**Assignment Instructor Notes**

*Professional Communications OER: Writing*

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This resource is for instructors and should *not* be shared with students.

It contains summary notes related to the activities used for student assessment in the Writing Module. As an instructor, please feel free to modify the assessment activities and rubrics as necessary to suit your particular needs.

## **Question Bank**

The Writing Module includes a large question bank covering each chapter of the module eText. Some of these questions may have been used within the eText or slide decks; however, a large number of questions remain unused and, therefore, available for you to use as you see fit.

You can use these questions in quizzes, exams, review exercises, and so on. Correct answers are identified, and many of them include feedback or rationale details where appropriate. The format of these questions makes it easy for you add them to LMS activities.

You can find more details about the question bank right within it.

## **General Assessment Rubric**

The generic assessment rubric addresses key elements of the Writing Module. It is intentionally generic so as to make it flexible for instructors to use. For example, you can use it

* formatively, to guide student learning by providing regular or periodic feedback on particular expectations.
* to formally assess learning outcomes holistically or, where appropriate, as an instrument-specific evaluation tool. Although module assignment evaluations include their own independent grading rubrics, you can use the general assessment rubric (or parts of it) *with* or *in place of* them. In other words, the rubric was designed to be adaptable for different course applications of the module.
* to inform the development of other more specific assessment instruments with a focus on one or more of the criteria in the general assessment rubric.

The emphasis for this rubric is on assessing effective planning, construction, and distribution of common workplace-related documents and publications. Integrated skills such as appropriate use of grammar, vocabulary, and writing style are focus points.

The success attributes that are related to the stated learning goals of the module—and can be measured with this rubric—include the following:

* *Writing Standard*: the ability to express oneself clearly in business communication
* *Writing Conformance*: the ability to plan and construct written communication that conforms to business standards and demonstrate compliance to business rules and ethical use of information

The rubric criteria identify areas in which students need to demonstrate success. For example, the student should be able to

* use effective design techniques in written communication to guide readers (introduction, headings, etc.);
* use multiple means to communicate written information (memo, newsletter, minutes, email, blog, forums);
* incorporate graphics and other aids to clarify complex or technical information;
* ensure accuracy of spelling, grammar, sentence structure, and punctuation;
* select appropriate writing styles, formats, conventions in relation to the purpose of the communication.

Correlation to Competency/Outcomes

The student should be able to

* apply principles of effective writing to produce professional workplace documents
* match the most appropriate styles of workplace correspondence to intended purpose or function
* apply rules of compliance and ethics in the development of written products

## **Email and Memo Assignment Rubric**

The rubric for the email-and-memo assignment is designed to be adaptable for use in formative and summative assessments. It should apply to many different email/memo activity scenarios or purposes.

You can include the rubric with the assignment to help guide student work. Here are two ways you can customize the rubric:

* Only two gradable elements are provided in the rubric, “Inadequate” and “Acceptable,” and this is intentional. You may assign points to these elements if you prefer to indicate levels of accomplishment within each. Tip: If you do use these point ranges, make sure they coincide with marks you have assigned to each criterion.
* Another option is to equate the elements to a pass/fail or similar binary scheme. This approach could also be iterative, allowing for re-submission. The feedback column would be key here, because the learning goal would be to coach learners through ongoing feedback where necessary.

There are several ways you can use the feedback column in the rubric:

1. If you choose to allow students to submit a draft, you can give them formative feedback to guide them in producing a better final product. You can then use the initial feedback as a basis for grading the final product by determining how well students have improved their work since the initial feedback given. Basically, the initial feedback sets out the baseline.
2. You can use it in a non-graded formative way to help students gauge their understanding of the email/memo building process. This may be a good option in non-credit courses or workshops.
3. You can use it in a graded way. In this case, feedback would be summative and rationalizes points given for each criteria.

As you can see, the rubric can accommodate several different marking strategies, including scales or point award, for different elements in the criteria. In essence, you are invited to adapt the rubric to these strategies as you deem necessary.

# **Composing an Introduction Email Assignment**

In the original assignment, students are tasked with creating a short introductory biography and preparing it as an email following the guidelines in the eText. They are provided with a rubric to help guide their work. The rubric is also used to assess the quality of their work.

**Using the Rubric**

The assessment is meant to be formative in nature; however, you could also assign points to the rubric and use the assignment for grading purposes.

You, as the instructor, may choose to be the exclusive user of this rubric, or you may additionally use it as a peer evaluation tool by requiring students to assess and provide feedback to fellow students.

