# Technical Communication MA

## Recruitment and admissions

**Goal Description:**

The program will recruit and admit enough students for the 2021-22 academic year to sustain or grow enrollment and increase the academic quality of the program.

**Providing Department:** Technical Communication MA

RELATED ITEMS/ELEMENTS - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - -

RELATED ITEM LEVEL 1

**Maintain a marketing plan**

**Performance Objective Description:**

The program will identify marketing opportunities and create necessary supporting materials. Additionally, we will complete these marketing initiatives:

- Participate in Saturday@Sam
- Attend on-campus and/or virtual events for prospective graduate students
- Place ads in programs for relevant academic conferences
- Implement a marketing campaign within the Minor in Professional Writing and the service course Introduction to Technical Writing

RELATED ITEM LEVEL 2

**Maintain Marketing Plan**

**KPI Description:**

The program will identify marketing opportunities and create necessary supporting materials. Additionally, we will complete these marketing initiatives:

- Participate in Saturday@Sam
- Attend on-campus and/or virtual events for prospective graduate students
- Place ads in programs for relevant academic conferences
- Implement a marketing campaign within the Minor in Professional Writing and the service course Introduction to Technical Writing

**Target Description:**
- Participate in Saturday@Sam
- Attend on-campus and/or virtual events for prospective graduate students
- Place ads in programs for relevant academic conferences
- Implement a marketing campaign within the Minor in Professional Writing and the service course Introduction to Technical Writing

**Results Description:**

As a program, we have begun successfully recruiting from our Minor in Professional Writing by holding program open houses every semester, including summers. We also hosted an on-campus event for World Usability Day that allowed students to experience aspects of our program. Finally, we created a LinkedIn page for our program. We determined LinkedIn is the best platform for our program given our student demographics. After only four months in operation with a few posts, our LinkedIn groups has amassed 150 followers, significantly more than we anticipated by this point.

RELATED ITEM LEVEL 3

**Action - Maintain Marketing Plan**

**Action Description:**

As a program, we have begun successfully recruiting from our Minor in Professional Writing by holding program open houses every semester, including summers. We also hosted an on-campus event for World Usability Day that allowed students to experience aspects of our program. Finally, we created a LinkedIn page for our program. We determined LinkedIn is the best platform for our program given our student demographics. After only four months in operation with a few posts, our LinkedIn groups has amassed 150 followers, significantly more than we anticipated by this point.

We need to maintain this action heading into the next cycle and strive to increase our presence at the STC Summit and make more frequent and value-added posts to our LinkedIn page.

RELATED ITEM LEVEL 3

**Increase LinkedIn Presence**
**Action Description:**

We will continue to grow our LinkedIn presence by posting frequent, at least weekly, content that showcases faculty and student successes, as well as industry-specific content.

RELATED ITEM LEVEL 1

**Meet enrollment projections**
**Performance Objective Description:**

In the proposal to create this program, we estimated that we would have have 28 total students enrolled by the end of the program's second year. The COVID-19 pandemic altered enrollment throughout year 2 and we ended the year with 20 enrolled students. Our new-enrollment goal for year three is at least 8 students to maintain the program's current enrollment numbers and offset students graduating.

RELATED ITEM LEVEL 2

**Meet enrollment projections**
**KPI Description:**

Based on the initial proposal for the program, we set our year-two enrollment goal at 28 students. This number was a projection created one year before the program launched. Due to issues related to COVID-19, enrollment by the end of year 2 was at 20 students. To sustain the program and grow it incrementally, we project to have at least 24 students enrolled by the end of year 3 (end of Spring 2022).

**Target Description:**

To sustain the program and grow it incrementally, we project to have at least 24 students enrolled by the end of year 3 (end of Spring 2022).

**Results Description:**

We did not achieve this target. Our program has mostly remained flat in terms of enrollment.

RELATED ITEM LEVEL 3

**Increase LinkedIn Presence**
**Action Description:**

We will continue to grow our LinkedIn presence by posting frequent, at least weekly, content that showcases faculty and student successes, as well as industry-specific content.

