

**ECM 300**

**Communications for Environmental Professionals**

**3 Credits**

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## ECM 300 Version: 20



# Communications for Environmental Professionals

## Calendar Description

This course focuses on strategies, techniques and applications of the technical writing process. It emphasizes skills required to develop direct, clear, concise and readable technical documents for the environmental industry. This course includes a weekly lab focusing on skill development in areas such as cover letter preparation, oral communications and mock interviews, the fundamentals of technical writing, and the preparation of documents such as proposals and formal reports.

## Rationale

This is a required course for students in the Bachelor of Applied Science degree in Environmental Management program. Technical communication is an integral part of the environmental industry. Professionals are constantly called upon to present technical information in a wide variety of formats including company reports, instructions, procedures, memos, letters, working papers, proposals, and presentations. Environmental professionals must have the communication skills to efficiently produce documents that are accurate and readable, and to deliver presentations that are clear and concise.

## Prerequisites

None

## Co-Requisites

None

## Course Learning Outcomes

Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to

1. evaluate, deduce and apply methods of collecting, recording, examining, interpreting, condensing and organizing data for technical documents and presentations.
2. plan, design and create high quality and professional technical documents used regularly in the environmental industry.

3. create, evaluate, assess, edit, and revise documents for clarity and precision in writing using word processing software.
4. select, create and incorporate visuals into documents and presentations used in technical communication.
5. plan, construct and deliver effective oral presentations based on discussed guidelines and approaches, and using computer software.
6. plan and create effective resumes and cover letters for specific job/practicum opportunities using technically competent written communication skills.
7. analyze, select, apply and compete for job or practicum positions in a professional manner.
8. exhibit professional conduct when negotiating a tripartite practicum agreement.
9. assess, choose, and demonstrate effective English writing and computer-based editorial skills including correct grammar, punctuation, composition and sentence structure when writing technical documents.
10. use appropriate courtesy, decorum and effective listening skills during a professional technical seminar, effective verbal communication skills when introducing a seminar speaker, integrate hypotheses and combine deductive and inductive logic when participating in a seminar question/answer period.

## Essential Employability Skills

Essential employability skills are critical for workplace success and lifelong learning. Lakeland College prepares its graduates for the workplace and lifelong learning by integrating and promoting essential employability skills development in its curricula. Each credit course offered at Lakeland College emphasizes one or more of the following five essential employability skills:

- A. **Communication Skills** that enable individuals to listen, interpret, express, and convey knowledge and ideas so that they are received and understood.
- B. **Teamwork Skills** that enable individuals to respect the thoughts and opinions of others as they work together to plan activities, meet deadlines, complete projects, and contribute to an organization's goals.
- C. **Critical Thinking Skills** that enable individuals to conceptualize and analyze issues from various perspectives while rationally evaluating the strengths and limitations of each perspective and deciding what action to take.
- D. **Adaptability Skills** that enable individuals to respond quickly, willingly, and positively to new conditions and changing times.
- E. **Positive Attitude and Behavioural Skills** that enable individuals to be confident about themselves and to deal with people, problems, and situations with honesty, integrity, and personal ethics.

Please refer to the Knowledge/Skills Matrix of this course outline to review the essential employability skills emphasized in this course.

## Resource Materials

### **Reference Texts:**

Lannon, J. M., Gurak, L. J., Klepp, D., & Kelly, S. (2018). *Technical communication* (Seventh Canadian edition). Pearson Canada.

[http://www.library.ualberta.ca/permalink/opac/8159382/LAKELND\\_LLWEB](http://www.library.ualberta.ca/permalink/opac/8159382/LAKELND_LLWEB)

Knisely, K. (2017). *A student handbook for writing in biology* (Fifth edition). Sinauer Associates, Inc.

[http://www.library.ualberta.ca/permalink/opac/7848226/LAKELND\\_LLWEB](http://www.library.ualberta.ca/permalink/opac/7848226/LAKELND_LLWEB)

Pechenik, J. A. (2016). *A short guide to writing about biology* (Ninth edition). Pearson.

[http://www.library.ualberta.ca/permalink/opac/6775498/LAKELND\\_LLWEB](http://www.library.ualberta.ca/permalink/opac/6775498/LAKELND_LLWEB)

Publications from scientific journals and government documents.

Handouts

***Required Materials:***

None

## Conduct of Course

This course includes lectures, labs and take-home assignments. Scheduled lab hours are available for class work on assignments, presentations, discussion of lecture content, and for completion of required homework. Students work individually or occasionally in pairs or in small groups as discussed in class. Work assigned for the lab period must be handed in at the end of the lab period to receive a mark.

