Fact Sheet

Overview: Ask people why they’ve chosen a particular career path, and odds are, few will answer that it’s because they hope to do a lot of writing. Yet in most professions, writing plays an important role. This project will help to shed light on one type of writing that may be significant for your future professional work.

Your task is to investigate and report on one genre that is uniquely important to a profession that interests you. Conduct primary- and secondary-source research to answer these broad questions:

- Why is this type of writing important in your profession? How frequently is this type of writing used? Why is it used?
- Who reads and uses this genre when it is written by members of your profession, and how does it affect them? Who else is affected by the writing, and in what ways?
- What (in detail) are the textual traits of one genre that is important to this profession, and—if this genre is also common to other professions—what is unique about it within this profession? What typifies the content, rhetorical appeals, organization, style, grammar, and format?
- What processes and strategies are important for writing in this genre? What “tricks of the trade” do people in this profession use, and what pitfalls do they try to avoid? How are ethics taken into consideration?
- How, in this profession, do writers know when their writing in this genre is successful? Who decides what counts as “successful” writing, and on what criteria are their judgments based?
- Where, specifically, can novices to the profession learn more about this type of writing?

Goals: The main goals for this project are for you to learn more about (1) the nature of professional writing in your field; (2) how to plan, conduct, and present primary- and secondary-source research; and (3) how to write a clear, concise report based on your research. The project is also an opportunity for you to beginning networking within your professional field.

Audience: Write a fact sheet for undergraduates who are interested in this profession but may not know much about the kinds of writing that it entails. There is also a strong possibility that professors and other students in your major or program will read your handout. Your classmates and I will also be interested in your findings, and a version of your handout may also be posted to your Web portfolio for this course.

Procedures and Requirements: Complete the following steps:

1. Choose a profession that interests you—one that you are fairly certain involves some professional writing.
2. Email me well before our January 24 class about your proposed plan for gathering information for this project.
   - Your plan must include an interview with someone who currently works in this profession. This primary source interview should occur in person (or, for a long-distance contact, over the phone or Skype) and must be completed by February 1.
   - Plan to consult secondary sources before your interview as a way to gather background information. After the interview, these (or additional) secondary sources should be used to confirm, clarify, and expand on the information from your primary source. In your proposal indicate how you will search for these sources.
   - You will also need to analyze 3-5 samples of one written genre that is significant in this profession. You should gather some of these samples from your interviewee and discuss them with him/her, as well as studying all of the samples further on your own. Talk with me for tips about gathering samples of document types that are usually kept confidential.
3. Conduct your research, making sure to take organized notes so that you can thoroughly, thoughtfully, and accurately answer each of the broad questions listed above. As you take notes, remember to label which information comes from which source.
4. Report your findings in a two-sided, single-spaced fact sheet for undergraduates in your major or program. You may choose how best to organize the information, but it is essential that you answer the broad questions outlined in the “Overview” above. The best handouts will be thoroughly informative and interesting, while also written in a clear, concise style. Additionally, they will employ the principles for content organization and page design that we study in ENG 305. Use visuals to the extent that they enhance your writing. Document your sources in accordance with the style guide (e.g., APA, CMS, CSE, or MLA) that is prevalent in your field. The due date is Tuesday, February 14.
About workshop 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 for a workshop will result in a full-grade reduction from the final score for your project.

Grading: The Fact Sheet is worth 10% of your final grade. I will grade your project holistically, meaning I will take all of the components into account. A quality project will:

- Report with thoroughness, accuracy, and insight about writing in a genre that is uniquely important for a profession that interests you.
- Show that you have conducted careful research using both primary and secondary sources.
- Support your (assigned) purposes and facilitate communication with your audience through effective and appropriate:
  - ideas, arguments, and evidence;
  - rhetorical appeals;
  - structure and organization;
  - style;
  - design and formatting;
  - grammar, usage, and mechanics; and
  - documentation for any sources whose ideas, words, visuals you use in your handout.
- Demonstrate an ethical approach to the report writing process and product.
- 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.