

**2010**

# W231: Professional Writing Skills Curriculum Guide



**SCHOOL OF LIBERAL ARTS**

INDIANA UNIVERSITY  
IUPUI

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### **.♥. Acknowledgements .♥.**

*I am grateful to former course coordinator Jan Blough whose work serves as the basis for our applied research project. Many thanks to all the W231 instructors, past and present, for their dedication and for their many contributions to our curriculum. Particular thanks to Mary Sauer for her continuous support and guidance.*

## COURSE DESCRIPTION

Professional Writing Skills (W231) is a Writing Program course for students in diverse majors. It fulfills a second writing class requirement for students in the Schools of Liberal Arts, Public and Environmental Affairs, Physical Education, Tourism, Convention, and Event Management, and Social Work, among others. The class also carries elective credit under the English Major. Students are required to complete W131 (or a comparable composition class) with a grade of C or higher before enrolling in W231. Depending on enrollment figures, around 15 sections are offered each semester, with all sections meeting in computer classrooms every other class session.

W231 introduces students to writing in workplace settings and focuses on the development of research skills that will be of value not only in the workplace, but also in upper-level courses in the student's major. The course assignments integrate previous writing experience with the discovery of the conventions of workplace writing, while a collaborative climate supports student responsibility for learning as they analyze and work within the constraints of various rhetorical situations typically encountered on the job.

During the first part of the semester, students complete one or two writing projects, each graded individually. (The number of early projects assigned depends on their complexity.) These assignments introduce students to the various genres in professional writing before they move on to learn research methods and to practice research-based writing through an extensive applied research project. The project allows students to put the writing principles learned in the first part of the course into practice by addressing a current problem in a local business or organizational setting.

With an emphasis on information retrieval skills, analysis, interpretation, and application of findings, the project is done in collaborative teams, allowing students to develop expertise in team dynamics, an important qualification for personal growth and advancement in many careers. The focus of the project is a current significant problem within a local professional community for which alternative solutions are possible. Writing in a "real-world" situation helps prepare students for the challenges they will encounter when writing on the job. Teams choose their target organizations by contemplating their majors, jobs, volunteer work, student organizations, and local communities, determining the problems experienced within each. Next, students conduct secondary and primary research to identify potential solutions.

Sequenced to promote student success, the written assignments include a research proposal, an interview guide, an annotated bibliography, a literature review, a primary research instrument, and a recommendation report. The approach to problem solving taught in W231 not only emphasizes the value of teamwork and information retrieval skills, but it also prepares students for the creative and independent thinking expected in the workplace.

As we have continued to work on facilitating the development of effective teamwork strategies, critical thinking skills, careful research methods, and the clear writing that is so essential in all professional settings, minor changes and additions have been made to the W231 curriculum, as reflected in this 2010 version. Developments in technology, which have transformed the way information is obtained, analyzed, and communicated in professional communities, will undoubtedly continue to impact future versions of the W231 curriculum.

## **COURSE GOALS AND THE PULS**

By the end of the course, successful students will have the ability to:

- Determine the appropriate content, format, and style for creating effective workplace documents.
- Adapt their writing to different situations, audiences, and purposes.
- Organize documents clearly and effectively for the intended audience.
- Expand their teamwork skills as they collaborate effectively in groups.
- Develop good research questions and strategies.
- Think critically about rhetorical concerns as they gather, evaluate, interpret, and apply information accurately, logically, and ethically.
- Produce accessible, well-designed documents.
- Develop a clear, concise writing style.

### **Technology Skills**

W231 students learn or enhance their skills in the following technologies:

- word processing
- electronic communication and collaboration
- file transfer and storage
- advanced document design strategies
- charts and tables in Word or Excel
- track changes in Word
- library research strategies using electronic indexes and databases
- Web searching strategies
- Oncourse tools and features
- PowerPoint basics

IUPUI has developed a set of expectations for the undergraduate educational experience, defining the higher order abilities and skills that all our students are expected to master. These expectations are called the [Principles of Undergraduate Learning](#) (PULs). To a certain extent, our W231 course goals support *all* of the PULs. However, the principle called “Core Communication” is especially relevant to W23 because the Core Communications skills are developed and enhanced in W231.

Core communication is defined as “the ability of students to express and interpret information and use information resources and technology—the foundational skills necessary for all IUPUI students to succeed. Core communication and quantitative skills are demonstrated by the student’s ability to

- a) express ideas and facts to others effectively in a variety of formats, particularly written, oral, and visual formats;
- b) comprehend, interpret, and analyze ideas and facts;
- c) communicate effectively in a range of settings;
- d) identify and propose solutions for problems using quantitative tools and reasoning; and
- e) make effective use of information resources and technology  
(<http://faa.iupui.edu/pul/>).

### **Classrooms**

Currently all sections of W231 meeting twice a week are scheduled in Cavanaugh Hall’s computer classrooms for one class session per week. (Once-a-week classes may use the computer rooms at will.) Traditional classrooms are “smart” classrooms (technologically enhanced), featuring a networked computer, projector, screen, document camera, and DVD player.

### **Textbooks**

Faculty may choose one of the following two textbooks:

Oliu, W. E., Brusaw, C. T. & Alred, G. J. (2010). *Writing that works: communicating effectively on the job*. (10<sup>th</sup>ed.). New York: Bedford St. Martin’s.

*Writing that Works* reflects an orientation to professional writing closely aligned with the IUPUI Writing Program’s philosophy and goals. The related website, which offers student and instructor resources, is located at <http://www.bedfordstmartins.com/writingthatworks>

Oliu, W. E., Brusaw, C. T. & Alred, G. J. (2009). *The business writer’s handbook*. (9<sup>th</sup>ed.). New York: Bedford St. Martin’s.

*The Business Writer’s Handbook* offers a brief approach to the topics covered in *Writing that Works*. The entries are alphabetically arranged in the spiral-bound book, which makes it a great reference for students. A companion website is available at <http://bedfordstmartins.com/alredbus>

Many instructors also provide students with a copy of *Group Work and Collaborative Writing*, by Brian Conner and John Vohs, as preparation for collaborative work. It is available as a text document on the W231 faculty website under “Collaboration and Teamwork.”

## **W231 Faculty Development and Resources Website**

[The W231 Faculty Development and Resources](#) website contains assignment overviews, sample documents, assessment forms, and examples of student handouts. (Note that some of the documents may contain references to page numbers from previous textbook or handbook editions.) To access the site (<http://www.iupui.edu/~cyber231/classresources/course.htm>), enter the user ID “instructor” and the password “w231” (case sensitive.)

The website is updated frequently with new assignments and other contributions from faculty. Currently the website contains pages on the following topics:

- APA Resources
- Assessment
- Annotated Bibliography & Literature Review
- Collaboration & Teamwork
- Correspondence
- Designing, Revising, and Editing
- Importance of Professional Writing
- Introductory Projects
- Library Research
- Performance Review
- Primary Research
- Project Guidelines
- Topics & Proposals
- Recommendation Report
- Syllabi and Lesson Plans
- Team Presentation
- Writing Resources

## **W231 Faculty Listserv**

The Writing Program maintains a W231 faculty listserv, W231-L@listserv.iupui.edu. To be added, contact the office at 274-3824.

## **GRADING**

### **Attendance**

W231 students are expected to become active participants in their classroom community of writers and learners; to contribute to the learning environment by attending regularly, prepared with assigned work; to collaborate both online and face-to-face; and to meet all deadlines. Therefore, attendance is mandatory. Due to the collaborative nature of the course, students with poor attendance will be unable to satisfactorily complete the course requirements or fulfill their team responsibilities. Students should be advised to notify their instructor if they must miss class and to

consult Oncourse or a classmate to find out what they missed (including the homework assignment, for which they are still responsible.) Instructors may elect to base up to 10% of the course grade on attendance, homework, or other student contributions, assigning “Completion Points” for each.

### **Evaluation of Written Work**

The Writing Program supports an approach to writing instruction that enables students to use knowledge and skills gained throughout the process of creating a project as they prepare documents to submit for evaluation at the end of the project. To demonstrate the student's ability to apply learning, project folders are composed of documents developed through the writing process, with feedback from peers and instructors playing an important role in that process.

Written comments, perhaps in combination with an evaluation sheet, are given in response to each assignment. Evaluation is based on the degree to which the work fulfills the W231 course objectives, after the writing has been taken through a recursive process of prewriting, drafting, peer response, revision, instructor response, further revising, editing, and submission for a grade.

Faculty may wish to divide the team project into two phases or into individually-produced work and collaboratively-produced work. Most instructors grade individual writing, such as sections of the annotated bibliography and literature review, to help ensure equitable distribution of the team's work, achievement of course goals, and timely submission of assignments. Setting up the team project with two phases reduces the number of files and documents for which students need to be responsible until the end of the semester; in addition, completing some assignments as they proceed with the rest of the project helps students feel a sense of accomplishment. Instructors use the W231 grading rubric (see appendix) to assess final team project folders, meeting during finals week to read reports representative of each grade category as well as those considered problematic.

Students should have ample opportunity to consult with their peers and with their instructor throughout the writing process. An important role of the instructor is providing feedback to drafts. Due to the number of students in the class (up to 23) and the fast pace of the course, teachers are not expected to respond to materials submitted via email prior to the due date. However, students who need assistance because English is not their first language, because they lack experience in writing, or simply because they have questions about an assignment, should consult their instructor or visit the University Writing Center *prior* to submitting their work for a grade. Once the final product has been turned in and graded, most W231 faculty do not invite submission of revised work for re-grading, although that is an option.

### **Quizzes (Optional)**

Some teachers hold students accountable for the assigned reading by giving brief 3 - 5 question quizzes at the beginning of the class for which the materials were assigned. If graded, quizzes should be low-stake, accounting for no more than 10% of the course grade.

## Weighting Assignments

Individual writing should count more toward the course grade than group work. In the example shown in Figure 2 below, 70% of the course grade is based on individual work, with collaboratively produced work accounting for the remaining 30%.

**Figure 1 Course Grades**

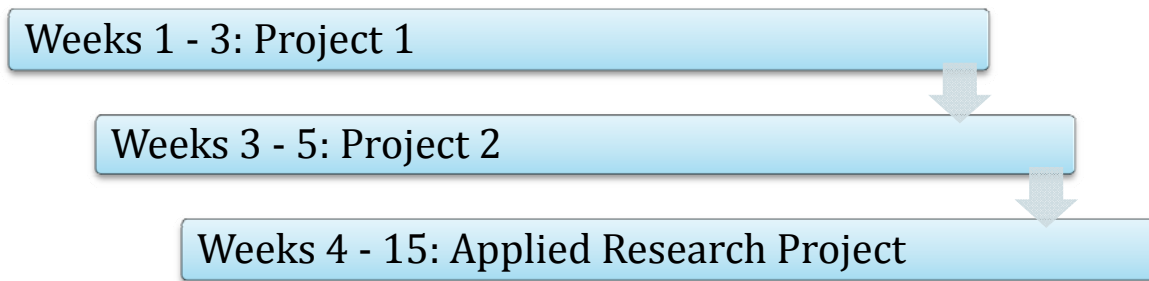
<b>Assignment</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>Project One</b>	10%
<b>Project Two</b>	15%
<b>Project Three Individual Work</b>	40%
Proposal (10%); Annotated Bibliography (5%); Literature Review, References Page, & Grid, (25%)	
<b>Project Three Team Folder</b>	30%
Transmittal Memo, Recommendation Report, and other project-related work (Team Proposal, Team Policies and Procedures, Target Audience Interview Guide with Responses, Team Annotated Bibliography, Team Literature Review, Primary Research Instrument & Tabulation, Presentation)	
Performance Review	5%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100%</b>

## Penalties for Late Work

W231 is a fast-paced course, and to be successful, students must stay up-to-date with the assignments. In order to be fair to all students, the guidelines below are suggested to regulate acceptance of assignments:

- Assignments must be submitted in the order assigned.
- Students may not join a team for the team project if they have not submitted the previous projects.
- Assignments will be penalized 1/3 of a letter grade each weekday they are late.
- Failure to submit individual sections of team project drafts to the team by agreed-upon deadlines will result in a project grade penalty of 1/3 of a letter grade per day.

