

**To:** Drs. Youngblood, Whittemore & Welhausen  
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**Re:** Editing Process Reflection and Key Learnings

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## **Introduction**

In the ENGL 7000 Technical Editing course with Dr. Youngblood, I had the opportunity to engage deeply with the principles of technical editing by revising and enhancing the Department of English's *Guide to Undergraduate Studies*. In this reflection memo, I showcase how this project refined my technical editing skills, strengthened my understanding of user-centered design, and deepened my ability to apply rhetorical strategies effectively.

## **Project Overview:**

The project aimed to transform a complex semi-private document into an official document to be used by several people in the Department of English. Dr. Bertolet created the original comprehensive guide for one-to-one communication with the then-current Director of Undergraduate Studies. The primary audience for this guide includes faculty members coordinating undergraduate studies, new and returning Directors of Undergraduate Studies (DUS), and advisors and administrative staff supporting undergraduate students in the Department of English. It provides a centralized resource to ensure consistency in policies, advising guidelines, and departmental best practices. The guide serves as an essential resource for new DUS faculty as a structured onboarding tool to understand their responsibilities and plan for undergraduate classes, while returning faculty use it to stay updated on department policies and procedures, and advisors and staff rely on it for accurate, up-to-date information when assisting students.

The editing process involved updating content, improving accessibility, and aligning the document with university and Microsoft style guidelines. To achieve this, I applied key technical editing strategies such as enhancing clarity, maintaining consistency, and integrating accessibility principles for both print and electronic formats. The final deliverables—a cover letter, an edited version of the guide, a style sheet, and a reflection memo—demonstrate my ability to refine academic documents to meet institutional needs while ensuring accessibility and ease of use for faculty, advisors, and administrators.

## **What I Learned:**

I gained a deeper understanding of the intricate details contributing to effective communication through editing. From our readings, I found that “editors must carry out two tasks at once. They must be clear in conveying how a document should be changed, but they must also be polite to maintain good working relationships with writers” (Mackiewicz, 2003). This resonated with me

during the editing, pushing me to manage these two needs — clarity and politeness — while ensuring that each word is purposeful and enhances the document's overall coherence and clarity.

Moreover, Lang's (2020) insights enlightened me to "evaluate the entire document for its clarity and organization, its effectiveness and usefulness to readers, and its compatibility with standards." This insight made me realize the significance of maintaining a consistent tone throughout the document, especially in the "Key Suggestions for Success" and "Awards" chapters, which reflect a blend of professional guidance and a conversational tone. By aligning the document's voice to resonate with new and experienced faculty members, I ensured that humor, such as references to team dynamics (e.g., "Never argue with Amy; Amy is always right"), complemented the informative content without undermining its credibility.

### **Challenges I Faced:**

One of the primary challenges during the editing process was navigating the delicate balance between preserving the author's voice and adhering to established writing conventions to make this undergraduate studies guide "evergreen." As Graves and Graves (1998) note, technical communicators must address language issues objectively rather than relying on personal preferences. Suggestions for improvements sometimes risked altering the document's unique style, including Dr. Bertolet's subtle humor that added a personal and engaging tone. This required careful consideration and effective communication with the author to ensure that the edits enhanced rather than diluted the original message.

Moreover, keeping information up-to-date for individuals with diverse responsibilities, such as updating the contact list while ensuring the document remains neutral and accessible to both the author and the reader, presented a unique challenge.

### **Successes:**

Through this editing project, I gained a deeper understanding of the importance of technical communication in academics. The experience built my confidence and highlighted the areas where I still need to grow to excel in this field. Although it was an individual project, the open Q&A discussion board added a collaborative element. Discussions on whether to format information into tables and how to replace individual names with positions to create evergreen content guided my editing decisions. Additionally, Dr. Youngblood's feedback, along with suggestions on maintaining consistency in formatting and addressing accessibility challenges, directly influenced the final product. These insights clarified expectations and helped me refine the document, making it more functional and adaptable for future use.

## Work Cited

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