Documentation with Report

Overview: This assignment is the third and final step in a series of interrelated projects. You have already reported on a client’s document needs and written a proposal about how to address those needs. Now you will collaborate with one or more classmates to implement one group member’s proposal. In addition to creating the new/revised document(s), your team will also write a formal report that gives an account of your project work.

Goals: The main goals of this project are for you to learn more about (1) writing collaboratively; (2) conducting research into the relationships of audience, usability, and document design; (3) and composing professional documents by applying principles for effective, ethical professional communication.

Audience: The primary audience for the new/revised document(s) is your client. For the formal report, I will be the primary audience (as your project supervisor and evaluator). Versions of your writing may also be posted to your Web portfolio.

Procedures and Requirements: These instructions apply to your collaborative writing. You will also be asked (individually) to write other related documents along the way, such as progress reports and correspondence. These will be relatively brief and will count separately toward your Professionalism score for the class.

As a team, complete the steps below:

1. Choose the proposal that you will implement. Read the document needs assessment and proposal that correspond with this project, and agree as a team about how you will collaborate. Submit to me a brief team e-mail (cc: your team members). Identify the document(s) you have selected to create or revise, explain your model for collaboration, and outline a schedule that clearly states the tasks (with deadlines) that each team member will be responsible for. Plan to complete a draft of your documentation early enough that you can gather client feedback, perform usability testing (see Lannon, “Designing and Testing the Document for Usability,” coursepack pp. 130 ff.), and revise your document(s).

2. When your team’s proposal has been approved, collaboratively write the new/revised document. Share a version of your document needs assessment and/or proposal with your client early in your writing process in order to gather feedback. Remember to allow time to conduct usability testing—and to revise based on that testing. Keep careful notes about your process and decisions about your written product so that you can discuss both process and product in detail in your formal report.

3. Together, write a formal report about your project work. As your writing instructor, I want to know about your process and about the writing choices that appear in your final document. I’m especially interested in how your team’s process and product decisions were informed by specific course readings and activities related to collaboration and to good writing, as well as by your usability testing and interactions with your client.

Deliverables and Due Date: The major sections of your formal report should include the title page, abstract, table of contents, introduction, discussion/body, conclusions, recommendations, and references. Use charts and other figures where they enhance your written text. The body of your report (introduction, discussion/body, conclusions, and recommendations) should be about 4 pages, single-spaced. Include a transmittal memo or letter with your report.

Polished hard copies of your document and formal report are due at the beginning of class on Thursday, April 19. If your project is a revision of an existing document, provide a copy of the original to me. If there are

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1 These project instructions adapt and extend from similar assignments given by Dr. Kathryn Northcut (University of Missouri-Rolla) and Dr. Clay Spinuzzi (University of Texas at Austin).
written instructions for your document (e.g., for grant proposals or article manuscripts), attach them as appendices in your formal report.

**About drafts:** Meeting the due dates for the smaller assignments and workshop drafts is important for you and for your classmates who learn with you. Each time that you miss one of these deadlines or come unprepared will result in a full-grade reduction from your individual score for the final draft of your project.

**A note on collaboration:** Successful collaboration is crucial to producing project documents that are effective and that take an ethical approach to writing processes and products. Since a graded project involves high stakes for you, I am taking several measures to help facilitate your successful collaboration:

- As a class, we will review principles for effective collaboration.
- We will also establish policies that help to prevent procedural and relational conflict and that include guidelines for responding to such conflicts.
- Each individual student will periodically be required to provide a status report that documents his or her work on the group project and that comments on the group’s progress.
- The grading process will take each student’s work toward successful collaboration into account.

If at any time your group needs assistance in collaborating successfully, be sure to ask for my help.

**Grading:** The Documentation with Report project is worth 25% of your final grade. I will grade your work holistically, meaning I will take all of the components together into account. After determining a group grade for the written work, I will make any appropriate adjustments to individuals’ scores to reflect their work toward successful collaboration. Decisions about adjusted scores will be informed by group members’ progress reports and by my observation of and interactions with group members.

In a quality project, team members will:

- Apply principles for effective, ethical communication in the creation of a new or revised professional document that meets a client’s assessed needs.
- Report with accuracy, thoroughness, and insight on the team’s processes and product decisions while making relevant connections to course readings and activities.
- Demonstrate that you as writers have conducted careful research (including usability testing and interactions with the client) into the possibilities and problems associated with the new document.
- Demonstrate that you as writers have taken care to study the rhetorical audience, purpose, situation, and assignment instructions; to understand your role(s); and to research the written genre conventions that are expected for your documents. These will be shown through effective, appropriate:
  - Content (including both text and figures);
  - Rhetorical moves;
  - Structure and organization;
  - Design and formatting;
  - Conventions of style, grammar, and usage; and
  - Documentation for any sources whose words, ideas, or illustrations are cited or used in the project.
- Demonstrate an ethical approach to the writing processes and products.
- Exhibit a developed and accurate understanding of the principles addressed in class, in the assigned readings and activities, and in my responses to your work.