Figure 2



As the chart in Figure 3 suggests, approximately five weeks should be allowed for the early projects, with the completion of the last introductory project overlapping the initial phase of the team project (team-forming and topic selection). Please see the W231 Faculty Development and Resources website for a sample syllabus, detailed assignment schedule, and examples of lesson plans.

## INTRODUCTORY ASSIGNMENTS

The early individual projects introduce students to the nature and purpose of professional writing and to the various types of workplace writing and the rhetorical principles of each. The introductory projects also prepare students to undertake the applied research project.

Students are usually more accustomed to writing for teachers who will grade their work than for readers who need their information. They also need help distinguishing the academic writing they are used to doing from writing in work and organizational settings. The early assignments help students understand that workplace communication involves treating writing as a social and rhetorical action to meet the needs of employers, co-workers, customers, and clients, and is often a problem-solving activity. They learn that workplace writers must consider the rhetorical and technical options for solving those problems, and that they must produce documents that are clear, strategically organized, and carefully designed with readers' needs in mind.

To help students make the transition from their previous writing experiences to workplace writing, early class activities might invite students to compare and contrast academic writing and professional writing, considering the purpose, audience, language, level of detail, and design features of each. A Venn diagram works well for this activity.

## Assignment Options

The curriculum includes beginning-of-semester projects that give students the opportunity to learn more about the characteristics of professional writing and that introduce them to the various genres in workplace writing, including correspondence. These early assignments acquaint students with the conventions of professional writing and show them how to analyze and work within the constraints of rhetorical situations that define effective use of those conventions. You may choose one or two of the options listed below, or create your own. Detailed guidelines and supporting resources pertaining to each of these projects are available for download on the W231 faculty website.

- **Correspondence Project:** This assignment introduces basic rhetorical principles needed to write effective letters and memos, helping students learn to adapt their writing to different situations, audiences, and purposes. It also expands document design skills. There are many different variations of this assignment, some involving cases and some based on ‘real’ situations. One variation is described below, and you’ll find others on the faculty website.
- **Correspondence and Design:** This project, created by Sara Harrell, involves creating a company logo, business card, and letterhead, as well as composing six correspondence documents with a ‘real-world’ audience and situation.
- **Problem-Solving in the Workplace:** This assignment, created by Gail Bennett-Edelman, provides students the opportunity to speak with professionals to learn about problem-solving in the workplace, with an emphasis on the role of research and writing in solving workplace problems. Although the project combines individual and group work, students are graded individually.
- **Team-Building in the Workplace:** This project, adapted by Julie Freeman from Gail Bennett-Edelman's Problem-Solving project, focuses instead on teamwork. This assignment introduces students to essentials for successful teamwork, providing a foundation for the upcoming team project.
- **Newsletter Project:** Created by Gail Bennett-Edelman, this project is done as the only introductory project because it is somewhat extensive and incorporates most if not all of the goals for the early part of the curriculum.
- **Job Search/Résumé Project:** This assignment introduces students to résumé and cover letter writing. Some instructors may also assign a request for a recommendation letter as part of this project. A version of this project created by Hannah Haas is available on the faculty website.
- **Principles of Effective Professional Writing:** This assignment by Jennifer Price Mahoney involves conducting an interview and composing an employee handbook on professional behavior.
- **Interviews with Professional Writers:** In this project, students interview a professional in the field they plan to enter. The interview focuses on the amount and type of writing the professional does as part of his or her job. The formal writing tasks include an interview guide, a memo report, and a thank-you letter.
- **Analyzing Professional Writing:** In this project, students analyze workplace documents by classifying them, determining their audience and purpose, and studying their elements of persuasion. They then compose a memo to the class to report their findings.

## Evaluation of Introductory Projects

The early projects should be evaluated based on their effectiveness in the following areas:

- Management of Purpose (Intended task is accomplished)
- Audience Awareness (Content is appropriate for the intended readers and meets their need for information)

- Organization (Appropriate sequence of information for the subject, the purpose, and the audience)
- Development (Depth of analysis; level of detail and elaboration; length)  
Coherence (Logical and smooth transitions between sentences and paragraphs)
- Format/Document Design
- Clarity, Concision, and Style
- Grammar, Punctuation, and Spelling
- Tone
- Diction (word choice and use)

## THE APPLIED RESEARCH PROJECT (TEAM PROJECT)

The main steps of the applied research project are as follows:

1. Form teams that choose a workplace problem to investigate.
2. Target a local organization in which the problem exists.
3. Interview a decision-maker within that organization who can provide insight and background information about the situation.
4. Research the problem using secondary and primary methods.
5. Present the results of their research in a recommendation report and oral presentation.

By identifying a problem or situation needing improvement at a local business, industry, government agency, campus or nonprofit organization, then conducting research, the team ultimately combines existing knowledge with new information from which they develop a plan to address that problem – the essence of applied research. As students become practitioners in their fields, they will also become critical readers and users of the literature of their professions. Therefore, this curriculum emphasizes an approach to problem solving that looks first to the literature as a means of understanding and defining the problem within a larger context, then to primary research to obtain needed data to address the problem at the local level.

The following chart describes the major assignments in the team project.

**Figure 3 Team Project Assignments**

ASSIGNMENTS	ASSIGNMENT DESCRIPTION
<i>Preliminary research proposal</i>	Each student writes a brief preliminary proposal memo to the class outlining his or her project idea and soliciting feedback. The memo identifies the target audience and suggests research methods. These memos are posted on Oncourse in advance of the class meeting in which teams will be formed.
<i>Team research proposal</i>	The team explains the project they have chosen, the rationale for their choice, their assessment of their team's strengths and needs, their policies and procedures, and a timeline for completing the project.

<p><i>Secondary Research &amp; Annotated Bibliography</i></p> <p><i>Literature Review</i></p>	<p>Teams conduct library research using a variety of library databases to explore the problem on a global level, and then compile an annotated bibliography of recently published scholarly sources in APA format.</p> <p>Teams examine the literature to identify causes and effects of the problem and to determine strategies used by other organizations to address the problem. They develop a 5-6 page single-spaced literature review, citing approximately 10 sources in APA. Copies of all articles references are submitted in the draft packet. The literature review should focus mainly on solutions.</p>
<p><i>Progress Report</i></p> <p><i>Primary Research Tool</i></p> <p><i>Tabulation of Data</i></p> <p><i>Recommendation Report</i></p>	<p>Via email or a written memo, teams update the instructor on their progress with the project and explain the primary research method selected. Students discuss the “who, what, when, where, and why” of the method. They may also be asked to include a tentative draft of the tool. Alternatively, the team’s progress and research method can be discussed during a conference with the instructor.</p> <p>Teams design their research tool (usually a questionnaire) and conduct the primary research. Proof of research (completed surveys) is submitted. Teams tabulate and analyze all data collected to determine possible solutions to the problem.</p> <p>Teams compose a recommendation report, applying their findings to the problem investigated. One or two visual aids are integrated into the report, which is accompanied by a transmittal letter, title page, and references page.</p>
<p><i>Project Presentation (Optional)</i></p>	<p>Teams present the results of their research in a 10-minute PowerPoint presentation to the class. The evaluation of the presentation is included in the final team grade.</p>
<p><i>Performance Review</i></p> <p><i>Project folder</i></p> <p><i>Preparation and Assembly</i></p>	<p>Students review their performance in the course and describe their achievement of course objectives in a memo to the instructor.</p> <p>All project work is revised and edited according to professional conventions. Results are published in a professional portfolio including a title page, table of contents, and other organizational aids.</p>

All major team assignments should be reviewed as drafts by the instructor and by other teams as the projects unfold.

## **MANAGING TEAMS**

Working on the project in teams allows the class to simulate an important element of professional writing. Since many businesses and organizations organize workers in teams or groups, it is

important for students to get a sense of the ways that team-developed documents evolve. In W231, teamwork is organized in class to facilitate all aspects of the work.

Each team member should take responsibility for writing specific sections of project documents, ensuring that everyone in the team will not only reach course objectives and develop the necessary skills, but also will do their share of the work. They will also complete evaluation forms (samples provided on the website) about their own work and their team members' work in order to ensure equitable work distribution and fair evaluation.

Keeping in mind that many W231 students are second-semester freshmen, instructors are encouraged to provide close supervision as students learn to work in teams. Students should be supplied with principles for successful collaboration and clear guidelines for managing the project. Textbook chapters on collaborative writing and ancillary readings such as *Group Work and Collaborative Writing* (available on the faculty website) should be assigned prior to team formation. Instructors may choose to quiz students over this material to ensure careful reading.

The following policies and procedures related to teamwork should be listed on the syllabus and considered mandatory.

### **Attendance During the Team Project**

The team's work can be accomplished only if each student commits to attending class regularly, arrives on time, and comes prepared with the assigned work. Inconsistent attendance or preparation may mean the team will need to meet frequently outside of class in order to get caught up. Excessive absences or tardies on the part of individual team members will jeopardize their team membership and project grade.

### **Team Size**

Students should not be permitted to join a team

- If they have not completed the first two projects
- If they have not submitted a preliminary proposal
- If they already have an excessive number of absences or tardies.

Teams will be comprised of 3, 4, or 5 members. Students will choose their own team members with guidance from the instructor. Students who are absent on team-forming day will be assigned to a team at the instructor's discretion. Please see the end of this guide for instructions on how to create and manage groups in Oncourse and to set up group folders in Resources.

### **Text Production and File Management**

Digital tools like track changes and commenting will facilitate collaborative production of text. Teams use Oncourse Resources to store their files and to share drafts between classes. (Use of the team folder in Oncourse Resources is required.) Team members should agree to post their files in their Team Resources Folder prior to the class when the assignment is due to the team or to the instructor.

This way the team's work can proceed even if a member has a last-minute problem that keeps him or her from attending class.

### **Work Distribution**

- Each team member must take responsibility for contributing equally to the team's work. If a student feels he or she has not been delegated a substantive section or task related to each assignment, the instructor should be alerted immediately.
- The team project grade will be based on the quality of the deliverable. Thus, the entire team is responsible for revising, editing, and preparing the project documents for submission. If the team believes that some team members have not effectively prepared/revised their parts of the work, they should consult their instructor about how to address those concerns long before the project is graded.

