Research Summary Project Description

Pacing: 3 Weeks

Percentage Weight of Final Grade: 15-20%

For Instructors

Students are asked to conduct professional and technical communication research into a local problem of their choosing (sample research problems are provided). This problem will be similar to those found in the workplace, which will help students enter the rhetorical situation of the work world. After conducting exploratory and descriptive research using a variety of resources and methods, students then create a memo (or other deliverable--instructor discretion) sharing their research with their peers.

Note: You can provide your own sample research topics. You also can require the students use those topics or let them pick their own.

Note: Instructors have the option of receiving the final document in a shared format (i.e., discussion board or Padlet, etc.) so that the final reports may be viewed by the class. The student submissions then can be used to inform selection of topics for the final report project (Module 4). The method of selection of report topics is up to the instructor.

For Students

Research in the workplace solves a problem. Tasked with a problem in the workplace, you may be asked to gather the information necessary to fully understand the issue at hand, solve that problem (or offer potential solutions), prove that your solutions are viable, and/or test your solution(s). Doing this work requires different types of research that go beyond simply querying a library database or using Google. You often will need to speak directly to target populations and audiences, and directly contact resources and experts in different professions and in the community. You also may need information in addition to or instead of scholarly resources. Local and national journalism may add context and perspective. Professional experts, government agencies, state and local authorities all may be relevant sources, as are individuals in target populations. Essentially, research in the workplace requires you to think critically and creatively about

- The type of information you need; and
- The best way to get that information.

Your job as a researcher is to address, explain, and/or solve a problem using the most relevant and applicable methods and resources. If a resource can supply information you need, then it is the right resource for the job.

It's also important when thinking about a problem your researching to keep in mind that you probably aren't the first person or organization to deal with this issue. Look at other organizations, groups, or communities negotiating the same or similar issue. Research how

those groups describe and deal with the problem. The perspective of experience is invaluable to your work.

Assignment

This project asks you to do workplace research into a local problem impacting USF or the surrounding community. Your goal for this project is to describe the problem in detail using as much information as you can gather from as many different sources as are useful. That means you are looking at research gathered by others (e.g., government agencies, non-profit organizations, professional and academic experts), but also you will gather your own data by contacting experts and asking impacted population for their perspective. You will produce a memo that reports your findings, giving readers a robust understanding of the problem you have researched.

Outcomes

Upon successful completion of this module, you will be able to:

- Engage with a problem-based scenario similar to those found in the workplace
- Develop research skills appropriate for addressing a specific problem
- Integrate research into a project deliverable
- Develop professional and technical writing and editing skills
- Practice writing for a specific purpose and audience
- Produce a specific genre of professional discourse (informational report)

To complete this project, you will choose a local problem occurring at USF or in the community. You can select a problem from the list below, or pick your own problem of a similar nature.

Sample Problems: [Instructors: You can supply the topics relevant to your course]
ENC 3246

- What is the optimal register layout for Starbuck's at USF to reduce lines and wait time?
- What is the optimal speed limit for roads on the USF Tampa campus to reduce accidents and delays?

- Which brand of battery will best serve the needs of USF's Digital Media Commons for their equipment that takes video/photographs underwater?
- Which internet browser performs the most efficiently for an organization with tens of thousands of users (such as USF)?
- Electric car charging stations at USF campuses

ENC 3250
- Assessment and use of USF student fees
- Availability of employment and/or financial services (e.g., job application, college application, financial aid, home budget programs) at local libraries
- Sustainable plastic waste management (e.g., water bottles)
- Electric car charging stations at USF campuses

ENC 2210
- Mental health awareness and/or access to mental health services at USF
- The variety and availability of healthy food choices at USF dining halls
- Vaccination rates and vaccine availability at USF and/or in the surrounding community
- Binge drinking at USF

Once you have selected a problem, you will research the problem, to include the following topics:

- **Background information**: Put the problem in context. What does the audience need to know to understand why the problem is a problem?
- **Explanation of the problem**: Describe the problem in detail. What is happening?
- **Causes of the problem**: Describe the factors contributing to the problem's occurrence. Why is the problem happening?
- **Impacted Population**: Describe the people most directly impacted by the problem. Who is the problem happening to?

To conduct your research you may wish to use any of the following methods and resources, or anything else that helps you explain the scope of your problem:
- Newspapers (local, university, national)
- Reports from government agencies, universities, and/or NGOs
- Scholarly research
- Facts and statistics compiled by government agencies and/or NGOs
- Interviews with experts and/or impacted individuals
- Surveys (social media makes doing surveys easy)

Deliverables
Major Deliverable:
- A report in memo format that describes your problem in detail using all the research you have conducted. The memo should have the following section headings:
    - Background Information
    - Explanation of the Problem
    - Causes of the Problem
    - Impacted Population
    - Works Cited
Supplemental Deliverables:
- Research Plan: A memo that identifies the problem you have selected and your plans for researching it, including research methods and potential sources for each required topic listed above.
- Research Progress Report: An update that describes a) the research you've done to date; b) which topics that research applies to; c) what you have left to do before completing a draft.