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Technical Writing for Engineers

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**Self-Assessment Essay**

When I first started taking the English course “Writing for Engineers”, I did not know what to expect. After I had finished drafting my letter of introduction, Professor von Uhl graded it, and then wrote that the paper needed more development and details. The paper also had grammar issues. It seems that my classmates could have been more helpful in spotting these issues during the peer review process. In addition, the Professor had said she did not provide feedback during the drafting process. Thus, I had to rely more on using the Writing Center at CUNY City College for peer review.

For my second assignment, I had to draft a memo that discussed an issue that I felt was important at City College that needed to be addressed. After I had submitted my memo assignment, the Professor wrote that the paper had grammar issues such as subject-verb agreements. To help the students improve their grammar issues, the Professor, throughout the semester, gave the entire class exercises in spotting grammatical errors such as comma splices, verb tense, subject-verb agreements, and sentence structure. These exercises were helpful for me in terms of seeing common errors that are found in writing. Also, the class participated in multiple Blackboard discussion assignments and commenting on other posts. Even more, the Professor provided feedback to me, in which she stressed the importance of reading out loud one’s writing to catch any grammatical errors. This was helpful in that I never had proofread my paper in that way before. I was then able to catch awkward phrases in terms of language, tense, and other usage.

Later on in the semester, the Professor brought the entire class to the library so that we can learn how to do research on the CUNY library database. The assignment we had to do was to write a rhetorical essay that compared three different lab reports in terms of writing style. The lab instructor gave the students tips on the best way to find these articles online. After doing some research, I found three articles that were of interest to me. One was about underwater detonation and the stress it creates. The other article was about the association between colors and emotions when a person listens to music. The last article was about using anime solvents to absorb harmful carbon emissions. Even though I found reading the articles to be hard work and tedious, I was able to compare the writing style of the three articles. After organizing my thoughts, I found the first article about the underwater detonation to be the best written, because it was not tedious and straight to the point. In addition, it had useful graphics and data to prove the point of the experiment. The other articles were either too technical or too long winded for me to read. Thus, those papers needed editing.

After submitting my rhetorical essay, the Professor gave me feedback, commenting that I did not do enough rhetorical analysis when I wrote about the abstract section. After consulting with her many times, I revised the paper to include more analysis. She also mentioned that the APA citation in the paper needed correcting. After taking an online tutorial on APA citation, I fixed the mistakes that she was referring to, which included using shortened titles instead of referring to each article as Article #1, Article#2, and so forth. Thus, I made the necessary revisions and handed to her another copy of the rhetorical essay.

After I had finished submitting the revised rhetorical essay, I started working on my technical description paper. This assignment was challenging in that I had to do a lot of research in looking up the technical components of an iPhone 6s. I mostly used Google to search for technical manuals and journal articles. I also used the school’s library to look for books. After I had gathered my reference materials, I spent a lot of time organizing my research into a coherent and logical manner. When I then submitted my drafts for peer review, I did not get a lot of feedback that was helpful. Thus, I went to the Writing Center for help. The Writing Center was helpful in that I was able to have conversations with the tutors over there. By having these conversations, I was able to have a better understanding on why my paper should be corrected according to their recommendations. In contrast to the peer reviews in class, there was no conversations at all. I thought that my fellow classmates’ comments were unhelpful, because I could not follow their reasonings. If I had a productive dialogue with my fellow classmates, I probably would have understood their logic. After I had submitted my technical description paper, the Professor gave me feedback that I needed to fix my transitions, subject-verb agreements, and some citation errors in that I used hyperlinks when referencing graphics.

After the last assignment was done, the Professor assigned the students in the class into groups. The group that I was assigned to had problems, because of the lack of teamwork, cooperation, and communication. The Professor then decided that I should work alone in that I had the responsibility of doing the final proposal by myself. The final proposal I had in mind was the small modular reactor. By using the Internet and the CUNY library database, I did the necessary research and organized the information I had found. Then, I integrated the sources into my paper by paraphrasing and including quotes to strengthen the viability of my final proposal. During the process, I had found drafting the paper to be time-consuming since I had to do a lot of research. Organizing and citing the sources took a lot of work and time. In addition, I had to include APA in-text citation as well as references. During the drafting process, I went to the Writing Center for help. The feedback I had received from the Writing Center was helpful in that I was able to conversations with the tutors about my writing. While I was drafting my paper, I also had to put together a PowerPoint slide when presenting the final proposal.

After I had finished submitting my final proposal and had delivered my presentation, I started working on my final self-assessment essay to write about what I had learned in this course during the semester. During the drafting process, the Professor then gave me feedback regarding my presentation. She wrote on CUNY Blackboard that I did not include enough visuals in my presentation. In addition, she wrote that I used the word “they” too much when I was presenting. However, I wrote an email back to her explaining my lack of visuals and other problems regarding my presentation. I wrote that I included visuals that were most important and that the others were not important. In addition, I wrote that I referenced many times the authors and articles I was using in my presentation. I only use the word “they” after the presentation when I was doing a questioning session. I could not remember the various titles and authors I used in my reference sources when I was answering questions.

In conclusion, when I first started the class, I did not know what to expect. After writing the letter of introduction and memo, the Professor emphasized the importance of grammar, and catching mistakes especially by reading the paper out loud. In addition, the class participated in group discussions, in which we were able to see different viewpoints on a particular topic as well as looking at various writing styles. This was helpful in terms of seeing how people communicated when discussing a topic.

Not only that, I learned how to do research on the CUNY library database to find peer-reviewed articles. During this process, I learned that it is important to read, organize, synthesize, and analyze the works of other writers. This required a lot of time and work. Also, I learned the format and usage of APA citation when writing my papers. I used these processes when I was writing my rhetorical essay, technical description, and final proposal papers.

When I started the final proposal, I found my group to be for the most part uncooperative, and they did not communicate very well in terms of providing feedback. It was a not a good experience in terms of group work. Thus, I worked alone on the proposal. During the time while I was writing the paper, I learned a lot about my subject of small modular reactor, and how much work is required to put together a well-written and cited paper. Not only that, I also learned the importance of rehearsing my presentation many times so that I was able to communicate effectively.

Overall during this semester, I learned the importance of spending time researching, organizing, and drafting when writing a paper. In addition, I learned the process of doing peer review and how imperative it is for people to work together in a collaborative manner. I want to thank the Professor, my fellow classmates, and the Writing Center at City College for the feedbacks they provided to me, while I was participating in this class. I learned a lot about putting together a technical paper where research is involved.