### **Use of Class time During the Team Project**

Sufficient class time should be given to teams to negotiate tasks and to plan their work. Most instructors devote a significant portion of one class meeting each week to teamwork. Class time in the computer room should not be used for composing individual work, as that is to be done outside of class. Instead, team time should be devoted to team discussion and decision-making, assimilating written work, revising and editing finished documents, and making the writing stylistically consistent. Team time should also be used to check on progress and to delegate tasks – to decide what needs to be done by each team member outside of class in preparation for the next class. If they use their class time wisely and communicate regularly on Oncourse, they should seldom need to meet outside of class.

### **Other Expectations for Teams**

1. Each team must develop its own procedures to facilitate their interaction; e.g., deciding how they will communicate with each other about absences and other issues and how they will handle conflict. (Instructors may opt to require a written Policies and Procedures Statement.)
2. Agenda-setting and email recaps for each class meeting should be part of the team's routine.
3. Teams should document individual members' contributions to the project by recording tasks delegated and completed on a team assignments record.
4. Teams are expected to use the strategies discussed in the *Group Work and Collaborative Writing* handbook to help them form a cohesive team and work together effectively.
5. Teams should make every effort to resolve conflicts through discussion before involving the instructor. However, if the conflict surpasses normal group debate and begins to significantly impede the team's ability to complete the work, teams need to consult the instructor.
6. At various times during the project, the instructor may require teams to send a brief progress report or to reassess their policies, procedures, and collaboration process. Any team issues or concerns should be addressed at that time. In these communications, teams may be asked to document which member(s) composed each section of each document completed up until that point in the project.

7. The team evaluation form completed at the end of the semester will help the instructor assess each student's individual contributions to the project. In some cases, a team member's project grade may be adjusted based on team member evaluations and the instructor's observations.

### **Instructional strategies**

- To prepare students for working in teams, devote part of an early class session to a discussion of students' previous experiences with teams – what are the advantages and disadvantages they have observed? For all the disadvantages, such as students not doing their share of the work, brainstorm ways to counteract the problem. Small group discussions followed by report-outs to the entire class work well for this activity and will open their concerns to discussion.
- After assigning reading on the collaborative writing process (from the text or other sources), lead students in a brainstorming session on how best to manage conflict in teams. Have students keep their notes to use for a subsequent activity after teams are formed in which each team creates a statement of their policies and procedures. They should explain (1) How they are going to communicate outside of class; (2) Where and when they will post assignments so team members have access to them; and (3) How they will handle conflicts among team members, such as disagreements on how to approach an assignment, or a team member who consistently arrives late. (These Policies and Procedures may be assigned as a section of or attachment to the team proposal discussed later in this guide.)
- To help students think about possible problems they might encounter, a class activity called "Scenarios for Teams" is available on the website.

### **Team-Forming Day**

Prior to the class in which teams are formed, have students review all the topic proposals (described later in this guide) created by their classmates on Oncourse as a basis for deciding which topics they are interested in and which best fit the criteria.

Research shows that ideally, teams should have no less than four and no more than five members. Team work must proceed even when one or two members are absent, so smaller groups don't work well for this project. Larger groups (more than 5) may take too much time negotiating all the work. Large groups might also make it too easy for passive or unmotivated students to stay in the background and not make substantive contributions to the team's discussions and work.

One option for forming teams is to have students form a circle and give brief overviews of their proposals. The rest of the class should evaluate how well the proposed topics meet the project criteria, perhaps referring to a topic criteria checklist as they listen to the overviews. Following the topic overviews, students can mingle, asking questions of students whose projects interest them. Another option is to allow students to choose team members first, then select the best topic from those proposed by group members.

## Project Topic Criteria

The success of the team rests in large part on the selection of an appropriate topic. Because many students have no experience with applied research, teachers should work closely with them, guiding them through the process of evaluating their topic ideas. For example, students often need help making the distinction between “problems” and “issues.” It may be helpful to explain that *solving problems* means deciding what action will change the situation for the best, whereas *resolving issues* means deciding what belief or viewpoint is the most reasonable. In addition, students need to understand the emphasis on applied research and follow strict criteria to guide their choices about topic, purpose, and audience. At least one student on the team *must* have a personal connection to the organization where the problem is occurring. Without firsthand knowledge of the situation, teams will struggle to understand how to proceed with investigating possible solutions.

## Sample Project Topics

The following topics were successfully researched by previous W231 students:

1. How can participation in the Pre-allied Health Student Organization be increased?
2. What ways can safety standards for handling hazardous wastes be improved at IUPUI labs?
3. Which computer program would best fit the needs of the California Closet Company?
4. How can communication between shifts be improved at Target?
5. What are the best ways to effectively use temporary employees at Home Hospital?
6. How can we upgrade the information system at Community Hospital?
7. How can shoplifting be reduced at MegaMart?
8. How can internship opportunities be expanded for journalism students at IUPUI?
9. What ways can we raise the level of customer service at Miller Lawn Care?
10. How can employee turnover be reduced at Peggy’s Beauty Supply?
11. How can the academic mentoring program at IUPUI be improved?
12. How can our parents’ support group expand the services available locally for parents of physically challenged children?

Students may select their organization before identifying a problem suitable for W231 by interviewing someone in authority at that organization, or they may opt to identify a topic in which they are interested, and then find a local organization experiencing that problem.

Students should ensure their topic ideas meet the following criteria:

### Criteria for the Problem

The problem must be ...

***A single, significant problem.*** Students may need to narrow their initial choices from a broad scope (employee turnover, for example) to a manageable one (employee turnover among entry-level employees at a local shipping company’s warehouse, for example).

***Significant enough to warrant extensive research and open to multiple solutions.*** For example, while the need to replace four-way stop signs with a traffic signal at a given intersection is a

legitimate, localized problem, solving it requires primarily documentation of need and discovery of existing policies and procedures, rather than analysis and thoughtful decision-making.

***An organizational problem, not a social problem or issue.*** Students should not choose issues such as health care, welfare, abortion, euthanasia, gun control, capital punishment, etc. Their purpose is not to explore or to make a claim about a social issue; their purpose is to find solutions to a problem or ways to improve an untenable situation occurring at a local business or organization.

***Local, not global.*** The problem may exist at similar organizations or businesses, as their research will show; however, the project should focus on only the local situation.)

***Narrow, not broad.*** The topic should be narrow enough that it can be adequately addressed in the time allotted for the project and in the assigned length of the documents.

***Organization-centered, not "me-centered."*** Their problems should not originate in a complaint against the student's company or organization. The goal is to improve a situation for the organization, and the target audience must not only agree that the problem exists, but also approve the research.

***Challenging, not impossible.*** Problems for which funding, space, and other resources are major factors cannot be easily addressed, even by the organization's leadership, so they prove to be beyond the scope of this assignment. Therefore, feasibility should be considered. For example, upon learning of the team project, some students immediately think of "parking at IUPUI." However, space and financial considerations are the key to improving campus parking. In addition, it is unlikely that a group of second-year students can identify solutions not already under consideration – or rejected – by the university.

***One for which both primary and secondary sources are accessible and available.*** Access to primary sources, including the local organization targeted by the project, is essential. First, the team must be able to arrange a face-to-face interview with the designated audience or a suitable representative within the organization. Later, students must be able to gain permission to conduct primary research on site if they decide that is the best approach for their project. Some restrictions apply to primary research methods that may affect topic choice. (See the section on primary research.)

### **Criteria for the Target Audience**

***An individual, or at the most, a small group of individuals (e.g., a board of directors).*** The target audience must be identified by name. Indicating that the audience consists of residents of X neighborhood, employees, retirees, teachers, parents, or similar classifications is not sufficiently specific. Although there are probably many people who will benefit if the problem is solved, they are the secondary audience, not the primary (target) audience.

Students often need the instructor's help to more narrowly define their target audience; for example, a proposal which initially targets "educators" could be altered to target the parent-teacher organization of a particular local school, a change that may enable the team to work with a topic of interest but one that will alter the rhetorical situation significantly.

**A stakeholder.** The target audience must have a legitimate interest in improving the situation. The purpose is not to complain *to* the target audience but to suggest solutions *for* them.

**A decision-maker, someone with authority.** The target audience must be capable of taking action on the problem -- someone who has the authority to make a decision based on the recommendations the team will offer once all the research is complete.

**Accessible.** The target audience (or a suitable representative) must be available for a face-to-face interview, approve the team's approach to the project, and cooperate with the research. As mentioned earlier, at least one student on the team should have an established connection to the business or organization. (Instructors should ask for confirmation of the personal connection in the proposal.)

### **Criteria for the Research Question**

**Open-ended:** Questions for applied research projects usually begin with a phrase such as "How can...?" or "What are the ways ....?" The question should elicit a variety of workable solutions, not just a yes or no answer, simple piece of information, or other closed-end response.

**Dependent on primary research:** The problem should rely heavily on primary research for a solution; if students could get the answer solely from library research, it is inappropriate for this assignment.

### **Instructional strategies to help students understand the nature of applied research:**

- After discussing the topic criteria, write sample topics on index cards, and give one card to each group. Make sure some of the topics are unsatisfactory, such as social issues, complaints against employers, broad, global problems. Have the group deliberate on whether the topic would be appropriate for W231, and report out with their reasons.
- Before students compose their proposals, provide an example of a moderately ineffective topic proposal. Ask students whether the proposed topic is workable for W231, identifying its strengths and weaknesses and explaining whether it could be "tweaked" to meet the criteria.
- Give students sample topics from previous semesters and ask them to create research questions for those topics. Then have them determine the position of the person might have served as the target audience for that project. (For example, a project about increasing parental involvement in an elementary school may have targeted the president of the parent-teacher organization or the school principal.) Next, have them talk about what kind of primary research the team may have done, and explain their rationale.

**Instructional strategies to help them choose their own topics:**

- Have students brainstorm a list of all the organizations with which they are affiliated, noting any problems occurring within them. Then they can work in groups to match the topics to the project criteria.
- Although it is important that students have a personal connection to the target audience, students who are not associated with any organizations or businesses can be encouraged to consult the *Community Resources Handbook (The Rainbow Book)*, located at the Reference Desk in University Library, to find a local community organization they can contact to identify a problem they could address in their topic proposal (e.g., volunteer recruitment). The last print version available was published in 2007. However, it has been replaced by the [Central Indiana Human Services Database](#), which is hosted by the Indianapolis-Marion County Public Library, and is available at <http://www.imcpl.org/cgi-bin/irntop.pl>.
- Students can consult a [list of campus organizations](http://life.iupui.edu/osi/student-orgs/) (<http://life.iupui.edu/osi/student-orgs/>), or stop by the Office of Student Involvement in the Campus Center, Suite 370, and consider targeting a student organization related to their major or other interest area. For example, most campus organizations are continually seeking new members and/or new funding sources.
- Use the following chart shows the ways in which students may identify a suitable topic for the project, as well as the benefits and challenges of each approach.

