

## Joining the Conversation: Written Assignments Across the Curriculum

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### Session Description and Intended Outcomes

This panel showcases University of Waterloo faculty who engage undergraduate students in inquiry through the high-impact practice of writing (Kuh, 2008), using carefully designed written assignments that include interactive components (such as scaffolded elements), “meaning-making” activities, and clear explanations of instructors’ expectations to deepen student learning in all disciplines (Anderson et al., 2016).

Panelists will describe their intended learning outcomes for these assignments and explain how they build low-stakes components, peer review, and in-class activities into these assignments to support student learning (Bean, 2011).

By the end of this session, attendees will be able to explain how carefully constructed written assignments can engage students, and they will be able to describe a range of options for designing written assignments that involve students in primary research, ignite students’ curiosity, and teach students to pose powerful questions in their academic work.

### References

Anderson, P., Anson, C. M., Gonyea, R. M., & Paine, C. (2016, December 26). How to create high-impact writing assignments that enhance learning and development and reinvigorate WAC/WID programs: What almost 72,000 undergraduates taught us. *Across the Disciplines*, 13(4). Retrieved January 26, 2017, from [wac.colostate.edu/atd/hip/andersonetal2016.cfm](http://wac.colostate.edu/atd/hip/andersonetal2016.cfm).

Bean, J. C. (2011). *Engaging Ideas: The professor’s guide to integrating writing, critical thinking, and active learning in the classroom*. 2nd ed. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Kuh, G.D. (2008). *High-Impact Educational Practices: What they are, who has access to them, and why they matter*. Washington, DC: Association of American Colleges and Universities.

**POSITION PAPER: Part B: Position Paper Instructions & Grading Rubric**

You will be given five questions/issues related to current issues in recreation & leisure, health, and kinesiology. You will choose one of the questions and will be required to formulate and justify a position on the issue. There are no right or wrong answers, only effective arguments, so be persuasive!

**Rationale/Creation of Questions:**

The following 5 questions were developed with the purpose for you to generate a position (i.e., support or not support the issue). These questions provide examples of clear division of opinion in society in regards to health and well-being, which can be argued with facts and inductive reasoning. Visually, these questions can be represented on a spectrum from completely agree to completely disagree. You are to choose one question and find out where you fit on the spectrum (i.e., their position) and complete the assignments through the instructions provided.

**Questions:**

- 1. Do you think marijuana should be legalized?**
- 2. Do you think junk-food should be taxed?**
- 3. Should those people characterized as obese pay more for health care?**
- 4. Do you think boys and girls can excel equally in sport?**
- 5. Should women and men be able to play on the same sports teams?**

**IMPORTANT NOTE:**

These assignments are individual! Therefore, no sharing, collaborating, copying, or using classmates work on the writing/completion of the assignments will be tolerated. It is OK however to verbally discuss and share a good resource with classmates or where you found a good resource.

**Final Position Paper**

You are to write a position paper on your selected question following your outline, taking into consideration suggestions and feedback from Part A.

**The Final Product will include:**

1. An Introduction
2. Thesis/Position Statement
3. Arguments for your Position
4. Arguments Opposing your Position
5. Conclusion
6. References
7. Final Letter\*\*

## AHS 107: Sociology of Activity, Health, and Well-being

### Criteria:

1. 5 pages of text (does not include title page, reference page, or 1 page final letter)
2. Double spaced, 12pt. Times New Roman font, 1" margins, page numbers
3. APA format
4. At least 3 scholarly sources, with a maximum of 5

\*\*Additionally, on 1 (one) separate page you will be required to submit a final letter after your references (follow Final Letter format at end of instructions) to indicate how you included the suggestions received from Part A. Any additional sources used should also be indicated.

### Final Letter

The purpose of the final letter is for you to describe your revisions and suggestions from Part A and how you incorporated them into Part B.

The **Final Letter** is an informal letter addressed to your TA (so start with something like "Dear TA's name"), which includes a description of the following (1 page max):

- what you did to revise your paper?
- what you worked especially hard on?
- what you would have done if you'd had more energy or time to work on this?
- what you're excited for me to read or see?
- what concerns you have for what I might be thinking when I read something?
- and anything else you want to tell me about your paper.

**AHS 107: Sociology of Activity, Health, and Well-being**

**Position Paper Grading Rubric**

<b>Criteria</b>	<b>Excellent</b>	<b>Competent</b>	<b>Needs Work</b>
<b>Introduction</b>	Writer introduces topic and positions of both sides clearly & accurately. 4-5pts.	Writer introduces topic and positions of both sides with some effectiveness. 2-3pts.	Writer does not introduce topic with reference to positions for and against, or introduces topic with limited effectiveness. 0-1 pt.
<b>Assertion of Thesis/Position</b>	Writer asserts thesis/position clearly. 2pts.	Writer asserts thesis/position with some effectiveness. 1pt.	Writer does not assert thesis/position. 0pt.
<b>Arguments in Favour</b>	Writer supports one side with clear and relevant arguments, including information/evidence in support. 8-10pts.	Writer supports one side with some argument and provides some supporting information for argument. 5-7pts.	Writer does not support one side or the other, or does not support argument with anything other than opinion. 0-4pts.
<b>Arguments Opposing</b>	Writer addresses and/or refutes argument(s) against their position clearly and effectively. 8-10pts.	Writer addresses and/or refutes argument(s) against their position with some effectiveness. 5-7pts.	Writer does not address and/or refute any argument(s) against their position. 0-4pts.
<b>Conclusion</b>	Conclusion is clearly stated and connections to the research and position are clear and relevant. The underlying logic is explicit. 4-5pts.	Conclusion is clearly stated and connections to research and position are mostly clear, some aspects may not be connected or minor errors in logic are present. 2-3pts.	Conclusion is not clear and connections to the research are incorrect, unclear or just a repetition of the findings without explanation. Underlying logic has major flaws; connection to position is not clear. 0-1pts.
<b>Format/Writing</b>	Paper is coherently organized and the logic is easy to follow. There are no spelling and/or grammatical errors and terminology is clearly defined. Writing is clear, concise and persuasive. 4-5pts.	Paper is generally well organized and most of the argument is easy to follow. There are only a few minor spelling and/or grammatical errors, or terms are not clearly defined. Writing is mostly clear but lacks conciseness. 2-3pts.	Paper is poorly organized and difficult to read – does not flow logically from one part to another. There are several spelling and/or grammatical errors; technical terms may not be defined or are poorly defined. Writing lacks clarity and conciseness. 0-1pts.
<b>Citation of Sources</b>	Writer cites sources clearly and accurately with proper APA. 8-10pts.	Writer cites sources with some accuracy, evidence of APA. 5-7pts.	Writer does not cite sources, or inaccurately cites sources. 0-4pts.
<b>Final Letter</b>	Final Letter Included at end of Assignment – 3pt.		
<b>Total Marks</b>	/50		

## ENGL/MTHEL378/300: Professional Communications in Statistics and Actuarial Science

### Course Requirements and Assessment

Please note that the project proposal (oral and written), research summary, and report are all part of the final capstone project.

Assessment	Date of Evaluation	Weighting
Participation	Ongoing	20%
Project Pitch (oral)	Feb 13 and 15	10%
Project Proposal (written)	Final-for-now: Feb 27; Final: April 9	10%
Research Summary	Final-for-now March 10; Final: April 9	10%
Digital and Media Writing (blog posts)	Jan 20, Feb 10, March 17, April 3	4x5%= 20%
Final Report	Final-for-now March 24; Final: April 9	30%
Total		100%

Please note that the research Summary, Proposal, and Final Report require two submissions: a draft version and a final version (plus many revisions prior to each submission). The goal is to help you learn these genres and, of course, become stronger writers in your professional fields. Please read the course calendar carefully to note when the initial submission (which we, in the English Department, call a “final-for-now”) and rewrites are due.

