LIVING **4** LEARNING

ENGL 210F:
Authentic Experiences in a
Simulated Environment

Dorothy Hadfield (dhadfield@uwaterloo.ca)

Bruce Dadey (badadey@uwaterloo.ca)

The Authenticity Principle

"…knowledge, skills, and attitudes should be embedded in tasks and settings that reflect the uses of these competencies in the world…the authenticity of the learning environment ensures that the knowledge gained will be readily available in the kinds of situations they will face in their work."

Allan Collins, "Goal-based scenarios and the problem of situated learning: A commentary on Andersen Consulting's design of goal-based scenarios." *Educational Technology*, 1994, 30-32.

Course Description and Objectives

Description

ENGL 210F is designed to provide you with communications skills for your professional life. To encourage you to think about applying these skills, the course environment has been designed around a simulated business, Living4Learning (L4L), and as a student in the course you will inhabit the role of an employee at L4L.

Within this role, you will be part of a team that has been assigned a major project to be completed by the end of the term; you will be expected to communicate in a professional manner with your teammates as you work on completing this challenge. You will have to learn to work collaboratively using technologies to communicate with team members who may be geographically dispersed—a condition increasingly common in the business world.

Assignments in English 210F will introduce you to the major genres of business writing, and help you develop the critical thinking skills necessary to define your purpose and audience—why and for whom you are writing. You will also develop your ability to write persuasively using key rhetorical principles and appeals to ethos, logic, and emotion. You will learn how to present an argument for common real world scenarios such as recommending a course of action or maintaining trust and goodwill with your clientele.

But most importantly, English 210F will help develop your ability to communicate in a professional, concise, and appropriate style for the business world.

Objectives

After you have completed your term with English 210F/Living4Learning, you will have practiced or mastered the following skills:

- Rhetorical analysis for communication (i.e., identifying context, audience, purpose, scope, etc.)
- Writing as process: planning, drafting, and revision
- Giving, getting, and using constructive feedback
- Communicating using clear and concise language, adapting tone and structure appropriately according to circumstances
- Collaborative teamwork, including communicating synchronously and asynchronously with colleagues
- Reading instructions and carefully following procedures
- Meeting deadlines and working within time constraints
- Producing a variety of communications in different genres, forms, and for different audiences

LIVING 4 LEARNING

A subsidiary of ENGL 210F

HOME   NEWS CENTRE   **ABOUT US**   DEPARTMENTS   CAREERS   CONTACT US

Living4Learning
About Us

COMPANY MISSION STATEMENT

Living4Learning recognizes that learning is a lifelong process. We create professional development websites, courses, and tutorials with the following key qualities: accessibility, reliability, and flexibility. More importantly, we create a living world in which students shape their own educational futures. We are a continental and global leader in cloud-based educational environments, and we provide open platforms and launchpads for nearly 5 million post-secondary students in collaboration with the healthcare, government, and corporate sectors. We change the way people learn through our innovative educational systems and solutions by enlivening online learning.

CORE VALUES

INDIVIDUAL PROGRESS

Living4Learning's state-of-the-art user interface closely monitors each and every learner while providing helpful instruction, enhancing the learning process and enabling a comprehensive, well-rounded learner experience. Our system closely analyzes learners on a case-by-case basis, mapping out their development and producing highly detailed, fully customizable learning plans that provide helpful tips and instruction during the learning process, and ultimately pave the way for learner success.

INNOVATION

Living4Learning's collaborative approach to online learning, along with our dynamic and feedback-oriented user interfaces allow for maximum creativity. We innovate online learning by making it seamless, easy-to-use, and highly quantitative in scope. Each and every learner experiences a fully customized learning plan tailored for their own specific needs and goals. Ultimately, the Living4Learning paves the way for each and every user not only to meet their learning requirements, but to realize their goals.
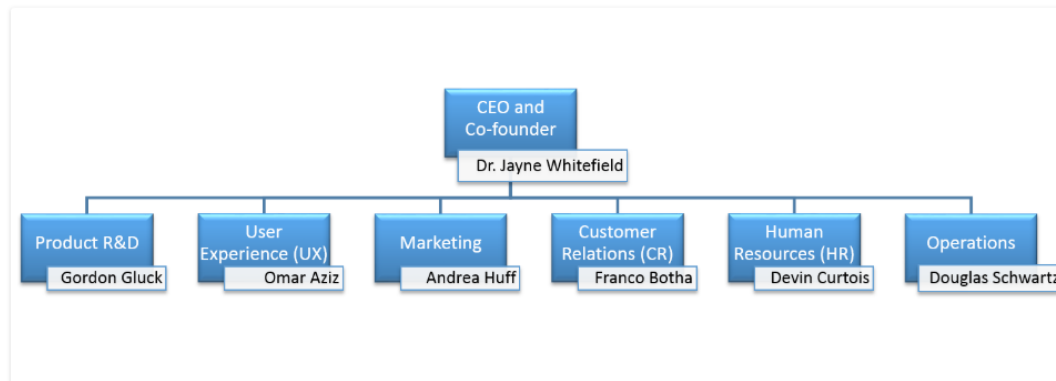
DEDICATION

The students of today shape the world of tomorrow. Living4Learning understands the importance of a comprehensive education. Our staff are always looking for new ways to enhance the learning experience, create new and advanced learning technologies, and improving existing technologies.

SIMULATION

Living4Learning incorporates gaming, and gamification/simulation technology into its learning systems. Our highly dynamic, state-of-the-art user interfaces create real-time online environments in which learners can interact with and manipulate complex systems, which serve as highly immersive environments that make the learning experience much more memorable and more effective.

LIVING 4 LEARNING

A subsidiary of ENGL 210F

HOME   NEWS CENTRE   ABOUT US   **DEPARTMENTS**   CAREERS   CONTACT US

Living4Learning
Departments

Living4Learning's corporate functions are organized into 6 departments; each department is headed by a Corporate Director who sits on the L4L Board of Directors with co-founder and CEO, Dr. Jayne Whitefield. The following orgchart outlines the department structure at Living4Learning:

CEO and Co-founder
Dr. Jayne Whitefield

Product R&D	User Experience (UX)	Marketing	Customer Relations (CR)	Human Resources (HR)	Operations
Gordon Gluck	Omar Aziz	Andrea Huff	Franco Botha	Devin Curtois	Douglas Schwartz

Click on any of the department names below for more information on the department and the department blog:

- Customer Relations
- Human Resources
- Marketing
- Operations
- Product R&D
- User Experience

Jayne Whitefield▾

Log Out | ? Help

Living4Learning
Careers

WORKING AT LIVING4LEARNING

Living4Learning is devoted to changing the way people
through our innovative educational solutions. We provi
course and learning management systems to more tha
stitutions of higher education in 15 different countries.

5 PRINCIPLES OF POSITIVE WORKPLACE CULTU

1. At Living4Learning, we are constantly seeking innovation, f
   we speak and work with one another. We believe that char

2. At Living4Learning we believe that every interaction and ev
   ber of the Living4Learning community is responsible for le
   something new every day. Living4Learning is a research cu

3. At Living4Learning we always prioritize education over pro
   goals and not short-term motivations like profit or efficien

4. At Living4Learning we set our standards high and we apply
   ees to take just as much care communicating with one and
   Living4Learning is treated with the utmost respect and pr

5. At Living4Learning we value diversity. We know that the ed
   coming more international, working across language differe
   forms of discrimination.

USER EXPERIENCE

Job Reference #: UXP1946

Do you look at current software and think: "I could make that better"? Are you fascinated by the human side of technology, and how we interact with our digital world? Can you translate user feedback into clear reports and action plans? If so, you might be just the kind of person Living4Learning's User Experience department is looking for!

PRIMARY RESPONSIBILITIES:

- Become familiar with functions and documentation of L4L's product suite
- Facilitate communications between users and product developers
- Organize and conduct events that engage users in product testing and feedback
- Request information efficiently and make persuasive recommendations
- Provide support and information to other departments as needed

THE IDEAL CANDIDATE WILL:

- Work effectively in a dynamic team environment
- Communicate clearly and concisely, particularly in writing
- Adapt to the ever-changing needs of L4L
- Contribute meaningfully to group meetings, brainstorming sessions, and projects
- Manage multiple deadlines and deliver results

Interested in joining the UX team? Fill out our Employment Application Form quoting **Job Reference # UXP1946,** and submit a PDF copy to the "Employment Application" dropbox by the deadline specified in the Course Schedule. You will find the dropbox by clicking **Assessments** and then **Dropbox** on the course navigation bar in the ENGL 210F LEARN site.