**Figure 4 Problem Selection**

**Source: Susanmarie Harrington**

Means of Finding a Topic	Benefits	Challenges
Student has good connection to an organization and is already aware of a problem that needs solving. <i>Example:</i> student volunteers at her church’s children’s program and is aware of a need to recruit additional volunteer teachers and to provide better support for current volunteer teachers.	Student has good access to organization and is familiar with the organization’s hierarchy, mission, and decision-making patterns.	Student (or the organization) may have a preconceived notion of “the solution” to the problem, which can short-circuit research.
Student has a solid tie to an organization, but isn’t aware of ongoing organizational needs. <i>Example:</i> A student is the parent of a Cub Scout, or a student works in a small business. In either case, the organization seems to be working smoothly and leaders/workers and den members/clients are seemingly happy.	Student has good access to organization and is familiar with the organization’s hierarchy and mission; may be familiar with decision-making patterns, but not involved with the process.	Early interviews with someone in the organization may help identify a topic, but student can confuse this interview with the target audience interview required <i>after</i> the proposal. It’s important to help the student separate the two functions.
Student is aware of a problem in some bureaucracy or organization she deals	Student may understand the reasons the situation	Student may need help seeing the <i>organizational</i> issue,

<p>with, but is not a member of the organization. <i>Example:</i> A student is irritated at conflicting information given him by advisors in his major department, or a student is tired of long waits to see an advisor.</p>	<p>needs improvement, but only from a user's point of view.</p>	<p>rather than the <i>personal</i> issue, at stake. Student will likely have problems understanding the problem from the target audience's point of view.</p>
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### Preliminary Topic Proposal

Each student must go through the process of writing a memo to the class, proposing a potential problem that would be suitable for this project, identifying the target audience who will act on their recommendations, and (3) suggesting methods to gather information. Although the project will be conducted in teams, each student must identify an actual problem that might be addressed with research. The purpose of the preliminary memo is to create a pool of ideas from which the class will draw to form teams and plan their work. It is also important that each student have a clear understanding of the nature of the project they are about to undertake. The preliminary proposal should take the form of a memo with a specific, descriptive subject line so various topics can be easily identified in the Oncourse Messages Inbox. Students email their memo to the class in Oncourse, where students review all of them prior to the class in which they are presented orally.

Like all memos, the proposal should have an accurate and interesting subject line, an introduction that previews the memo's content, and a clear sense of audience and purpose. The preliminary proposal includes the following sections:

**Problem Statement:** Proposal writers should define the problem they wish to investigate and explain its significance. The causes of the problem (if known) should be described as well as its potential impact on the organization or business where it is occurring.

**Scope:** Students should also describe the scope of the study, since undoubtedly there will be many aspects of the problem outside the scope of the report due to time constraints and the length of the assigned documents. They should also include the research question their project will attempt to answer, stated as a "How can ...?" or "What are the ways...." type of question. Provide sample research questions for students so they can see how to narrow their focus and phrase their question.

**Personal Connections:** Students should explain their primary tie to the organization and problem.

**Research Objectives, Methods, Examples of Sources:** The reader should be convinced that the writer has a good understanding of the proposed project. Therefore, in this section writers explain their research procedures (methodology) in two parts. First, they address secondary (library) research: What kinds of information are needed to understand the problem better? What databases might be explored? What key words will work as search terms? What types of sources might be looked for (e.g., academic journals, trade journals, newspaper articles, etc.)?

In this section, some instructors also require students to provide evidence of preliminary research, listing citations of a few sources to demonstrate the availability of relevant, credible, authoritative secondary sources.

**Conclusion:** Students discuss any concerns they would like the class to address in response to their proposal, then conclude the memo.

**Assessment:** Although you should give students feedback on their topic ideas before they compose their proposals, you may choose not to respond to rough drafts of preliminary proposals. However, show students the importance of the proposal by assigning it a percentage of the course grade. Make it clear that students may not join a team if they have not contributed a project idea. You might even tell students that their preliminary proposal is their “ticket” to class on the day teams are formed.

After teams form, and before they leave that class session, they should complete and submit a brief compliance checklist so you can authorize them to proceed with their team proposals. The form should list their team members’ names and a team name so groups can be formed on Oncourse, along with folders in the Resources tool.

To facilitate teamwork, require students to post all individual work in their team’s folder on Oncourse prior to the class it is due. This ensures that the team’s work can continue even if an individual team member must miss class. Students should routinely save all their course files in an Oncourse Resources folder. This eliminates those common crises involving lost or damaged flash drives. (See the appendix for help.)

## **Team Proposal**

### **Objectives:**

- To reach agreement on precise problem definition and focus of the proposed project
- To revise and edit preliminary proposal of student whose topic was selected
- To assess team strengths and weakness
- To develop team planning skills
- To receive instructor approval to proceed with the project

After teams have been formed and they have chosen a project focus, they describe their topic and request instructor authorization to proceed. The team proposal shows the instructor that the team has made a thoughtful decision about the focus for their work.

Like all memos, the team proposal memo should have an accurate and interesting subject line, an introduction that previews the memo, and a clear sense of audience and purpose. The team will work together to revise and add to the preliminary proposal of the team member whose project the team selected.

Students should be asked to do the following:

1. Revise the introduction so it is clear that this is a team proposal, not a preliminary proposal. **After describing the problem the project will address**, explain why the team chose this project over the other available topics. The team proposal should show that the team a thoughtful decision about the project topic.
2. **Revise** the body of the memo, **keeping** the sections already there, and adding any that were missing.
3. Address all concerns noted on the original draft, being especially careful to address areas where the preliminary proposal did not meet the criteria or did not clearly explain how the project meets the criteria. For example, the preliminary proposal may not have clearly defined the problem; it may have neglected to name the target audience; or it may have failed to mention the possible type(s) of primary research that might be appropriate.
4. **Add** to the proposal the following two sections:

**(1) Group strengths and weaknesses:** Every group has strengths and weaknesses, and the key to successful teamwork is to be aware of what they are. That way they can work around the limitations and maximize the strengths. Although they have just started working together, they can get acquainted by sharing and assessing the strengths and weaknesses of their team. In this section, they will describe their team members' talents, skills, past writing and research experiences, past team experiences, technological expertise, etc. They can also describe any limitations or areas in which the team may be lacking or anticipate needing need extra help.

**(2) Policies and procedures: In this section, or in an attached statement, the team will describe the following:**

- How the team will keep track of deadlines and who's doing what.
- What specific strategies from *Group Work and Collaborative Writing* the team will incorporate to help them meet challenges or overcome conflict.
- Whether the team plans to appoint a coordinator or co-coordinators for each phase of the project? For the entire project?
- What strategies the team will use to discourage groupthink, and how they will work together to insure that everyone's voice is heard.
- How they will handle issues such as excessive absenteeism, chronic tardiness, late or missing work from team members, etc.
- How they will decide if and when to involve the instructor in resolving problems.
- Teams are required to post their drafts on Oncourse in their Group Space prior to class. What other procedures will they follow to ensure that the work is completed and available to the team?

**Closing:** The memo might close with any questions they have for their instructor as they begin the project.

## Target Audience Interview

### Objectives:

- To learn objectivity in interviewing
- To design questions relevant to the previously defined project purpose
- To develop meaningful questions based on the practical, unique circumstances of the local organization's situation

### Formal writing tasks: Interview Guide and Interview Summary

Students need to do some preliminary investigation to ensure that their selected target audience agrees the problem is in fact a problem for the organization or business. They also need to make sure that the person they envision as a decision-maker within the organization does indeed have the authority to act on the recommendations to be proposed at the end of the project. With that established, team representatives interview their target audience to gather background information about the problem as it is occurring at the local organization.

To prepare for the interview, the team creates an interview guide listing questions designed to solicit background information about the organization's priorities, limitations, past experiences, as well as specific data related to the problem. For example, if their topic is employee turnover, students will want to find out how many employees have left the business in a stated time period; their reasons, if known, for leaving; and the cost of training new employees. Students will need help designing interview questions which solicit the needed information, including the history of the problem; current strategies or plans for addressing the problem; concerns such as politics and budgets that affect the decision-making process or limit the possible solutions to the problem; and kinds of information the target audience needs that could be gathered through library or primary research.

Conducting this interview early in the project reinforces the applied nature of the project, insures that the team has the cooperation of the target audience, and helps students define their research project's purpose. Ultimately, they may choose to narrow, refine, or refocus their research question as a result of this interview. Some teams might prefer to do some reading in the field before conducting the interview. This allows them to become more knowledgeable about their topics and to create effective interview questions. Faculty may choose at which point to assign the interview, or may opt to let students make that decision based on their particular situation.

Teams should ask their target audience to complete a brief letter or form, acknowledging their work on the project and authorizing primary research. Following the interview, students email the instructor a brief summary of the interview and send a thank-you letter to the interviewee.

## **Instructional Strategies**

- Have students write an audience analysis of the interviewee and his or her organization and use it as a starting point to identify issues to explore during the interview. (The “Organizational Profile” handout on the faculty website will guide students through this process.)
- Ask teams to exchange drafts of interview questions and evaluate them based on issues of ethics, relevance, sequence, and style.
- Caution students against asking the target audience how to solve the problem. Remind them that if the target audience knew the solution to the problem, their research project would be unnecessary.

## **SECONDARY RESEARCH**

### **Objectives:**

- To lead students through the steps of information retrieval through library research.
- To acquaint students with source evaluation strategies.
- To teach critical reading and summarizing of literature.
- To teach APA documentation style.

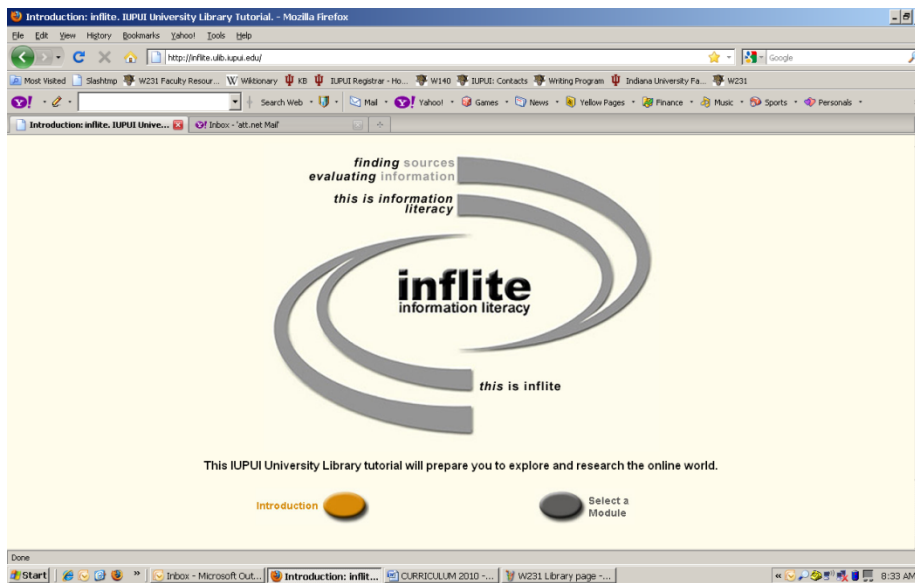
### **Formal Writing Tasks:** Annotated Bibliography and Literature Review

During the secondary research phase of the project, students explore their topic on a global level to see what other organizations have done to address the problem. Teams with a clear understanding of how sources will be used in the project, and with narrowly defined research questions, are ready to conduct library research using a variety of University Library databases. As students locate their sources, critical reading is guided by the research question initially formulated as well as new questions that arise in the course of the research. Teams use their questions to ascertain where additional information is needed and to determine when the research process is complete.