**Optional Part 2 of Assignment (Extension Activity)**

The “Composing an Introduction Email Assignment” has an optional extension activity that requires students to revise an email they have written. Because it deals with revision rather than composition, it gets students to follow guidelines outlined in a different section of the eText than the initial assignment. You may use the extension activity as a “part 2” of the original assignment and instruct students to modify their original assignment based on the feedback they received. Including the extension activity as part 2 of the assignment would add some consistency between the two by linking them together. Alternatively, this optional revision can be independent of the initial composition assignment.

Note: The extension activity requires that students *revise* an email they have written. The eText includes a chapter on revising one’s writing; therefore, this activity may be best positioned after students have engaged with that material. Below are some of the recommended requirements for the activity, if you decide to use it..

* Students need to format the document, using the appropriate structure for the email. Details about this can be found in the etext.
* Students need to consider the audience for whom they are composing this email, and the purpose of their message.
* Students should draft their email considering the style and tone used in the body text.
* Students will bring their introductory biography emails to class and exchange them with one of their peers.
* Using the single point rubric provided, students will provide feedback on areas of strength, as well as room for improvement, to their peers. The feedback can include suggestions for rephrasing particular sentences, for example. Optionally, you may wish to instruct students to use proofer’s marks.
* Students will then use the feedback to revise their email prior to submission.

## **Business Letter Assignment**

You may wish to supply address information both for the fictitious Sunny Days Travel Agency and the sender. Or you may allow students to supply the addresses. These addresses do not need to be real or verifiable; however, they do need to be complete in form.

The letter should include all structural elements of full or semi-block style. The closing should be appropriate to the purpose, tone, and receiver. For example, Sincerely, Yours truly, Regards, etc.

Readability includes the words used to convey the message, paragraph structure, sentence structure and that the letter is professional in tone. It needs to have good flow.

There are clues in the scenario that students should pick up on to guide the tone and purpose of the message. It also includes both positive and negative comments about the experience which should be presented in the student’s work. Although the scenario may make it seem that the letter should be more personal in style, the purpose is to convey the experience as feedback for improved services. Therefore, the approach is businesslike but informal.

Business Letter Assignment Part Two (optional)

There is an optional second part to this assignment. You may use Part Two as a follow-up or as a separate assignment activity. The main focus of part two is on using a more formal businesslike tone when creating the letter and being indirect in style but direct on inquiry points. The letter for the first part of the assignment is styled and presented as a “good news” letter. Part Two is also business-to-business but focuses on an indirect approach to conveying bad news.

Part two also requires that students include additional elements, such as an attachment and properly quoting from the original letter. The use of quote characters for this is covered in the punctuation section of the module. Note that this is not citing a work but merely including direct comments from the letter. Again there are clues to pick up on in the scenario that should help guide the tone and purpose of the letter.

## **Grading**

* Rather than supplying a rubric, students can see the criteria and points used for grading both parts of this assignment. This assignment is not only about being technically or mechanically correct, but also about conveying a message properly for purpose. Note that the approach to grading is reduction. This approach can sometimes become more central in the mind of students as they craft the assignment, hopefully resulting in better quality work.
* The “General Assessment Rubric” supplied with the Writing Module could also be used with the grading scheme included, or instead of it, in assessing this assignment. The rubric criteria provides sufficient scope for this assignment and would only require adding point values or scales for each.

## **Short Report Assignment**

This assignment was planned for use as a summative assessment of the module. It includes requirements from several of the module eText sections and chapters.

Focus for the report scenarios is on creating short reports using the layout outlined in the module eText. Each scenario has been developed for a particular style or method; however, with some minor editing, you can repurpose any scenario.

The module eText introduces progress, summary, and recommendation reports; however, it was decided to focus on summary and recommendation reports for summative assessment purposes. It was felt that progress reports would require a significant amount of detail in the scenario and require much more class time than would be available, to prepare students adequately.

The list below provides the particular style or method intended for each of the six assignment scenarios; however, they can be easily adapted as necessary for different styles.

* Scenario #1 - Summary Report
* Scenario #2 - Summary Report
* Scenario #3 - Recommendation Report
* Scenario #4 - Recommendation Report
* Scenario #5 - Summary Report
* Scenario #6 - Recommendation Report

It is recommended that you provide the grading rubric to students along with the assignment to help guide their work. You may add actual points for each criterion and element as appropriate to your grading scheme.

The rubric is designed to be adaptable for use in formative and summative assessments. It should apply to many different report activity scenarios or purposes. This rubric can accommodate several different marking strategies, including scales or point award for different elements in the criteria. It is left to instructors to adapt it as necessary.