Goal-based Scenarios, Thick (Ill-Structured) Problems

Joseph Petraglia, "The Real World on a Short Leash: The (Mis)Application of Constructivism to the Design of Educational Technology." *Educational Technology Research and Development*, 46.3, 1998, 53-65.

Dear Applicant,

I'm pleased to confirm that you've been offered an internship position with Living4Learning for this semester. You'll be joining the team of learning creatives (as we call ourselves at L4L) in the User Experience department. Congratulations and welcome to UX!

Please make sure you start reviewing the information about the UX department on the corporate website to familiarize yourself with who we are and how we fit into the larger company. You can access the Living4Learning website through the link on the ENGL 210F course home page.

Your major project for this term is to work collaboratively with your departmental colleagues on drafting a **proposal for a User Conference**. We used to host an annual User Conference but we discontinued it… The board thinks we are just fine without going to all that effort and expense anymore, but I believe we are losing touch with who our users are and what they want. Your proposal needs to convince our CEO and the other directors that we can host a User Conference within the next year without compromising core development and support activities.

[...] proposal on the due date posted [...] select the best one to use in [...] Conference.

[...] other departments for information [...] posal. Make sure all your [...] to help establish the credibility and [...] on this project and can answer any

See the next page for instructions on making requests for information relevant to your proposal.

With best regards,

Omar

Omar Aziz
Corporate Director, User Experience

Learning Virtually all the Time. We Live for Learning.

Request prompts

Making a Request (Assignment 1)

Your goal is to get a 2-3 page report that provides a convincing recommendation about programs or processes you can use in planning a User Conference. Review the information on the project requirements and follow the guidelines presented in the course materials about how to make an effective, appropriate request. Work with your team to make sure as many of the topics are covered as possible, but try to avoid overlap and unnecessary duplication of effort.

For this assignment, you will choose **one** of the following contacts, and draft an appropriate request. While your requests will be addressed to corporate directors, it's unlikely that they have time to respond themselves, and will likely forward the request to a regional intern.

Andrea Huff, Corporate Director, Marketing [email: andhuff<at>l4l<dot>sim]:
The Marketing department sources the kinds of specialty promotional materials, giveaways, etc. that you usually find at these kinds of events. Ask them to recommend a "swag strategy" suitable for the type and size of event you are planning.

Franco Botha, Corporate Director, Customer Relations [email: fbotha<at>l4l<dot>sim]:
A big part of user conferences is having demonstrations and workshops. CR has data on which features our learning partners want or are having trouble with. Ask them to recommend an appropriate selection of topics based on the number and format of sessions you plan to include.

Gordon Gluck, Corporate Director, Product R&D [email: ggluck<at>l4l<dot>sim]:
One of the highlights for users at a user conference is hearing from the people who actually build the products and know what innovations are in the works, but the learning creatives in Product R&D are already overworked and definitely won't want to take time out for a user conference! You must ask them to recommend some options for how they would be willing to take part.

Doug Schwartz, Director of Corporate Operations [email: dschwartz<at>l4l<dot>sim]:
The Ops department looks after space planning and rental venues. They will know what kind of space we have available at L4L HQ for events, and what other venues are available to rent locally and farther away. Ask them to recommend a venue suitable for the type and size of event you are planning.

Devin Curtois, Corporate Director, Human Resources [email: dcurtois<at>l4l<dot>sim]:
An event like a user conference usually requires some dedicated staff during planning, as well as staffing at the event. Let HR know what kind of skills and time commitment (full-time, part-time, short-term, long-term) we need for the event team, and ask them to recommend whether to manage it in-house, hire, or outsource it.

Authentic Writing: Rhetorical Context

Prewriting Analysis: Rhetorical Context

Use this worksheet to help you assess the rhetorical context and plan your communication strategy. Explain your analysis and choices in the assignment submission memo.

| Purpose(s) of communication	Desired outcome(s)
Identify Audience(s) *Who is primary audience? Secondary audience? Who am I in relation to them?*	implications for tone
Knowledge base of audience(s) *What does audience already know? Still need to know?*	implications for content
Likely reaction to communication *Will the audience be open, hostile, or indifferent to my message and desired outcome?*	implications for approach
Audience size and location(s)	implications for medium
Other considerations:	

# A more authentic experience: Writing towards Transactionality

- Transactional writing: seeks to bring about an action or effect some kind of change.

- Pseudotransactional writing: does not have to result in real actions or change; just appears to have that potentiality *in the teacher's opinion*.

