitted by **April 16, 2017**.

Please identify the course or courses affected (as applicable): **CCT383 The Interactive Society**

Briefly (150 words maximum) introduce the course, its position in its program, and writing assignments or instruction that have typically been used.

This course introduces students to the study of how interactive digital media and systems affect, influence, and reshape our information-centric society. Students develop skills that will enable them to propose changes to the design of digital technologies, to relevant policies, or to current practices that address issues at the intersection of society and interactive technologies such as privacy concerns, marginalization of at-risk users, digital divides, or ICT for sustainability. The course is structured around assigned readings relevant to the presented concepts, complemented by practical writing activities and essays. The activities mirror tasks found in several relevant post-graduation jobs, for example: writing a policy brief for a newspaper, drafting “talking points” for a political speech; creating tweets for an NGO’s social media campaign. The essays are typically 800-word papers on an assigned topic, where students incorporate the practice gained through the practical activities. The essays are submitted in several “rebut-revise-resubmit” stages.

Indicate the desired learning outcomes for the proposal (as distinct from those for the course or courses as a whole), and how these learning outcomes relate to the learning outcomes of the course, courses, or program: that is, please indicate how the activities described in the proposal complement the rest of the student learning in the course or courses affected.

This course exposes students to digital innovation and its implications for culture and society. Students learn about specific theoretical aspects related to interactive technologies and how such transformative technologies could be harnessed or how these affect our information-centric society. This is an experiential learning course, where students acquire skills in a wide range of digital industries by practicing (and reflecting on) technical writing tasks that are representative of these industries, e.g. press releases, policy drafts, speaking points, tech white papers.

This proposal aims to support these experiential learning activities, by introducing a scaffolding process to the practical skills acquisition. This will

allow students to more incrementally and more thoroughly gain marketable skills that are relevant to a wide range of industries where the role of new media and interactive technologies is increasing (e.g. manufacturing, information technologies, health care, assistive technologies, social services).

Provide a basic overview of the strategies that will be used to improve students' writing— e.g., extra feedback on writing assignments; the use of scaffolded writing assignments; writing instruction; etc.

During the first year this course was offered we have found that students responded very well to the rebut-revise-resubmit process. This process was in effect for the first 3 of the 7 essay-based assignments. (5 of the essays were written "at home" and 2 were in class as a mid-term and final test). However, the process of writing a rebuttal once essay feedback was provided and then revising the essay was hampered by the time pressure this placed on the TA. Currently, students received very limited feedback (3-4 bullet points) for each essay, which does not provide meaning learning opportunities. It became evident that both additional and timely feedback is critical for the first 3 assignments and the practical activities that are scheduled before the midterm. Additional TA resources will allow us and the TAs to more promptly regrade assignments that were "revised and resubmitted".

Due to the limited hours available for the TA (a normal teaching load), we could not provide "mock" marked assignments for students to use as a learning guide. Similarly, the in-class practical activities do not receive feedback outside the tutorial time, while students would benefit greatly from receiving more detailed written feedback on these. Additional resources will enable us to better scaffold the writing activities by:

- D Creating a mini-repository of mock marked assignments, to be used by students before the first assignment.
- D Providing more extensive and timely feedback on the first and second essays.
- D Providing more detailed guidance and timely feedback on the practical activities, for the weeks paralleling the first three assignments, and
- D Reducing the amount of feedback and replacing it with an additional round of "revise-and-resubmit" for the third assignment, which maintains a scaffolding process but, as expected at later stages of the scaffolding, it transitions from formative to summative feedback.

If applicable, indicate how Teaching Assistants will be used in the project.

As detailed previously, additional TA hours are necessary to create the resources required for improving the learning outcomes of this course and to assist with the creation of graded examples to be used during the course (and in subsequent terms when the course is offered).

Indicate whether additional TA training (beyond the WDI Writing TA Training session for new TAs) will be required and, if so, indicate the number of hours/TA (maximum 4), content of the training, and its relationship to the proposed student assessment or instruction.

No additional TA training will be required.

Describe the writing tasks incorporated as a direct result of the additional funding requested, and provide details on any writing instruction to be provided that relates to these tasks. If the funding is supporting an increased number of graded writing assignments, please indicate the number of additional words students will write.

The additional funding will allow us to assign more contact and marking time for the TAs. This will produce more extensive feedback for the written essays, allow students to revise their essays in an additional round (and received more

feedback through this process), and enable us to provide written feedback on in-class writing activities.

Based on last year's experience, students' essays are in the 800-1200 word (we did not enforce nor recommend any word limit, instead focusing on the quality and depth of the argument presented). We have noticed that students who have engaged us more directly and elicited our feedback have also submitted longer essays. We hope that by being able to provide more extensive feedback, by allowing more resubmission rounds, and by providing graded examples, students' essays will average 2000 words.

Clearly state the number of students participating in the project. If applicable, indicate the maximum enrolment for the relevant course(s) and the final enrolment in the course(s) the last time it was/they were offered. Please also indicate the course's or courses' relationship to the broader program of study.

We estimate an enrollment of 40 students. The class is limited to 48 students for practical reasons (need of access to computers for in-class activities), although given the pressure on TA and instructor resources due to the intensive writing requirements, and ideal enrollment is closer to 30.

Provide details on how the funded activities will impact and support students, if the proposed project is not restricted to a specific course (or courses).

The project is currently restricted to CCT 383, although its writing-related innovations are likely transferable to other courses with a strong writing component.

Indicate any other resources you will use to support your project (library, RGASC, online resources, etc.).

We have greatly benefited from the support available from RGASC, including suggestions and consultations in shaping the current curriculum for this course. Additionally, students are taught how to use the UTM online library resources and scholarly search engines such as Google Scholar. We expect to continue using such resources.

Include a detailed budget.

Additional TA hours required:

10 hours for feedback

20 hours for grading

15 hours for preparing mock graded assignments

TA rate: 42.69 + 4% vacation pay + 11% university-mandated benefits

Total budget: \$2218

Please confirm that you (as the Instructor and/or originator of the proposal) approve this proposal and indicate approval here with a check mark:



Please confirm that your Chair supports this proposal and indicate approval here with a check mark:

