Writing Development Initiative
CCT109 and CCT110 Proposal (2022-2023)

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Please indicate the course code:

CCT109 and CCT110

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

CCT109 (Contemporary Communication Technologies) and CCT110 (Rhetoric and Media) are required courses for entry into any of the ICCIT (Type 3) programs. These two courses, offered respectively during the Fall and the Winter terms, are connected implicitly by theme and explicitly through writing assignments. Both courses share a significant enrolment overlap as well. CCT109 provides students with an introduction to communication technologies and cultural theory, while CCT110 focuses on the application of theory through different communication media. In addition to various evaluation methods, students in CCT109 are tasked with writing a 5-page essay, which forms the basis of a 10-page essay in CCT110. By asking students to further develop and iterate their CCT109 paper (through scaffolded assignments) the essay assignments are intended to mimic the iterative writing of a scholarly paper.

Please indicate the desired learning outcomes for the proposal (as distinct from the course as a whole), and how these learning outcomes relate to the course or program's learning outcomes: that is, indicate how the proposal complements student learning viewed holistically.

Our proposed WDI project will support student writing skills across two large 100-level courses at UTM, CCT109 and CCT110. Our WDI proposal aims to improve two specific components of student writing in CCT109 and CCT110: (1) how they go about understanding and implementing *actionable* feedback and (2) how they navigate the writing and planning processes behind expanding a scholarly paper from 5- to 10-pages in length.

Our proposal has three core learning outcomes:

1) to support student understanding of in-course feedback as actionable commentary designed to improve their writing competency;
2) to foster efficient writing planning strategies in developing and planning out a short paper; and
3) to support student metacognitive capacities by reflecting upon how actionable commentary has changed their writing skills between September (CCT109) and April (CCT110).

With WDI support, TAs in CCT109 will undergo a pre-course afternoon workshop designed to help them provide uniform, imperative-phrased feedback on the major assignment for the course, a 5-page research paper. This paper focuses on communication theory and is scaffolded through the Fall term.

This TA training will focus on how to read and critique papers for common issues regarding argumentation, structure, and planning. During the course, TAs will be directed to frame/phrase their feedback on these elements as actionable imperatives, drawing on recent work by our UTM colleagues in the humanities context.[1]

We will reinforce pre-course TA training throughout CCT109 as well. This will occur during weekly teaching team touch-down meetings; benchmarking meetings run by the Head TA; as well as prior to the release of feedback, when the Head TA, the instructor, and the general writing TA will confirm alignment across tutorials. These reinforcement mechanisms will also serve to ensure TA feedback is uniform across sections.

CCT109 tutorials will be designed to support student writing—with a focus on our key concerns of planning, structure, and argumentation. TAs will lead lessons on these core concerns with an emphasis on students using feedback to refine their drafts. Feedback on the scaffold submissions and the final paper will focus on these core concerns.

In CCT110, students will use their five-page paper from CCT109 as the foundation of a longer, 10-page paper where they will be tasked with examining the application of communications theory to different communication media. To ensure alignment across the courses, students in CCT110 will be required to upload their 5-page CCT109 assignment, with feedback, to the CCT110 Quercus shell during the first weeks of the course.

With WDI support, pre-course TA training for CCT110 will focus on how to guide students through the revision and expansion process, specifically around reverse outlining. This activity builds on the first assignment from CCT109, which focuses on reverse outlining a piece of scholarly writing. This guidance will become central to tutorial lessons and discussions throughout the term, where particular attention will be paid to the importance of planning when it comes to turning a shorter piece of writing into something more substantive.

Finally, throughout both classes, we will build out tutorial-based activities that focus on the importance of metacognition and benchmarking one's own progress. We do so to make "visible" the outcomes of incorporating feedback and planning one's writing process. These metacognitive components will be re-enforced through a short reflective exam question in CCT109 and a 200-word reflection assignment in CCT110. The CCT110 reflection assignment will require students to review their first draft of their papers from CCT109 and final draft of the paper for CCT110.

Please provide a basic overview of the strategies that will be used to improve students' writing.

Our proposal is focused on creating time for TAs to provide enhanced and targeted support to our students. In both courses, TAs will be allocated additional training hours to help them better the quality of their feedback in the assessment process and additional grading time to provide actionable, customized feedback for each student. This is in addition to the general feedback currently provided through grading rubrics

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[1] We take this suggestion from our UTM colleagues who have recently investigated what forms of feedback students find most productive at the 100-level. See Cowan, Evans-Tokaryk, Farooqi, Kaler, & Graham, "Phrasing Feedback to Improve Students' Writing in a Large First Year Humanities Course," *IJ-SOTL* vol. 15, no. 2 (2021): Article 15. https://doi.org/10.20429/ijsotl.2021.150215.