Joseph Petraglia, "Spinning Like a Kite: A Closer Look at the Pseudotransactional Function of Writing." *JAC* 15.1, 1995, 19-33.

Conventional Assignment: Pseudotransactional

Student

Teacher
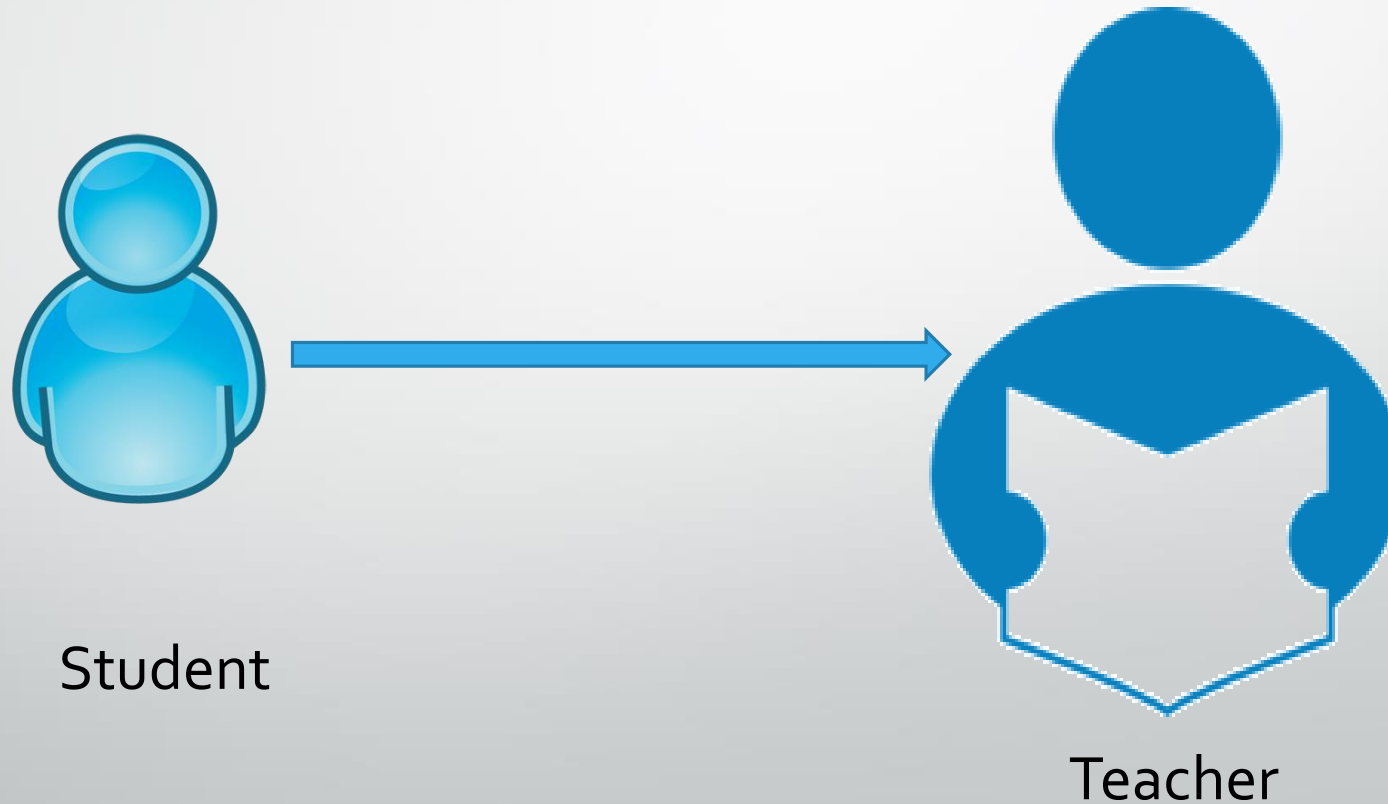
Simulation Assignment:
Authentic Transactional elements