### Assignment Descriptions

#### **Capstone Project 60%:**

The purpose of the capstone project is threefold:

1. Reflects the type of teamwork experiences you will have when you enter the actuarial or statistical fields.
2. Working within your team, you will complete a series of milestones throughout the term that will culminate in a final report that directly reflects the standards of your field. Therefore, it is vital that you complete all the required readings, which will provide insight into what communications comprises in the fields of statistics and actuarial science.
3. You will practically apply the skills you have learned in this class, in co-op, in other classes and in your life to your chosen field. That is, this capstone project is an opportunity to practice communicating as an actuary, statistician, computer scientist, predictive analyst, any of the other career opportunities that a degree in Statistics and Actuarial Science will afford you.

You will use the PPDAC (problem, plan, data, analysis, and conclusion) model and well as MAGIC (Magnitude, Articulation, Generality, Interestingness, and Credibility) as the foundational means to organize your project, both in terms of project planning and the delivery of information/data in a professional report and presentation. Establishing a specific target audience for your project, along with analyzing the specific communicational needs of that audience, will be essential: a major portion of your grade will be based on the appropriateness of your choices with respect to content and expression as well as meeting the standards of the profession.

You will be assigned a peer review team based on your interests. Each of you will write a report on a specific subject, but you will - there are absolutely NO team written sections of any assignment. You will each do your own research and writing. Your teams are there to provide feedback and support.

## ENGL/MTHEL378/300: Professional Communications in Statistics and Actuarial Science

The capstone project comprises the following activities and assignments. Please note that not all of these activities are graded, but all are necessary.

**Group Project Pitch and Proposal (Pitch 10% and written Proposal 10% = 20%):** The first step will be to sign up for a capstone topic. The topic will be broad. You will join others who have also signed up for this topic. You will work to support each other as you research and write your part of the project proposal. A PowerPoint or other visual components will need to be part of the presentation or pitch. After the presentation, you will write a five-page proposal, following the template for proposal writing provided in class.

**Summarizing Research (10%):** This is a crucial step to completing the final project. You will read a peer-reviewed article from your field and write a detailed summary. This summary will, in turn, be rewritten to become part of your final report. You will choose an article from the list of journals supplied in the assignment guidelines (to be distributed and explained in class).

**Peer Review:** Your participation in these activities can mean the difference between passing and failing the course. I believe you will see the benefit of support each other, as well as providing and giving feedback. If you need extra incentive, those who give excellent and consistent feedback (as per the guidelines supplied in class) and collaborate professionally will note an improvement in their own work (of course, peer review counts toward your participation grade). While you should comment often, you are also expected to provide useful and helpful feedback. You will be placed in a peer review group by Week 8 and your team will be given a folder by me (do not make one on your own) in Drive.

### Report (30%)

**There are two submissions for the report. A “final-for-now” where you will be given a “ghost” or preliminary grade. I (and your peers) will comment on your “final-for-now” and then you will revise your report for final submission one week after the final class. You can consider the final submission equivalent to a final exam in that your report encompasses all you have learned in this course.**

Your summary and project proposal will help you to craft a report. For those interested in actuarial science, you will be expected to complete a report that follows the standards of the profession. If you will be entering another profession, then you will be given a number of report templates to choose from, depending on the kind of data you want to share. One of the many duties actuaries must perform is the composition of reports to share information with clients, colleagues and peers. These reports combine excellent narrative technique with technical expertise. An actuary's communications must follow the standards of practice of the profession, which includes that any and all communication be appropriate to the audience in terms of form and content, clearly state the scope of the project (including limitations and constraints), and express significant findings in written and online formats.

**Tips for success:** be sure to take detailed notes in the classes where composition, grammar, and report writing are covered; ask for help when needed from your instructor, and, of course, teammates.

**Learning Goals for Assignment:** project management, report writing, data analysis, writing for non-technical audiences, collaborative communication, presentation skills, document design, effective representation of data, research skills, ethics and professional standards

**DO NOT INCLUDE THIS SECTION IN YOUR PROBLEM BRIEF**

**Considerations**

A problem brief outlines the issues a respondent is supposed to address when developing products, services or programs intended to solve the problem outlined. Problem briefs are sometimes part of larger requests that could include multiple, smaller briefs as part of a larger package or a public call for proposals that also includes specific budgetary information and evaluation criteria.

An effective design brief will

- Formally recognize a deficiency or need in current operations
- Develop a plan for understanding the problem
- Gain visibility for the acceptance of an identified need and potential solutions
- Provide a starting point for the evaluation of solutions developed

A less effective design brief will

- Have overly restrictive requirements that limit respondents to a tightly pre-determined solution
- Unfairly limit the range of responses and respondents who could participate
- Be unclear or deeply ambiguous
- Be based on unverified data insufficient for the problem at hand

A problem is rarely developed when the desired work is very well-defined. Rather, these are released when there is inherently some ambiguity in the problem. It serves to generate a variety of responses. When used as part of a call for proposals the design brief, along with the accepted proposal, serve as the basis for a contractual relationship between the buying and selling organizations.

In this class responses to this problem brief will all cost a maximum of \$10,000.

For more information, see

Porter-Roth, B. (2002) *Request for Proposal: A Guide to Effective RFP Development*. Boston: Addison-Wesley.

**GRADING RUBRIC – PROBLEM BRIEF**

<b>Item</b>	<b>3 points</b>	<b>2 points</b>	<b>1 point</b>	<b>0 points</b>
Follows the assignment template/ example	Contains all sections from the template	Contains most of the material outlined in the template	Contains some of the material in the template	Does not follow the template

**INDEV308: Introduction to Social Entrepreneurship**

Quality of supporting research	Research is credible, relevant and well-presented	Research is provided but there may be issues with sourcing, quality or clarity in presentation	Research is insufficient for the assignment	Research is non-existent
Intended audience	Intended audience is clear and the document is written with them in mind	Intended audience is clear	Intended audience is unclear	There is not intended audience
Overall quality of writing style and argumentation	Understandable for all readers	Understandable only for readers with a background in the topic	Somewhat difficult to follow	Very difficult to follow
Scoping of problem	Problem is well-scoped and provides a strong platform for action	Problem is scoped too narrowly to allow creativity in responses or too broad for an issuer to evaluate responses	Problem is too vague to provide adequate direction to respondents	Problem is not identified at all
Total	Maximum 15 points			

**Title of Problem Brief**

Intended Type(s) of respondents:

[Who do you expect to reply to this call for proposals? “Anyone” is too broad, as are “Consultants” or “Nonprofits”. Have a type of respondent in mind. Examples: Management consulting firms, accounting firms, computer programmers, researchers, community agencies in Waterloo, etc.]

Possible Issuing Organization:

[Who could have written a call for proposal like this? Try to take this perspective when writing. Examples: Region of Waterloo, TD Bank, House of Friendship, University of Waterloo Faculty of the Environment, etc.]



## INDEV308: Introduction to Social Entrepreneurship

### Introduction

One paragraph outlining the overall context for the problem brief. Include a brief description of the course challenge, the specific leverage point you would like people to design a solution to, and the intended impact.

### Background & Impact

Provide one or two paragraphs outlining why this call for proposals is being written. What problem is the call for proposals trying to address? How big is this problem? This provides important context for respondents.

Keep an eye to whose perspective you are writing from. A community agency might be looking to provide new services to an existing client group or provide existing services to a new client group. A company might be looking to solve a recurring problem that is creating additional costs or reducing their potential revenue. A government might be seeking to implement a new policy and wants to consult stakeholders who might be impacted or make a major purchase to support the policy. Each of these will lead to the development of a very different problem brief.

Include a final paragraph outlining one or more ways that solving this problem could lead to impact at scale. Possibilities include provoking policy change, providing new services to the intended beneficiaries and replication of a solution to different places or populations.