## Evaluation Procedures

At all times, written work must be presented in a professional format. Students may be required to rewrite assignments as requested by the instructor. The instructor also has the right to refuse poorly completed work. The final grade is an aggregate of the following:

<b>Environmental Communications</b>	
Consists of:	
Term Paper	20%
Assignments	45%
Magazine	20%
Presentation	10%
Participation	5%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>

In order to receive marks for work completed in scheduled lab periods, students must be present at that time. Absence during these working periods may constitute a zero. Late assignments are not marked.

The final grade is an aggregate of quizzes, assignments, oral presentations, and a formal report. Assignments focus on developing technical writing skills for a variety of documents in the environmental industry, including cover letters, memos, proposals, and formal reports. As well, students are required to develop and present oral presentations in which effective visual aids and communication skills are employed. A formal report, which is linked to the capstone, is part of the evaluation, and focuses on research skills, effective organization, data collection, and writing and editing skills. This large project is broken into a variety of assignments that build on the completion of the report.

## Knowledge/Skills Matrix

### Students apply and demonstrate their knowledge and skills to use

#### A. Communication Skills

<b>A1. by listening, reading, interpreting information, and communicating effectively</b>
<b>Evaluation(s)/Goal(s):</b> Assignments & presentations/Goals 1-10; Major Project & Presentation/Goals 1-10
<b>A2. by using written, spoken, and/or visual formats and media to communicate and meet needs of each particular audience</b>
<b>Evaluation(s)/Goal(s):</b> Assignments & presentations/Goals 1-10; Major Project & Presentation/Goals 1-10
<b>A3. by using libraries, Internet, technical publications, journals and other sources to find pertinent information</b>
<b>Evaluation(s)/Goal(s):</b> Assignments & presentations/Goals 1-10; Major Project & Presentation/Goals 1-10

#### B. Teamwork Skills

<b>B1. by using interpersonal skills to create an atmosphere that maximizes the strengths of group members to accomplish tasks</b>
<b>Evaluation(s)/Goal(s):</b> Assignments & presentations/Goals 1-10; Major Project & Presentation/Goals 1-10
<b>B2. by using interpersonal skills to resolve conflict, relate to others, and assist others</b>
<b>Evaluation(s)/Goal(s):</b> Assignments & presentations/Goals 1-10; Major Project & Presentation/Goals 1-10
<b>B3. by contributing and listening to others as group determines realistic objectives, prioritizes tasks, and identifies resources and timelines</b>
<b>Evaluation(s)/Goal(s):</b> Assignments & presentations/Goals 1-10; Major Project & Presentation/Goals 1-10
<b>B4. by treating other members of the group open-mindedly and fairly</b>
<b>Evaluation(s)/Goal(s):</b> Assignments & presentations/Goals 1-10; Major Project & Presentation/Goals 1-10
<b>B5. by developing tactics/strategies to accomplish tasks</b>
<b>Evaluation(s)/Goal(s):</b> Assignments & presentations/Goals 1-10; Major Project & Presentation/Goals 1-10

#### C. Critical Thinking Skills

<b>C1. by seeing critical thinking as a lifelong process of self-assessment</b>
<b>Evaluation(s)/Goal(s):</b> Assignments & presentations/Goals 1-10; Major Project & Presentation/Goals 1-10
<b>C2. by examining problems closely</b>
<b>Evaluation(s)/Goal(s):</b> Assignments & presentations/Goals 1-10; Major Project & Presentation/Goals 1-10
<b>C3. by examining beliefs, assumptions, and opinions, and weigh them against the facts</b>
<b>Evaluation(s)/Goal(s):</b> Assignments & presentations/Goals 1-10; Major Project & Presentation/Goals 1-10
<b>C4. by seeking out the truth</b>
<b>Evaluation(s)/Goal(s):</b> Assignments & presentations/Goals 1-10; Major Project & Presentation/Goals 1-10

<b>C5. by finding solutions; make decisions</b>
<b>Evaluation(s)/Goal(s):</b> Assignments & presentations/Goals 1-10; Major Project & Presentation/Goals 1-10
<b>C6. by incorporating new ideas that may not necessarily agree with previous thought on the topic</b>
<b>Evaluation(s)/Goal(s):</b> Assignments & presentations/Goals 1-10; Major Project & Presentation/Goals 1-10
<b>C7. by seeing connections between topics and use knowledge from other disciplines to enhance reading and learning experiences</b>
<b>Evaluation(s)/Goal(s):</b> Assignments & presentations/Goals 1-10; Major Project & Presentation/Goals 1-10