Intern

Request

Recommendation

Intern

Proposal
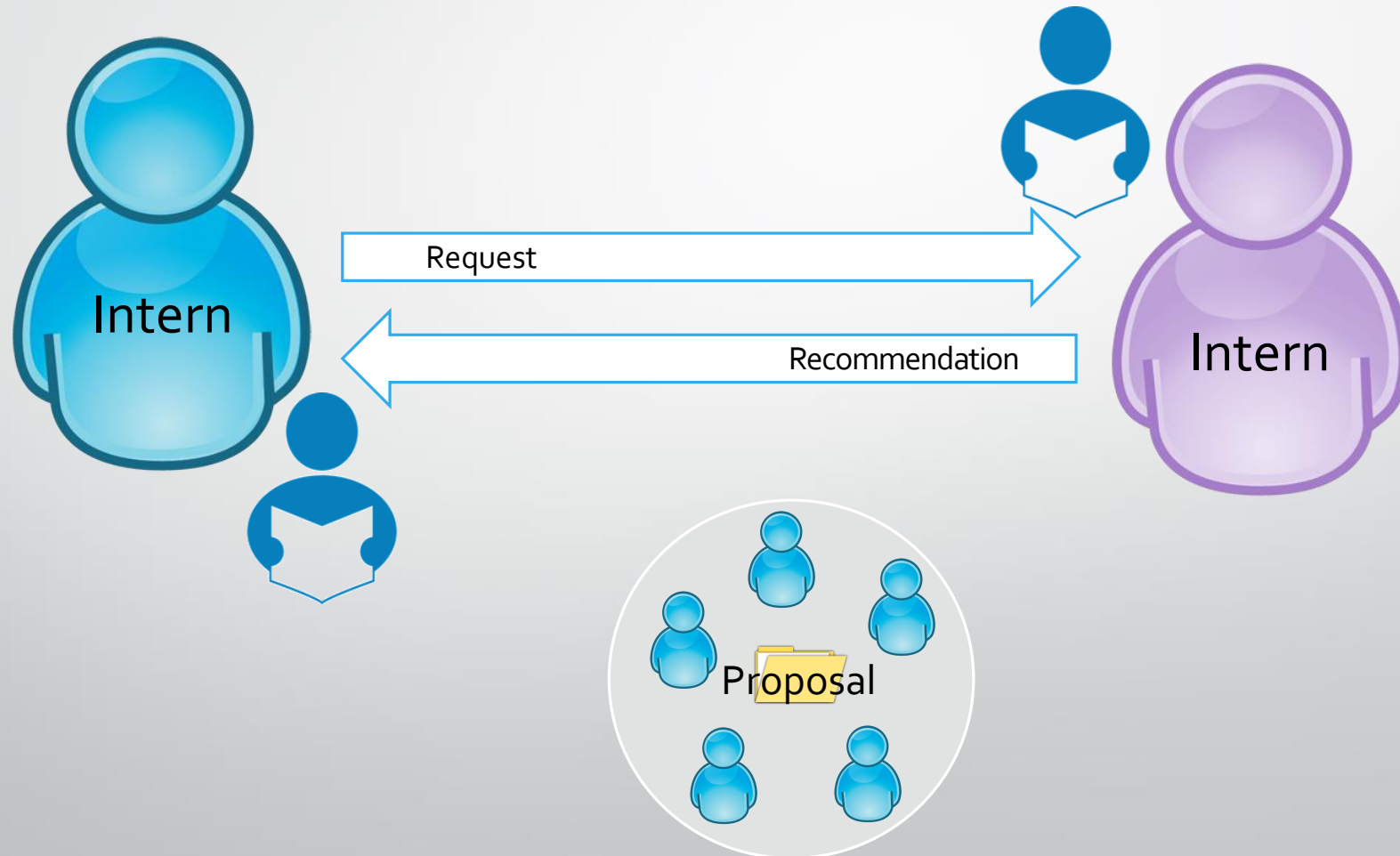
Does it work? Benefits

- Structuring the course as if it were we were working in a real business setting. It really helped to understand the types of documents and collaboration that will be expected in some companies.

- Provides a realistic simulation that allows students to work as if they are actually in a business setting.

- Great way to set up a business communication course with a business setting. Gives some similar situations that one may face in the workplace.

- The professionalism and conciseness of messages written by students and instructors in the course. Simulating a work place department helped in this regard.

Does it work? Challenges

Group Work

- Too much group work. I understand that that is what the real world is like, but when your group doesn't contribute to most of the group work and then gets the same mark as those that do it all, it gets to be really unfair.

Clarity

- Overall I felt the instructions left for assignments, discussions were very vague. The assignments themselves were not extremely difficult, but my group and I often spent more time trying to figure out what we were suppose to do than us actually doing the work.

Simulation

- The L4L website use was silly, as the internal and external websites for such a company would normally be separate.

- Some more info about the products would have been nice, like some mockups of the apps.