### **Library Instruction**

Class activities on collecting, evaluating, integrating, synthesizing, and documenting sources will be invaluable to students as they undertake the comprehensive task of secondary research. During this part of the course, instructors may wish to emphasize the academic as well as nonacademic applications of the course work.

Figure 5 *Inflite* Tutorials on Information Literacy



Students will need supplementary instruction and guidance to complete their library research successfully. With library technology making vast and diverse quantities of information accessible, students need instruction in planning a research strategy as well as in the mechanical skills of using electronic and traditional library resources, and in analyzing and evaluating

their secondary sources. Students can be introduced to the basics of library research through the [Inflite](http://inflite.ulib.iupui.edu/) library tutorials, shown in Figure 6 above (<http://inflite.ulib.iupui.edu/>).

### Sessions with a Librarian

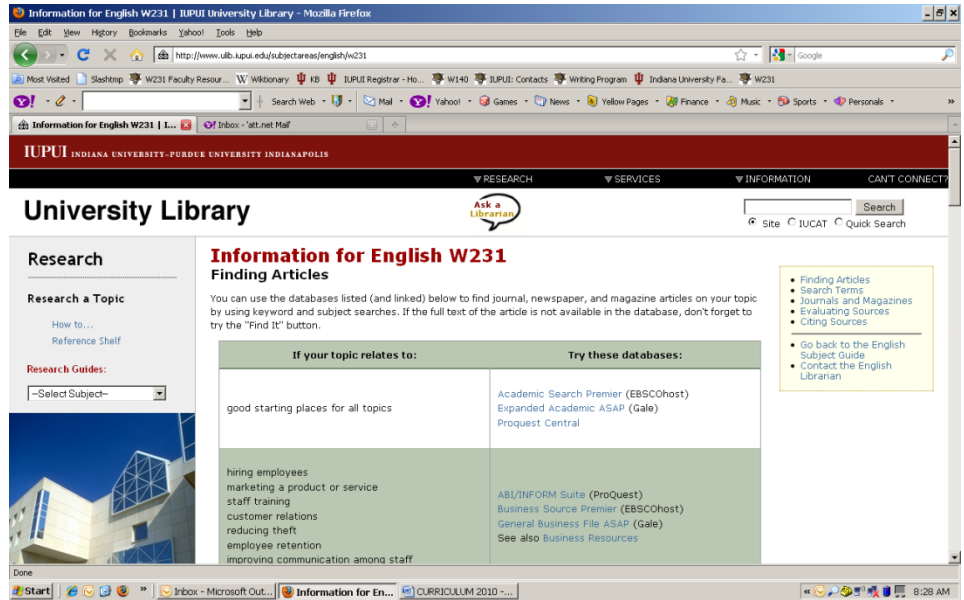
Most instructors invite the department's library liaison to introduce the students to research skills in a library instructional session that is customized for W231. The current library liaison for W231 is **Jaena Hollingsworth** ([hollingj@iupui.edu](mailto:hollingj@iupui.edu)). Sessions should be scheduled in advance, ideally during syllabus preparation, to occur during a regular class period, either at University Library or in the computer classroom in Cavanaugh Hall. During the session, students can begin researching as the instructor and librarian monitor process and progress. Jaena also encourages faculty to add her to their Oncourse sites, where she can adapt the "library resources" tab to include relevant databases. In addition, students will find it easier to contact her via Oncourse Messages when they have questions.

Instructors should encourage teams to determine their research question prior to the class in which they will be introduced to library research strategies. When teams come to the class on library research with an approved topic and research question, the session is more meaningful to them, as they see connections between the information presented and their own research plan.

Faculty may also wish to schedule a subsequent class meeting in the library. A conference room can be reserved in advance, where teachers can station themselves to be available for advising students as they conduct library research. Team meeting rooms are also available in the library, and may be reserved by visiting a link on the library's website at <https://rooms.ulib.iupui.edu/>

## Library Research Tips

Encourage students to seek a wide variety of recently published articles from academic journals, trade journals, professional journals, or other periodicals. The library website called “[Information for W231](#)” offers research strategies specifically aimed at helping W231 students begin their research, such as which databases to use depending on their topics, how to use search terms, how to differentiate scholarly periodicals from popular magazines, and how to evaluate and cite sources. ([www.ulib.iupui.edu/subjectareas/english/w231](http://www.ulib.iupui.edu/subjectareas/english/w231)).



Since most students will not know the names of relevant journals, they should begin their search using “[Find Articles and More](#)” on the [library's home page](#). They can use “Find it!” to see if our library has sources that are unavailable in linked full text. Searching IUCAT, the library catalog, with the title of the article is the most common error student researchers make. (Users must search IUCAT for journal articles using the title of the *journal*, not the title of the *article*.)

## The Open Internet vs. Library Sources

Many students need help to understand why they should not simply use Google to find information, so teachers should explain why the open Internet is not advised for scholarly research. First, the expectation in most college classes is that students will obtain high quality print or electronic resources using library databases that are not accessible on the Open Internet. University Library has a large collection of information on a variety of carefully selected and organized topics.

These additional points will help convince students why we require library research (as opposed to “Googling” in W231:

- When people say “Web,” they mean the Open Internet – the part that anyone connected to the Internet can view. Most search engines (like Google) scan only the Open Internet. Since most search engines don't scan all Web pages, students could miss valuable information found in private databases.
- The open Internet does not provide access to published materials; publishing costs money, and publishers don't give their materials away for free on the Internet.

- Most information on the Web does not go through a review process. Anyone can publish on the Web without passing the content through an editor. Pages might be written by an expert on the topic, a journalist, a disgruntled consumer, or even a child.
- Some information on the Web is not free. Many Web pages are free to view, but some commercial sites will charge a fee to access their information.
- Information on the Web is not organized. Some directory services, like Yahoo, provide links to sites in subject lists. However, there are too many Web pages for any single directory service to organize.
- Most information on the Web is not comprehensive. Rarely will researchers be able to use a search engine on the Web to collect information from earlier decades and different types of sources.
- Most information on the Web is not permanent. Some well-maintained sites are updated with very current information, but other sites may become quickly dated or disappear altogether without much of a notice.

Advise students to ensure the quality of their secondary research:

- They should look mainly for recently published scholarly works, such as academic journals and trade journals, rather than popular magazines. (They often need help to understand the difference.)
- They should seek articles that provide solutions, not which simply confirm the existence of the problem. For example, a newspaper article that reports on the problem without suggesting how to solve it may not be very helpful.
- They should not select several articles from the same publication. They are expected to gather information from various sources representing various points of view. Although students may consult a dictionary, Wikipedia, or other general references, those should not be listed as sources.
- They should not focus their research on the mission of their target organization. The organization as audience will not need that information; its members already know why the organization exists. Background information as it relates to the problem under investigation is relevant, and causes and effects of the problem should be examined, but the main focus should be *how to solve the problem*.
- They should avoid using sources published *by* the organization or business targeted in their project. Organizational pamphlets or documents are usually considered primary, not secondary, and are inappropriate for the secondary research phase of the project. (Students who lose awareness of their audience during library research may think they have solved their research problems by gathering several print publications or websites written by or about their organization.)
- If students find a source that is "just what they're looking for," they can identify the descriptors or subject headings in the abstract and plug those new terms into the database search. They should also look at the article's reference page to find the key sources the author used and try to locate those in our library through IUCAT.

If students come up with too many hits while searching an electronic database index, they can narrow the search field by trying one or more of the following strategies:

- Narrow the topic.
- Use the index of the database to identify and redefine search terms.
- Use the thesaurus feature of the database (an official list of all subject headings) to find better search terms.
- Use *AND* to narrow the search. (*OR* can be used to enlarge the search.)
- Limit the search to only those articles written in English.
- Determine if the database has a literature review on the topic.

If they are experiencing difficulties finding sources, suggest they try the philanthropy, the medical, or law libraries if appropriate. The Philanthropy library, located in University Library, has many sources for topics related to fund raising, volunteerism, and not-for-profit organizations.

### **Evaluating Sources**

Instructors should also discuss strategies for evaluating the information they gather by asking the same questions a skeptical reader would ask:

- Is it accurate?
- Is it complete?
- Is it up-to-date?
- Is it unbiased?
- Is it supported by evidence my readers will find compelling?
- Does it conflict with other evidence?
- Is it clearly relevant to my readers' situation?

### **Dividing the Work of Conducting Secondary Research**

Each team member should locate at least three or four reliable, recently published articles from credible business or trade journals. Team members consult each other as they conduct their research to make sure the team searches a variety of appropriate databases and gathers sufficient information to address the research question.

Teams work together to decide what pieces of information from which articles to include in their project. Although they will explore causes and effects, to fulfill the purpose of the research project, they should focus mainly on the strategies and solutions the authors suggest, focusing on what other organizations have done to address the problem. The team evaluates the articles they collect, and narrows the collection to the best 10 – 12 articles. This is a good time to remind students that although all members of the team will receive the grade awarded to the project, an individual team member's grades may be lowered if the instructor has sufficient credible evidence that he or she failed to meet his or her obligations to the team. After the team has gathered and read all the articles they plan to use, they need to:

- Create an annotated bibliography.
- Re-read the articles, identifying and categorizing the key questions/issues the authors address. Sort the information using these categories. The best way to do this is to construct a grid of common points. This grid lists the subtopics students have identified and then briefly describes how each of the sources responds to this issue. (See the website for an example.)

### **Annotated Bibliography**

The annotated bibliography is a formal, comprehensive record of the sources gathered. It becomes a valuable tool, listing APA citations of the articles and a brief summary of each. Based on the annotated bibliography, the instructor can assess whether the teams have collected relevant, credible sources, and whether they are ready to draft their literature reviews.

Each student composes an annotated bibliography (in APA format) listing the sources he or she contributed. Each source is annotated with a brief summary (descriptive abstract) and a statement of relevance and potential application of the content to the local problem under investigation. In the summary, the student should do the following:

- explain what the article covers
- briefly summarize key points
- establish the credibility of the author
- explain the work's primary purpose
- compare this work with others when appropriate

The statement of relevance should conclude the summary by explaining how the article is related to the research topic and why it is valuable for the team project. The statement of relevance should note specific information found in the article that may prove useful in determining solutions to the problem.

The following list of “do’s and don’ts” should be covered in class and included on the assignment sheet:

- DON’T plagiarize abstracts or annotations from the database description of your articles. Write your own, customizing them to your specific research problem.
- DON’T copy the citation, assuming it is APA. Use your handbook, a University Writing Center APA handout, or web resources to cite the source in correct APA. Points will be deducted for APA errors.
- DO write in complete sentences, not fragments like “Discusses budgets for nonprofit organizations.”
- DON’T attempt to write a complete summary of the source; just *explain what it contains* – describe what it covers, then explain why this source is relevant to your project. (Statement of relevance.)