**D. Adaptability Skills**

<b>D1. by working independently or as part of team</b>
<b>Evaluation(s)/Goal(s):</b> Assignments & presentations/Goals 1-10; Major Project & Presentation/Goals 1-10.
<b>D2. by carrying out multiple tasks or projects</b>
<b>Evaluation(s)/Goal(s):</b> Assignments & presentations/Goals 1-10; Major Project & Presentation/Goals 1-10
<b>D3. by being innovative and resourceful: identify and suggest alternative ways to get the job done</b>
<b>Evaluation(s)/Goal(s):</b> Assignments & presentations/Goals 1-10; Major Project & Presentation/Goals 1-10
<b>D4. by being open and respond constructively to change and uncertainty</b>
<b>Evaluation(s)/Goal(s):</b> Assignments & presentations/Goals 1-10; Major Project & Presentation/Goals 1-10

**E. Positive Attitude and Behavioural Skills**

<b>E1. by dealing with people, problems, and situations with honesty, integrity, and personal ethics</b>
<b>Evaluation(s)/Goal(s):</b> Assignments & presentations/Goals 1-10; Major Project & Presentation/Goals 1-10
<b>E2. by showing interest, initiative, and effort</b>
<b>Evaluation(s)/Goal(s):</b> Assignments & presentations/Goals 1-10; Major Project & Presentation/Goals 1-10
<b>E3. by affirming the need for positive solutions and encourage positive interaction and feedback</b>
<b>Evaluation(s)/Goal(s):</b> Assignments & presentations/Goals 1-10; Major Project & Presentation/Goals 1-10
<b>E4. by balancing personal and family activities with job-related activities</b>
<b>Evaluation(s)/Goal(s):</b> Assignments & presentations/Goals 1-10; Major Project & Presentation/Goals 1-10

**Grade Equivalents and Course Pass Requirements**

*A minimum grade of D (50%) (1.00) is required to pass this course.*

Letter	F	D	D+	C-	C	C+	B-	B	B+	A-	A	A+
Percent Range	0-49	50-52	53-56	57-59	60-64	65-69	70-74	75-79	80-84	85-89	90-94	95-100
Points	0.00	1.00	1.30	1.70	2.00	2.30	2.70	3.00	3.30	3.70	4.00	4.00

**Students must maintain a cumulative grade of C (GPA - Grade Point Average of 2.00) in order to qualify to graduate.**

## Attendance

Classroom and laboratory attendance is considered vital to the learning process and as significant to the students' evaluation as examinations and reports, therefore absenteeism is recorded.

- a. Students having a combination of excused and/or unexcused absence of 20 percent or higher for the scheduled course hours can be required to withdraw and would then automatically receive a "RW" (required withdrawal) for the course, regardless of any other evaluation results. (RW is a failing grade).
- b. An excused absence is one that is verified with your instructor. Verification should be prior to the absence or the next class day following the absence. Verification of the absence may take the form of a note from your doctor/College nurse regarding illness, or a note from another instructor regarding a field trip or other activity, or authorization by your instructor following an in-person meeting. Be sure to contact your instructor and ask what they will require from you as verification for each absence. An unexcused absence is anything NOT verified by the instructor prior to the absence or the next class day following the absence.

NOTE: Any exceptions to the above attendance policy (e.g. timetable conflicts, work-related issues) must be approved in writing by the Department Chair prior to the beginning of the course.

It is the students' responsibility to know their own absentee record.

Normal hours are 8:30 a.m. to 6:30 p.m., with potential for evening courses, exams or extended field trips. Students are expected to be available for classes during these times.

## Course Units/Topics

*Lecture content includes (but is not limited to):*

1. Introduction to technical writing
2. Grammar and mechanics review
3. Writing Technically
4. Oral Communications
5. Designing Visuals
6. Workplace Correspondence
7. Organization Strategies
8. Networking and business etiquette
9. Time management and working under pressure

10. Technical writing as required in the BASEM Practicum Handbook, including the Capstone Report.

The topics outlined are presented in the lecture and lab component of class. The order and presentation may vary as topics overlap and according to time constraints. As well, each document created in class may constitute knowledge of some or all of the topics at various stages throughout the course.

***Lab component of the class may be used for the following:***

1. Job searching and writing cover letters
2. Writing Proposals
3. Mock Interviews
4. Technical Writing Practice
5. Paraphrasing/Citing/Referencing
6. Paragraphing
7. Oral Presentations
8. Editing and revisions
9. Designing Visuals
10. Researching
11. Computer Applications



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