### Key Facts

Provide key facts and figures that can be used by respondents to estimate revenue, costs, benefits and other vital information. This will help respondents understand the potential impact of the work, the scale of the challenge and any market opportunities that would arise from solving this problem. The more focused you are here the easier it is for your respondents to design products or services in response. However, if it is too focused you will limit the room for respondents to respond creatively. Focus on the problem you are trying to solve, not the specific solution.

- Include a bulleted list here to highlight specific features
- Use as many bullets as needed (likely 5 – 10)
- If there are any specific tools, systems, processes, etc. you'd like included
- If there are specific tools, systems, technologies, organizations, policies or other constraints a designer would have to adhere to (example: legal constraints from government or other funders).
- ...

### Scope

Include a few bullet points describing what is in scope:

- This section defines the boundaries of your project. “In scope” means that these are items or activities that would be an important part of a solution.
- ...

Include a few bullet points describing what is out of scope:

- “Out of scope” means that items or activities are not within the issuing organizations activities, plans or budget. Identifying something as “in scope” or “out of scope” can allow a respondent to better focus their responses
- ...

## **BME 381: Biomedical Engineering Ethics**

### **Assignment #1 - Critical Analysis of a Biomedical Ethical Situation of Concern**

#### **Objective**

To perform a critical analysis of a biomedical ethical situation of concern that has personal relevance.

#### **Overview**

The topic of this paper will be the description, analysis, and critique of a biomedical ethical situation of concern you have recently experienced; it could be one you encountered during a co-op work term, a situation encountered by a close family member, or a situation experienced by a friend. While the facts should be truthful and accurate, your paper should be 'blinded' to exclude identifying information (such as changing the names of people and places) to protect the identity of any people, companies, and/or institutions involved. Your reasoning should draw on the topics, methods, and resources discussed throughout the course.

The paper should be written as your candid thought process, such as you might write in a lab book or diary. All papers will be treated as strictly confidential by the course instructors.

#### **Topic proposal - Out of 10; worth 2% of final grade - ½ page**

The purpose of the topic proposal is to identify and describe the biomedical ethical situation of concern that you intend to use for your paper (described below) so that you and the course instructors have the opportunity to ensure it is appropriate. As such, you should provide a clear, detailed description of the situation of concern that conveys its relevance and complexity. Be sure to include a brief 1-2 sentence description of the main ethical question(s) or concern(s) you will be reflecting on in your paper.

Written feedback from the course instructors will focus on perceived appropriateness of the proposed situation of concern and potential applicability to the paper format described below. The instructors may also provide feedback on the appropriateness of various ethical concepts, such as autonomy, beneficence, etc., to describing and interpreting the proposed ESOC. The instructors may also advise you revise your ESOC as appropriate.

#### **Paper – Out of 100; worth 18% of final grade - 4 to 5 pages, plus references and figures**

The paper should include the following:

##### **Background/overview**

Begin your background with a clear description of the biomedical ethical situation of concern, followed by how it was handled and what the outcomes were (both positive and negative).

##### **Stakeholder perceptions**

Perform an analysis of the stakeholders by identifying who the different stakeholders involved were, how they may have perceived the situation, why they perceived it that way, and what consequences these perceptions may have had on actions taken and resulting outcomes.

## **BME 381: Biomedical Engineering Ethics**

### **Alternative courses of action**

Given the same ethical situation of concern, develop three alternate courses of action derived from different moral standpoints. Each course of action should include reasoning as to why it is implied or recommended by that specific moral standpoint (you may want to use the four-point “syllogism” on page 84 of Biomedical Ethics for Engineers to explain the different courses of action; the course of action should align with the ‘moral conclusion’, point #4 of the syllogism). Compare and contrast the three courses of action and discuss the merits and drawbacks of each.