- DON'T include your audience interview as one of your sources on the annotated bib or on the reference page of your upcoming literature review. The annotated bibliography lists only your library sources.
- DON' number the entries.
- DON'T begin each paragraph with "This article talks about..." – articles can't talk. Just begin with the author's name or introduce the topic of the article in other ways, as in the example above.
- DO give the author's position or job title if at all possible. Check the database abstract or end of the article to find out this information.
- DO put the annotations in alphabetical order according to the author's last name when your team compiles the annotations of your selected articles to create your team annotated bibliography. If there is no author, use the first important word of the title.
- DO include copies of the articles when you submit your draft for feedback.

Instructor feedback will indicate if they are on the right track with their research, or whether they should narrow their topics, find different kinds of sources, or in some other way modify their approach. Teachers have the option of grading individual annotated bibliographies prior to the submission of the team's compiled annotated bibliography.

### **Team Annotated Bibliography**

From the 15–20 articles gathered by the team, the team chooses 10 – 12 of the most relevant articles, and creates the team annotated bibliography – one document that includes the individually-written citations and annotations for the selected sources. Teams can save their annotated bibliography with a new file name (annotations deleted) to create their references page for the upcoming recommendation report (which should include only the works referenced in the report.)

### **Teaching APA style**

It is essential to provide thorough instruction in APA style. Several of the programs that require W231 use APA (e.g., Tourism, Convention, and Event Management, Social Work, and Psychology), and they expect students completing W231 to know how to integrate sources smoothly and accurately according to APA, with in-text citations and a references page. The University Writing Center has a good [APA handout](#) available on their handouts page at <http://www.iupui.edu/~uwc/pdf/APA%20Documentation%206th%20Edition.pdf> Purdue's Online Writing Lab also has helpful [APA resources](#) at <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/01/>.

### **Instructional Strategies:**

- Provide a model of an annotated bibliography since that format will be unfamiliar to most students.
- Use a short sample article in class to practice reading for main points and writing summarizing statements.

- Have students bring highlighters to class along with a copy of one of their articles. Guide them through highlighting main points and drafting one complete entry for their annotated bibliography.
- Ask teams to create a citation for one of their sources on the board and present it to the class for critique.
- Provide a references page or section of a report with APA errors and ask them to correct it, perhaps rewarding the team who catches the most errors.

## **Literature Review**

Students examine the current state of the literature on their topic in a comprehensive analysis to identify strategies used by other organizations to address the problem.

### **Objectives:**

- To identify and analyze issues raised in the literature
- To establish relationships among secondary sources
- To identify similarities and differences between secondary research contexts, events, and issues
- To form explicitly stated conclusions
- To review summary, quotation, and paraphrase
- To review organizing long reports; synthesis
- To use transitions to show relationships and connections
- To review purpose and form of APA documentation

Defining the problem is an important step before arriving at solutions. Therefore, students survey the literature to see how other organizations have perceived the factors related to the problem, as well as what strategies they recommend to address it. The literature review reinforces and builds on the skills students developed in W131, such as critical reading, analysis, synthesis, organization, and evaluation and integration of sources.

The literature review is a major step in the project not only helps the student researchers to include all relevant variables in the project, it also provides a good framework to proceed further with the investigation as it helps teams focus the primary research more meaningfully on aspects of the problem found to be important in the published studies. A comprehensive review of the literature ensures that no major factors have been ignored that could impact the success of the project. The team's findings will be incorporated in the recommendation report to update the target audience on the recent research in the field and to help support the team's recommendations.

According to Sekaran (1992), a good literature review ensures that:

1. Important variables that are likely to influence the problem situation are not omitted from the study.

2. The problem investigated is perceived by the professional community as relevant and significant.
3. A clearer idea emerges as to what variables would be most important to consider, why they would be considered important, and how they should be investigated to solve the problem. Thus, the literature review prepares the student to conceptualize the primary research.
4. The problem statement can be made with greater precision and clarity.
5. The student does not run the risk of "reinventing the wheel," that is, wasting efforts trying to rediscover something that is already known.
6. The student as researcher is knowledgeable about the problem area and has done the preliminary work necessary to conduct primary research.

### **Dividing the Work of Composing the Literature Review**

To divide the work of composing the literature review, each team member should accept responsibility for drafting one or two sections of the literature review, depending on how many sections are needed to cover the major subtopics the team has identified from analyzing their articles. To draft a section, students should work from one row of the grid, incorporating and contextualizing the material in that row. Section length will vary depending on the amount of material gathered related to the particular idea.

Each row of the grid should be used to create one section of the review to ensure organization of the paper by key points, not by source.

The literature review should be a logical presentation of the research done thus far in the area of investigation. The review should synthesize all relevant information in a cogent and logical manner instead of presenting all the studies in chronological order with bits and pieces of uncoordinated information.<sup>1</sup>

Students who are unfamiliar with the concept of synthesis often organize their literature review like an annotated bibliography. Therefore, as they students use the grid to help them draft the literature review, they need be taught how to illustrate ways in which the sources agree and disagree by providing topic sentences and transitional words and phrases so readers can see those relationships.

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<sup>1</sup> Adapted from Sekaran (1992), *Research Methods for Business: A Skill-Building Approach* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.) New York: John Wiley and Sons.

They must make ample connections among them by illustrating how the sources agree, disagree, and overlap.

Although writers control the synthesis that occurs in a literature review, they must remain objective and unbiased as they analyze and report their findings. The readers of the literature review do not wish to learn what *the student* thinks; they want to learn what the *authors/experts* think. Instead of *commenting* on the sources or *evaluating* their ideas, students should show how the various sources' ideas are related. Writers of a literature review should establish their focus on the literature, beginning with the introduction, and maintain it to the conclusion. Students need to be shown how to use transitional words and phrases that show the connection between the sources. This not only leads readers to see the relationships among the sources, but it also helps students keep their focus on the literature itself (and not on what they *think* about the literature.)

When submitting their literature reviews, students should include a copies of the articles they cited. In order to evaluate the effectiveness of their efforts to quote, paraphrase, summarize, and document sources, some instructors also ask students to highlight passages in the articles that they have incorporated into their papers.

### **Compiling the Literature Review Sections**

After students have revised their individual literature review sections, they should work with their teams to further revise and combine the sections into a coherent review. First, a brief introduction should be added to the literature review that simply states the purpose and describes the scope of the literature review, including the key issues the review will address. This purpose/forecasting statement can be accomplished in just a sentence or two. Using relevant headings in parallel structure, the body should be composed of the individual sections composed by each team member. If these sections have been effectively written, they address each issue one at a time and discuss how the authors of the articles respond to that issue. Each section should open and close with a sentence focused on the literature (topic sentence and concluding sentence.) The ending should do more than briefly summarize what the literature says about the topic overall.

### **Using the Secondary Research Findings in the Recommendation Report**

Later in the project, the team's literature review can either be incorporated into the recommendation report in its entirety, or the findings can be further condensed so that only key factors are highlighted. Material from the secondary research that supports the recommendations should definitely be included in the recommendation report.

### **Instructional Strategies:**

- Guide students through development of a grid of common points to ensure synthesis.
- Have students work in groups to analyze and evaluate a range of sample literature reviews, looking at how well expectations were met in areas of content, format, synthesis, objectivity, and documentation. Provide them with a list of questions to guide their analysis.

- Have teams draft a section of a literature review in class, pointing out the need for topic sentences which maintain focus on the literature. Have them report out by reading aloud or projecting the file.
- Have students complete an audience analysis worksheet to ensure they are directing their report to their target audience. The writer’s checklists in the textbook could serve this purpose.

## **PRIMARY RESEARCH**

During secondary research, students investigated their topics in a broader sense to determine all the key factors addressed in the literature and to see how other organizations have dealt with the problem. Now, during primary research, they will investigate the local situation to help develop workable solutions tailored to their specific organization’s situation. In the primary research phase of their projects, students will continue gathering information to find ways to answer their research question, but instead of using written sources, they will collect data by means of a *quantitative* primary research tool, such as the following:

- survey by questionnaire
- controlled observation
- content analysis of company or organizational data or documents

### **Objectives:**

This phase of the project offers students the opportunity to design and conduct responsible primary research. In addition, students will learn to do the following:

- To consider multiple audiences: readers of the recommendation report as well as those involved in the primary research (e.g., survey respondents).
- To relate the instrument’s content to overall project purpose
- To record, organize, and quantify data
- To analyze and interpret primary research findings

Based on their new knowledge of the problem gained through secondary research, students are led through heuristical processes to make good decisions about methods of conducting primary research – surveys of those affected by the problem, controlled observations, analysis of primary documents containing organizational data, and/or interviews with subject matter experts.

## Responsibilities for Ethical Research

Students are responsible for all information collected as a result of their projects. The following assumptions create a framework within which classroom research should be conducted:

Instructors will supply students with written assignment guidelines regarding research with human subjects. As defined in the Federal Common Rule Policy, "research" is a "systematic investigation designed to develop or contribute to generalizable knowledge," and a "human subject" is "a living individual about whom an investigator (whether professional or student) conducting research obtains data through intervention or interaction with the individual, or identifiable private information. (Office of Research Administration, Non-Research Student Projects).

Class assignments are usually not intended to or likely to lead to generalizable or published results, and, as such are not considered "research" by the Institutional Review Board (IRB). However, students are **not permitted** to involve special populations such as minors, prisoners, and patients, as they are considered vulnerable research subjects. Such projects must be reviewed by the IRB. Obtaining IRB approval to conduct research with at-risk populations is a lengthy process for which we have insufficient time in the semester.

The primary research methods the team chooses should arise directly from the research question guiding the project and the type of information needed. If they need to know how many pre-allied health students at IUPUI might be interested in joining the Pre-Allied Health Student Organization (PAHSO), a survey by questionnaire is a logical choice to collect information from a reasonably large sample of the survey population. On the other hand, if the team wants to explore student attitudes about participation in campus organizations at an urban commuter college, they might meet with a focus group and consider the similarities and differences in the responses, how strongly the opinions are held, etc. In combination, the student might schedule the focus group first, and then use those results to develop a meaningful questionnaire for a survey of students.

In helping students choose their methods wisely and to conduct their research appropriately, we must recognize and share with students a critical point about W231 research: As an introductory course, W231 does not expect the level of research completed in graduate work or professional environments. Sampling techniques, statistical analysis, reliability, validity, and interpretation of findings may not meet the professional requirements or expectations of the field in which the student's project is based. W231 offers an opportunity to practice research skills in a limited way, in order to lay a foundation for later work.

### Selecting a Primary Research Tool

Only one primary research method is required, and it must be quantitative. The method they choose should rise directly from the research question guiding their projects and should elicit the type and

amount of information needed. The main question they should consider is this: Which method will help us make recommendations and offer solutions in our Recommendation Report?

Students may choose from the following methods:

*Survey by Questionnaire.* If the team needs information about a group of people so they can describe them, their actions, or their viewpoints statistically, they should survey a selected sample of the group. Questionnaires are a good choice when researchers need to know "how many." They need to decide what type of information they need, and how to design reliable questions that will collect that information. *Minimum of 25 completed questionnaires.*

*Observation.* If the team wants to observe behavior or activity as it occurs naturally and without interference from the researcher, they should use the observation method. They need to decide what events or activities to observe, and what specific behaviors or actions to assess. In order to record, quantify, and analyze the data, they will prepare an observation form. *Minimum of 4 hours of observation.*

*Content Analysis.* Attending conferences and meetings and analyzing the speeches or presentations is another way to gather information. With permission, students can examine business records, administrative files, annual reports, conference transcripts, or meeting minutes as a way of determining changes, patterns, or other information. In order to record, quantify, and analyze the data, they will prepare an observation form. *Minimum of 20 analyzed documents or files.*

### **Qualitative Research Tools (Optional)**

*Focus Groups.* Teams may opt to meet with a small group of members or employees to learn more about their opinions or actions related to the problem under investigation. Audio recording the group's session is essential to documenting the information.