(see Appendix B for an example). In CCT110, TAs will be allocated more time to review the comments and feedback provided in CCT109. They will also review the student statements outlining specifically how the feedback will be incorporated into their expanded paper.

As of September 2020, UTM has begun offering a first-year writing course, ISP100H5 *Writing for University and Beyond: Writing About Writing*. For the 2022-2023 school year, this course will be required by the Departments of Anthropology, Chemical and Physical Sciences, Mathematics and Computational Science, Political Science, and Visual Studies for admission to some of their Specialist and Major programs. If you are proposing a project for a first-year course in any of these Departments, please be sure to consider how the project would complement or reinforce instruction offered in ISP100H5. For further details about ISP100H5, please contact Michael Kaler (michael.kaler@utoronto.ca).

N/A for ICCIT

Please indicate how Teaching Assistants will be used in the project.

CCT109 currently employs 20 Teaching Assistants (in tutorials capped at 50 students) and CCT110 employs 24 Teaching Assistants (in tutorials capped at 30 students). Teaching Assistants are the main point of contact for students in these relatively large courses, but they are challenged with providing students adequate, informed, and actionable feedback on their writing.

Please 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.

One of the challenges we face is hiring 20-24 TA's who are able to provide feedback regarding academic writing for our students. The TA's come from different backgrounds, and there is disparity among them regarding their ability to evaluate writing and provide feedback that will help students in future work.

For this reason, we ask for a four-hour training session in both CCT109 and CCT110 focused on how to provide comments outside of the grading rubric. This training will also help address disparities between tutorials (where there is often evidence of variation between TA expectations and feedback)

Please 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 funding will broadly support two initiatives:

1. Provide training for TAs to support and evaluate student writing on three assignments. This will result in specific, targeted comments for each student based on structure/argumentation; reverse outlining; and development of a smaller study into something more substantive.
2. A 200-word reflection submitted by each student in which they reflect on the TA feedback and address how this feedback has been incorporated into the subsequent, scaffolded assignment.

Please clearly state the number of students participating in the project, if the proposed project is course-based. Indicate the maximum enrolment for the relevant course(s) and the final enrolment in the courses the last time they were offered. Please also indicate the course's relationship to the broader program of study.

> The maximum enrolment in both courses is 800 students. Historically, CCT109 has seen enrolment close to this maximum, while CCT110 tends to be 10-15% lower. Even with this decrease from 109 to 110, the courses share a significant enrolment overlap. All students would be participating in the proposed project.

Please 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).

> ICCIT students are not required to complete ISP100, and CCT109 and CCT110 play the role of not only preparing students for the various ICCIT program streams but also understanding and beginning to master the writing required of undergraduate programs (which we define as "academic writing" in contrast to other forms considered in both courses). The current use of rubrics limits the quality of feedback to each student. We believe that the proposed project will provide students with tailored, specific feedback that will improve their understanding of writing requirements at the undergraduate level via the scaffolded assignments. These are skills that are intended to serve them throughout their university education.

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

> We will continue to have guest speakers from the library (Michael Serafin) and RGASC (Michael Kaler) to discuss topics such as using the UTL databases, academic integrity, and writing help from the RGASC. We also run a PELs program for all students (where they are awarded with a 3% bonus grade upon completion). ICCIT also funds a TA who provides writing help via weekly drop-in and appointment hours. All of these resources will support the WDI proposal.

Please provide a detailed budget. Please indicate TA resources in terms of TA hours, not dollar figures.

Item	Hours	Calculation of hours
CCT109 (Terms: Fall and Summer May/June)		
TA training specific to assignments listed below.	80 hrs	4 h x 20 TA's
Provide directed, actionable feedback on research question and annotated bibliography.	62.5 hrs	750 students x 5 min*
Provide directed, actionable feedback on 5-page essay.	125 hrs	750 students x 10 min*
CCT110 (Terms: Winter and Summer July/August)		
TA training specific to assignments listed below.	96 hrs	4 h x 24 TA's
Review TA comments from CCT109 and statement from student regarding how the input will be implemented.	162.5 hrs	650 students x 15 min*

Provide directed, actionable feedback on introductory paragraph and essay plan.		
TOTAL	526 hrs	Est. @ $49.1/hr = $25,827

* these times are in addition to the use of a grading rubric, where TA's circle appropriate feedback. See Appendix B for an example of a grading rubric used in the Winter 2022 term.