### **Reflection**

You are asked to reflect on how your biases may impact perception and decision making. This discussion should include:

- Identifying 4 or 5 of your own values and beliefs and how they may influence your perception of the original biomedical ethical situation of concern you described above.
- How might you take into account your biases when facing a similar situation of concern in the future?
- If you faced the same situation in the future, which course of action would you take - the same course of action that was actually taken or one of your proposed alternate courses of action? Why?
- Any other thoughts or observations you wish to share.

### **Format and Submission Guidelines**

12 pt Times Roman font with 1.5 line spacing. Margins should be a minimum of 2.5 cm. 10% will be deducted from the final grade of submissions that do not conform to these guidelines.

Plagiarism is a serious academic offence. Students are expected to know what constitutes academic integrity to avoid committing academic offences and to take responsibility for his/her actions. A student who is unsure whether an action constitutes an offence, or who needs help in learning how to avoid offences (e.g., plagiarism, cheating) or about “rules” for group work/collaboration should seek guidance from the course professor, academic advisor, or the undergraduate associate dean. For information on categories of offences and types of penalties, students should refer to Policy 71, Student Discipline. For typical penalties check Guidelines for the Assessment of Penalties.

### **The Writing Centre**

The Writing Centre is an on-campus resource available to you. The Writing Centre works across all faculties to help students clarify their ideas, develop their voices, and communicate in the style appropriate to their disciplines. Writing Centre staff offer one-on-one support in planning assignments, using and documenting research, organizing papers and reports, designing presentations and e-portfolios, and revising for clarity and coherence.

You can make multiple appointments throughout the term, or drop in at the Library for quick questions or feedback. To book a 50-minute appointment and to see drop-in hours, visit <https://uwaterloo.ca/writing-centre/>. Group appointments for team-based projects, presentations, and papers are also available.

Please note that communication specialists guide you to see your work as readers would. They can teach you revising skills and strategies, but will not change or correct your work for you. Please bring hard copies of your assignment instructions and any notes or drafts to your appointment.

## **BME 381: Biomedical Engineering Ethics**

### **Assignment #1 – Grading Rubric**

Overall mark is out of 100 possible marks. The paper is worth 18% of your final (overall course) mark.

#### **Content (75 marks)**

##### **Background/overview (10 marks)**

- Is the ESOC and how it was addressed presented clearly and concisely?

##### **Stakeholder Perceptions (15 marks)**

- Are all directly relevant stakeholders considered? Are stakeholder perceptions treated in a thoughtful manner?

##### **Alternative Courses of Action (25 marks)**

- For each of the three courses of action considered, are relevant ethical concepts/standpoints/perspectives considered? Does the paper demonstrate fluency with these concepts in use? Are the alternative courses of action plausible and thoughtful?

##### **Reflection (25 marks)**

- Does your reflection on your chosen course of action show a willingness to engage critically with your own assumptions? Does the reflection draw upon moral/ethical concepts or concerns to shed light on the action taken, and whether or not that action can be justified? In reflecting on your own values, beliefs and biases, do you make your assumptions explicit, or do certain moral or ethical assumptions remain implicit and therefore unexamined?

#### **Overall grading criteria to bear in mind**

##### **Relevance:**

- Does the paper clearly, accurately, concisely, and completely address the question asked? Does the paper exhibit an understanding of the relevant content and the purpose of the exercise? Does the writing reflect a high degree of comfort with the subject matter?

##### **Originality and competency:**

- Does the paper exhibit a willingness or ability to integrate and synthesize relevant ideas, or does the writing rely heavily on quotations and paraphrases? Does the paper show a willingness and ability to think creatively about the ESOC?

##### **Style and Presentation (25 marks)**

- Does the paper exhibit logical flow and coherence; is the paper logically consistent? Are relevant connections between ideas explored and elaborated?
- Does the paper conform to the course guidelines?
- Is the paper free of spelling and grammar mistakes?
- Appropriate use of vocabulary, sentence structure, paragraphs, punctuation, etc.
- Is the paper clearly written?
- Are references used appropriately? Is the formatting of the references correct and consistent?