*Interview with an Expert.* If students choose to interview an expert, they should select someone who has successfully dealt with the problem under investigation. (They should not confuse this interview with their target audience interview.) Students should be reminded that interviews with experts can only be done in conjunction with a quantitative research tool.

Teams must submit drafts of their research tool for instructor approval before proceeding with the research. After revision, they conduct their research, tabulate the data, and submit all completed surveys (or other forms used) as proof of research.

### **Instructional Strategies to Help Students Select a Research Tool**

- Have students answer the following prompts in class:

1. About which strategies recommended in the literature would you like to question your survey respondents? (See chart on the faculty website to use as basis of a class activity.)
  2. What kind of information do you need that your library research did not supply? Factual information? Statistics? Opinions of those affected by the problem? Other?
  3. Where can you get this information? Will it be accurate and reliable? How do you know? Will it be sufficient? Why do you think so?
  4. If you will obtain your data through surveying or observing people, who? How could these people provide answers to your research question?
- Give students a sample questionnaire and critique it in class.
  - Have students visit several websites on survey design and prepare a report to the class on the key factors to consider.
  - In groups, have students look at a list of research questions and decide what possibilities exist for primary research regarding those situations. Then ask students work with each other to come up with ideas for primary research for their own projects.
  - Critique sample questionnaires.
  - Use PowerPoint presentations available on the faculty website related to designing questionnaires and conducting surveys.

## Progress Report

### Objectives:

- To explain rationale for choice of primary research methods; to provide answers to the "who, what, when, where, why, and how" of the selected methods.
- To explain the perceived application of the data to be collected

As soon as teams have selected their primary research method, they update the instructor on their progress with the project. They explain which primary research method they have selected, along with the rationale for their choice—why they think this method will provide sufficient relevant data; how they think the data will be applicable to their research question; who will be surveyed, interviewed, or observed; how they intend to conduct the research; and when they plan to complete it. This update can take the form of a brief email, a more formal written memo, or even a short presentation to the class.

For a formal written progress report, students might be asked to create a one – two page memo in which they update you on their team’s progress. Organizing the memo in a way that works best for the assigned purpose, they should explain the following:

- How they have divided the work; who has completed what tasks
- Who has written which sections of which documents
- How they have handled the revising and editing process

- Whether or not the team has referred to the team's policies and procedures to facilitate their collaborative process
- How well they keeping up with deadlines
- What problems the team has encountered so far, and how they have worked to overcome them (problems collaborating, problems with the assignments, etc.)
- What problems they are still experiencing
- What they wish they had understood better at the beginning of the project, perhaps offering suggestions for next semester
- What concerns them as they prepare to put together the literature review
- Anything else they'd like you to know or questions as they prepare to enter the primary research phase of the project

## **RECOMMENDATION REPORT**

### **Objectives:**

- To analyze and synthesize the research findings
- To define and contextualize the problem for the designated audience
- To interpret primary research findings in light of knowledge and information gathered through secondary research
- To smoothly integrate visuals that enhance understanding of data
- To design a well-supported report based on application of research findings

Explain to the class that once they have finished the literature review and conducted the primary research, they are ready to analyze and interpret the data they have gathered, draw conclusions, decide on what actions to recommend, and complete the remaining sections of the recommendation report.

### **Arriving at Recommendations**

Teams should consider these questions:

- What do we conclude from the research?
- Are other interpretations possible, and do we need to explore them?
- What are the implications for my readers?
- What else must I learn to explore those implications thoroughly?
- What are the implications for the secondary audience, or stakeholders who are not my readers?
- What does this mean my readers should do? What are our recommendations? Will they be convinced they have the information necessary to take the recommended actions?

The recommendation report uses visuals and text to present an analysis of all data collected and to propose solutions to the problem investigated. The report is accompanied by a cover letter or memo

to the target audience, a title page, and may include appropriate appendices, such as a copy of the survey tabulations. Evaluation should be based on the quality of the visuals in addition to the other elements typically evaluated in this type of assignment.

**Rhetorical Situation:** The Recommendation Report is defined as a detailed report that the team submits to a reader or a group of readers who are in a position of authority – the target audience designated at the outset of the project -- and who may endorse or reject the recommendations. Students will present a carefully created, well-supported report, suggesting ways to apply of the research findings to the problem investigated.

Although this document is directed specifically to the decision-maker or person with the authority to act on the suggestions and recommendations, students should envision this document being read by other stakeholders, as well. For example, their target audience may have to take the report further up the organizational ladder for commentary and approval. Similarly, he or she may decide to share it with those below them in the management hierarchy. Therefore, writers must include details about the problem that they discussed with the target audience in the interview at the beginning of the project that other readers would not know. The report should make sense even to readers with no (or very limited) background knowledge on the company or its situation.

Most students' reports are unsolicited; that is, no one asked them to solve the problem. Instead, the problem is usually identified with the target audience's help. Depending on the project's purpose, that audience is waiting for this report to make a decision, to initiate changes, to begin a new program, or to create a policy. The acceptance of the report recommendations, for example, can lead to improved working conditions, a more efficient and economical business, additional jobs or business for a company, or a safer work environment.

Teams should approach writing the report as a problem-solving activity. Their goal is to solve a problem that affects the reader and his or her organization. Everything in the report should relate to the problem.

Students should do the following:

- Regard their audience as a skeptical reader. They should assume the reader will question what they say and will want to see how they arrived at their conclusions and recommendations. They should examine their drafts from the reader's point of view and look for errors, omissions, and inconsistencies.
- Spell out recommendations with hard facts and concrete examples, thus avoiding unsupported generalizations.
- Make sure the recommendations are workable. What they propose should be consistent with the organization and capabilities of the company. It would be foolish to recommend, for example, that a small company (50 employees) triple its workforce to accomplish the proposed suggestions. It should also be financially realistic. Students should be cautioned

against recommending solutions that would be financially infeasible for the target organization to implement.

- Present the report attractively. The report should be carefully edited, inviting, and easy to read, with headings and other visual devices that conform to standard document design principles.

## **Recommendation Report Content**

***Introduction:*** a brief statement of the purpose for writing this report; succinct definition of the problem; explanation of why a specific change is necessary; emphasis on how this report will address that problem. Concrete evidence is cited here to show that the problem is significant and that action needs to be taken; verification of how widespread the problem is or how frequently it occurs supported by specific examples; quantifiable details about the implications or consequences of the problem.

***Methodology:*** all methods used to gather information explained in detail.

***Secondary research findings:*** While some W231 teachers ask students to include the literature review in its entirety with the body of the report, others ask students to summarize only the key findings upon which the recommendations are drawn. In those cases, students can submit the literature review in their supplementary folder.

***Primary research findings:*** interpretation and analysis of the primary research findings. In the primary research analysis section, at least one visual based on a set of significant primary research findings should be included, such as a pie chart or bar graph created in Excel or Microsoft Word.

***Conclusions and recommendations:*** Conclusions drawn from both the primary and secondary research are presented and discussed. This section is used to lead readers inevitably to the recommendations. Every recommendation should be supported by information/evidence provided earlier in this report. Students may choose to present the recommendations in a bulleted list.

***Closing:*** The report ends with a brief paragraph or two in which the seriousness of the problem is reiterated and readers are reminded of the reasons change is needed. The most important benefits of the proposed solutions may be emphasized again.

**Appendices** to the report should include the references page in APA and the tabulation of survey responses.

## Instructional Strategies:

- Provide some sample statistical data for collaborative analysis to enable students to practice interpreting quantified data and identifying some of the common errors and misleading interpretations that can occur when working with statistics.
- Ask students to complete a detailed, written analysis of their designated audience. Using the analysis in collaboration, students discuss implications for the introductory section, organizational choices, style, and tone. Emphasize that the choices will be different for each student based on the rhetorical situation.
- Have students bring their tabulated data to class and work in groups to determine which sets of data are appropriate to represent visually. Next, they determine which type of graphic aid will best represent that set of data. Finally, they decide how and where to use the visual aid in the report.
- Obtain a set of data from a campus organization, such as the admissions office, and design a class activity that leads students through the steps discussed above.
- Remind students that they must persuade readers that their conclusions and resulting recommendations are firmly based on the facts. Point out that their readers must understand:
  - their recommendations – the actions they suggest their target audience should consider
  - their evidence – the facts and data from the research offered in support of the recommendations
  - their line of reasoning – the connections linking the recommendations and the evidence; the reasons readers should agree that the evidence backs up the recommendations.

Readers *must* be able to follow their line of reasoning; therefore, they must discuss *in the report* all information that led to the recommendations. To help them achieve this objective, ask teams to brainstorm a list of recommendations, then to create a table that lists their recommendations in the first column and the data that led to each recommendation in the second column. After they draft the recommendation report, they can add a third column that states *where* in the report the data can be found. The table should ensure that readers will be able to follow their thinking from the findings to the conclusions to the recommendations. Point out that this table is different from the grid they completed for the literature review in that its purpose is to help them make sure their recommendations are supported by the research findings, not to help them organize the content.

## The Oral Presentation

### Objectives:

- To share the results of the research project
- To condense the results of an extensive project into a 10- minute talk
- To design visual aids to supplement the presentation
- To develop skills to write clear, concise PowerPoint slides

Most instructors require teams to do a 10–minute PowerPoint presentation to share the results of their research with the class. These presentations take place the last two or three class meetings before projects are due, perhaps just prior to course evaluations. Students (or instructors) who are inexperienced with PowerPoint can complete an online tutorial at

[http://www.iupui.edu/~webtrain/tutorials/powerpoint2000\\_basics.html](http://www.iupui.edu/~webtrain/tutorials/powerpoint2000_basics.html)

Faculty should provide students with a written evaluation of their presentation based on criteria such as the following:

- Anticipated level of audience’s background knowledge of the topic
- Introduced the topic well to arouse audience interest
- Limited the talk to main points and findings
- Arranged points logically and made connections among them
- Avoided clichés, slang, and jargon
- Designed clear, easy to read visuals
- Ran close to allotted time

Printouts of the PowerPoint slides are included in the team’s final folder and may be assessed as part of the final project or graded separately.

### Instructional Strategies:

- In the computer room, introduce writing for PowerPoint and lead students through a simple exercise to construct a set of PowerPoint slides.
- Show students several PowerPoint presentations given by teams in previous semesters and critique them together.
- Have students analyze their reports to identify the important information they want to include in their presentations, highlighting key phrases and terms that they want to stress. Then have them make an outline for their presentation, including only the major points.
- Do an exercise on parallelism and explain its importance in crafting effective slides.
- Have students practice their presentations on members of their collaborative groups, timing their talks, troubleshooting, and making sure they fall within expected time frames.