We confirm approval of this proposal.

We confirm that our Director (Tracey Bowen) supports this proposal.

Appendix A: Current versus proposed (WDI funded) TA responsibilities

Assignments	Current TA responsibility	WDI funded responsibilities
CCT109		
Students select one of five topics. They are then asked to develop a related research question and to identify 4-5 peer reviewed articles, identify the article thesis, and note how the article is related to the research question.	Read the student submission and evaluate using a grading rubric (see Appendix B). TAs are allocated 10 minutes per paper.	Add specific comments to the paper with suggestions on how to improve writing. TAs would be allocated 5 minutes per paper for this additional task.
Incorporating feedback from the previous assignment, students complete a 5-page essay.	Read the student submission and evaluate using a grading rubric. TAs are allocated 10 minutes per paper.	Add specific comments on both improving the paper and preparing to expand it to a 10-page paper in CCT110. TAs would be allocated 10 minutes per paper for this task.
CCT110		
Students must use the topic selected for their 5-page paper in CCT109 and conduct additional research, prepare an essay plan and write the introductory paragraph. They must also submit a reflection on how the TA comments for CCT109 were (or will be) addressed.	Read the student submission and evaluate using a grading rubric TAs are allocated 10 minutes per paper.	Add specific comments to the paper with suggestions on how to improve writing. TAs would also ensure that comments from the CCT109 TA have been addressed. TAs would be allocated an additional 15 minutes for this task.
Students submit a 10-page paper incorporating TA feedback.	Read the student submission and evaluate using a grading rubric.	N/A

Appendix B: Research Question and Annotated Bibliography Rubric

Student Name: **Grade:**

Comments:

RUBRIC	A	B	C	D	F
Research Question	Demonstrates an excellent understanding of the broader topic and its relation to the fields of media, communications, and rhetoric. Research question is clear, well written and is neither too broad nor too narrow in focus. The question falls within one of the three broader topic categories (as per the CCT109 assignment).	The research question does well to provide context within the field but would have benefited from more clarity. Focus of the research question is either too broad or too narrow.	The question would have benefited from additional context within the larger topic and field. Research question is far too broad (or far too narrow) making it difficult to address within the context of an undergraduate essay.	Does a marginal job demonstrating familiarity and understanding of the larger topic. Research question is not only too broad or narrow in focus, but it does a marginal job providing direction for an essay.	Research question is poorly phrased and provides minimal, if any, direction or context for a thesis statement or essay. The question demonstrates poor understanding of the purpose of a research question.
Annotated Bibliography	Sources are recent, relevant and demonstrate a strong understanding of the debates related to the larger literature. The thesis or intent of the author(s) has been clearly identified and described. Descriptions of how the articles relate to the research question is well written and cohesive.	Overall, appropriate sources have been selected. The thesis or intent of the author(s) has been identified. Descriptions of how each article relates to the research question is reasonable and understandable.	Sources are inconsistent in terms of quality and should be more recent and relevant. The thesis or intent of the author(s) could have been identified more clearly. Descriptions of how each article relates to the research question needs to be stronger.	Bibliography does not include the six required sources. The majority of sources are not quality peer-reviewed, academic sources. The thesis or intent has either not been identified or is incorrect. Descriptions of the articles relevance to your research question is weak or incorrect.	Sources are of poor academic quality. The reasons you provide for including them demonstrate an inadequate understanding of both the topic and the broader body of literature. They should be changed for the third assignment.
Writing and APA Formatting	Technically, the assignment is excellent: well organized, well written, free from errors, spell-checked and proofread. Bibliography is flawlessly formatted in APA style.	Technically, the assignment is well organized, well written, and contains only minor errors. Bibliography is formatted in APA style with only a few minor errors. Minor issues with (i) in-text citations or (ii) assignment formatting.	The assignment does not meet expectations in one or more of the following: organization and structure, writing and expression, errors (typos and proofreading). APA bibliography formatting contains multiple errors. Several issues with (i) in-text citations or (ii) assignment formatting.	The assignment is undermined by poor ability in the following areas: organization and structure, writing and expression, errors (typos and proofreading). APA bibliography is poorly formatted and contains multiple errors. Major issues with (i) in-text citations or (ii) assignment formatting	Please consider seeking help from either the course writing instructor or the Robert Gillespie Academic Skills Centre for future assignments. No indication that APA formatting conventions were followed. Please consult an APA style guide for future assignments