## Performance Review (Self-Assessment)

### Objectives:

- To reflect on accomplishments; comparing writing at the beginning of the semester to writing now
- To demonstrate understanding of course goals and key concepts
- To analyze level of achievement of course goals

In a 2 - 3 page memo to the instructor, students review their performance in the course and describe their learning experiences. They might be asked to construct an argument regarding the level at which their writing accomplishes course goals. Some teachers ask questions which prompt students to demonstrate learning of specific concepts; for example, students might be asked to define “review of the literature,” to discuss how it differs from a typical research paper, and to explain where in the recommendation report readers will find examples of effective synthesis of sources.

The performance review is not part of the final project folder, since it contains only team-produced documents. A percentage (usually 5 - 10%) of the course grade is based on this memo.

### Instructional Strategies:

- Ask students to work in groups to define and explain the course goals in their own words; then they examine each writing assignment in relation to the goals. Ask students to draft one paragraph in class that includes the goal itself, the student’s evaluation of degree of achievement, and two or three supporting statements. Suggest that students have thus created their own model for the performance review.
- Have the students complete an affinity diagram. This is an activity in which they work individually to brainstorm all the things that they have learned during the semester and write them on post-it notes. They are asked to stick them randomly on the board. Standing at the board, they look at the items to figure out "categories" for the learning. E.g., communication skills , technology literacy, research skills, and problem solving/higher order thinking skills. Then they match the items to the appropriate category, and when done, all the items should fit into one of the categories. <sup>2</sup>
- Post a series of grammar and style quizzes to the class listserv and have students complete them outside of class.
- Hold an editing workshop in which students highlight stylistic concerns, such as passive voice, wordy sentence constructions, *There are* and *It is* sentence openers, and revise and edit.

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<sup>2</sup> Contributed by Joanna Henning, who mentions to her class that, coincidentally, those are the very skills sought by potential employers.

## Team Applied Research Project Folder

After a series of in-class editing workshops which emphasize the professional standards identified throughout the course, teams should be prepared to assemble a professional-looking folder containing their written project work. The project folder contains only the team-produced documents; individual student work from earlier in the semester is not included. All contents of the folder should be revised and submitted as clean copies of final products. The portfolio is typically worth 25% - 40% of the course grade and should be submitted during the last class meeting of the semester, prior to finals week. (There is no final exam in W231.)

Instructors requiring one team project folder for the semester will ask for all project-related documents to be submitted. Those dividing the project into two phases will ask for only the following to be submitted in the final folder:

1. Cover page for the folder
2. Cover letter directed to the target audience
3. Recommendation Report with title page, table of contents, visuals, and references page
4. Primary research tool with tabulations (usually presented as an appendix to the report.)
5. Print-out of PowerPoint slides
6. Previous drafts with instructor comments and assessment sheets. (Some instructors may ask for these to be submitted in a separate folder, apart from the final deliverables.)

## Determining Course Grades

Grading rubrics for the final team project folder are provided in the appendix and on the W231 website, along with sample assessment sheets for all the major projects. All team members should receive the same grade on the project, unless the instructor has evidence a particular student deserves a higher or lower grade based on their participation on the team. In such cases, the instructor may wish to consult with the course coordinator before making a final grade decision. If Oncourse groups have been formed based on team membership, assessments can be emailed to the entire team at once.

Faculty using the Oncourse grade book can simply enter the team project grades, and assuming grades on earlier individual projects have already been entered, Oncourse will automatically calculate final course grades. This will eliminate the need to send students individual assessment sheets at the end of the semester. Ask teams if you may keep their team project folders to share with future classes. If they do not wish to leave the portfolio for future classroom use, make arrangements to return the project to a team representative.

## Incompletes

In a writing course where due dates may seem distant, students sometimes procrastinate and fall behind. It's important to clarify that incompletes are **not** given to such students. The School of Liberal Arts incomplete policy should be included on the syllabus and pointed out to students early in the semester.

A grade of Incomplete should be awarded only if the work is mostly complete, generally 75 to 80 percent, and of passing quality. A student who needs to retake the entire course is **not** eligible for an incomplete. Neither is a student who has simply fallen behind. Incompletes are appropriate only when exceptional circumstances prevent students from finishing all course requirements by the end of the semester. Exceptional circumstances can include the serious illness of the student, spouse or partner, child, or parent; or a fire or accident that interrupts the end of the semester – circumstances which would cause the student to suffer a hardship if held to the previously established course deadlines.

When deciding whether or not to give an incomplete, the instructor must assess what constitutes three-fourths of the work completed as well as the “unusual circumstances.” In W231, the student should have completed all project work in full participation with her team, through the draft of the recommendation report. The “unusual circumstances” might include serious illness of the student, her spouse, child, or parent; serious accident, fire, or other trauma; or serious emotional upheaval. The instructor in consultation with the course coordinator determines the validity of the circumstances. The instructor also negotiates with the student and her team to ensure that the team is comfortable with the handling of the situation. The course coordinator can help faculty decide whether an incomplete is warranted.

### **Instructor Responsibilities for Giving an Incomplete**

- Give the student an “I” on the official grade report.
- Download the [SLA Incomplete form](#) (PDF). This form is to be printed, filled out by instructor, and signed by both instructor and student. A copy is to be given to the Writing Program secretary and to the School of Liberal Arts - Office of Student Affairs, CA 401. The form asks you to record what work has been finished and what work remains, along with the assignment grades the student has received so far. The above requirements for your course should be stated on the form, plus any other work or conditions you wish to see met.
- Choose a realistic date for completion of the work. You may offer a student up to one year to finish the course, but you are under no obligation to do so. Usually an earlier deadline is appropriate.
- Plan to work with the student while he or she is completing the course requirements.
- You must give the student a reliable means of contacting you, which may mean giving a home phone number or address (especially if you will not be returning to IUPUI).
- You are responsible for the grade even if you leave IUPUI.

### **Removal of Incomplete**

In order to award the grade you will need to submit a [Removal of Incomplete](#) form.

If the work has not been completed and a grade assigned within a year from the end of the semester in which the Incomplete was awarded, the Office of the Registrar will automatically change the grade to an F. Both the student and the faculty member will receive notification that this change is pending and should take steps immediately to resolve the Incomplete.

In rare cases at the end of the initial one year period, the student may ask the instructor to extend the Incomplete for an additional fixed period of time. If the instructor agrees, he or she should submit a grade of IX on the Removal of Incomplete form. This action will block the automatic change to F after one year.

In rare cases, faculty may opt to recommend or require students to attend another term of the course (or a portion thereof) in order to remove the Incomplete. In such cases, students should NOT re-enroll in the course. Instead, the student should make the necessary arrangements with the original instructor to sit in on the required class sessions. At the end of the term, the instructor would file the Removal of Incomplete with the Office of the Registrar. A student who is required to attend the course in a subsequent semester should understand that sitting in on the course or otherwise making up the Incomplete does not count as part of the student's [full-time or part-time](#) load for financial aid purposes or for loan deferments.

In some cases, after receiving an Incomplete, the student may wish to withdraw from the course. This requires the signatures of the instructor and the student's dean on a Removal of Incomplete form. Please note that the Writing Program Handbook (2010) contains information regarding other policies involving teaching.

## USING ONCOURSE RESOURCES TO FACILITATE GROUP WORK

Groups are subsets of participants for a given Oncourse worksite. They are created to facilitate the work of the W231 project teams. You can use groups with the following Oncourse tools:

- **Messages:** Send private messages to the teams.
- **Resources:** Allow specific access to files and folders for each team.
- **Site Setup:** Manage your teams.

**Accessing groups.** You can access groups with the Site Setup and Worksite Setup tools.

1. In your site's [menu bar](#), click **Site Setup**.
2. Click **Manage Groups**.

To access groups with the Worksite Setup tool:

1. Click **My Workspace**.
2. From the menu bar, click **Worksite Setup**.
3. Check the box next to the course for which you wish to manage groups, and from the top, click **Edit**.
4. Click **Manage Groups**.

### Creating a group

[Create groups and add site members](#) 

1. Access the groups area of your site
2. Click **Create New Group**.
3. In the "Title" field, enter a title for your group (e.g., Project team 1). You may also add a text description.
4. From the window on the left, select a site participant to add to the group, and then click >>. Repeat this step until you've added all the members you wish to the group. To select more

than one member at a time, hold down the Ctrl key (in Windows) or the Command key (in Mac OS X), and select the members you wish to add.

Alternatively, click **All>>** to move all site participants to the right-hand window, select any participants you do not want in the group, and click **<<** to remove them.

5. When you're finished, click **Add**.

**Note:** It is not possible to create a new group based on existing group (i.e., duplicate an existing group).

### **Editing a group**

1. Access the group's area of your site.
2. Next to the group title, click **Edit**.
3. You may revise the "Title" and "Description" fields. You may also add or remove group members as described above.
4. When you're finished, click **Update**.

### **Deleting a group**

1. Access the group's area of your site.
2. Next to the group you wish to remove, check the box under **Remove**.
3. Click **Remove Checked**.
4. To confirm removal, click **Delete Groups**.

**Résumé**

\_\_\_ pts. (out of 30)

**Format** Does the résumé’s format reflect good design principles? Is the use of bold, dashes, dates, punctuation, bullets, or font sizes consistent?

**Content** Does the résumé clearly highlight the skills the company listed in the job description? Does the objective match the position? Is it clear that you have the necessary qualifications? Does the résumé include all the expected parts? Are the elements of the résumé organized in an appropriate sequence? Is the résumé persuasive overall?

**Editing** Are word choices appropriate? Is the résumé grammatically correct? Error-free? Concise?

**Application Letter**

\_\_\_ pts. (out of 35)

**Format** Conforms completely to modified block or block style. Effective design features.

**Content** Does the letter clearly indicate how you heard about the opening and mention the position for which you are applying? Does the letter explain your interest in the job in a persuasive manner? Does it convince the reader that you are qualified for the position by outlining the skills asked for in the job description? Does it use specific details from your experience to illustrate mastery of those skills? Is the content well organized and coherent?

**Goodwill** Does the letter have a positive, confident tone? Does it establish goodwill? Does the final paragraph request an interview, provide contact information, and end with goodwill?

**Editing** Are word choices appropriate? Is the letter grammatically correct? Error-free? Concise?

**Request Letter**

\_\_\_ pts. (out of 35)

**Format** Conforms completely to modified block or block style. Effective design features.

**Content** Does the opening get right to the point without unnecessary prefaces? Does the letter include sufficient detail so the recipient can comply? I.e., are all important details mentioned, such as where to send the letter, the date the recommendation letter is needed, the name and address of the recipient, etc.? Does it remind the reader of qualities that you’d like him or her to emphasize? Is the content well organized and coherent?

**Goodwill** Does the letter have a positive, confident tone? Does it establish goodwill? Does the final paragraph confirm the request, provide contact information, and end with goodwill?

**Editing** Are word choices appropriate? Is the letter grammatically correct? Error-free? Concise?

Peer Reviews \_\_\_

Job ad \_\_\_

**GRADE:**

Sample assignment evaluation sheets are meant to serve as examples only; they must be adapted as appropriate to correspond with instructors' criteria and grading scales.

Additional project evaluation sheets and other instructional resources are available on the W231 faculty website, such as PowerPoint presentations, assignment guidelines, handouts, and sample student papers.



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