RELATED ITEM LEVEL 3

**Meet enrollment projections**
**Action Description:**

Marketing efforts have been our primary action to meet our enrollment projections. We have seen new admits outpace graduates for the past year, but the issue we have experienced is higher than acceptable attrition as students leave the program due to burnout in the workplace, stress from

family obligations, and even anxiety over the political climate in the state of Texas. We need to investigate actions to better address this attrition.

# Synthesis of Scholarship in Technical Communication

## Goal Description:

Now that the program has graduated six students, faculty have determined that more scholarly preparation is needed throughout the program's coursework that supports the portfolio documents that students produce at the end of the degree program.

**Providing Department:** Technical Communication MA

RELATED ITEMS/ELEMENTS - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - -

RELATED ITEM LEVEL 1

**Synthesize Scholarship in Technical Communication**

**Learning Objective Description:**

Students will be able to competently synthesize scholarship in technical communication in the following ways:

- Situate the scholarship of a given area or sub-discipline in technical communication historically and currently.
- Situate relevant professional competencies of technical communication with relevant scholarship.
- Situate a student's professional and academic work within relevant scholarship and professional practice of technical communication.

RELATED ITEM LEVEL 2

**Synthesize Scholarship in Technical Communication**

**Indicator Description:**

Students will be able to competently synthesize scholarship in technical communication in the following ways:

- Situate the scholarship of a given area or sub-discipline in technical communication historically and currently.
- Situate relevant professional competencies of technical communication with relevant scholarship.
- Situate a student's professional and academic work within relevant scholarship and professional practice of technical communication.

**Criterion Description:**

Starting Spring 2022, students will be required to complete a standard final assignment in all courses that requires them to synthesize insightful scholarship from that course in a reflection that discusses this scholarship in relation to competencies in technical communication and the work the student has completed during the semester.

Students will be evaluated according to a standard rubric.

For Spring 2022, there is no expectation for how students will perform on these final synthesis assignments; rather, the criterion is simply that these assignments are given, completed, and evaluated for all students in every course, with the exception of TCOM 6300, according to the established standardized documentation. From there, the program will begin assessment to determine what future criteria should be.

**Findings Description:**

Our program has not produced a standard final assignment or a standard rubric for that assignment. To maintain faculty freedom, we discussed these issues in greater detail as a faculty and have allowed faculty to continue assessing their classes as they see best with an encouragement to emphasize situating scholarship and practice into the students' works. For the Portfolio Evaluation, we have removed the Print Portfolio requirement to give students more time to focus on the Critical Review, a substantial argumentative and reflective essay that students write during the portfolio course. More time on it means the faculty member teaching it can better assess how students are addressing scholarship during the semester and can make real-time adjustments as needed. Fall 2022 saw great success in this regard, and Spring 2023 is currently going well with this approach, too, though we will know more after Portfolio Evaluations at the end of April.

### RELATED ITEM LEVEL 3

**Action - Synthesize Scholarship in Technical Communication**
**Action Description:**
Our actions to improve this area of our program have been successful as all three students passed their portfolio evaluations in April. In review, we have not had an issue with synthesis in two years, so we will not longer focus our attention on this action in the coming cycle.

### RELATED ITEM LEVEL 1

**Produce Standard Course Requirements for Synthesizing Scholarship in Technical Communication**
**Performance Objective Description:**
Now that the program has graduated six students, faculty have determined that more scholarly preparation is needed throughout the program's coursework that supports the portfolio documents that students produce at the end of the degree program. To that end, faculty will produce a standard final exam/reflection that will be given to students at the end of each semester that situates the scholarship presented in the course with the work the students have completed.

Required documents by end of assessment year:

- Standard final exam assignment that requires students to synthesize of scholarship of a given course with competencies in technical communication and students' specific course projects.
- Standard rubric used to evaluate these projects.

### RELATED ITEM LEVEL 2

**Produce Standard Course Requirements for Synthesizing of Scholarship in Technical Communication**
**KPI Description:**
Now that the program has graduated six students, faculty have determined that more scholarly preparation is needed throughout the program's coursework that supports the portfolio documents that students produce at the end of the degree program. To that end, faculty will produce a standard final exam/reflection that will be given to students at the end of each semester that situates the scholarship presented in the course with the work the students have completed.

Required documents by end of assessment year:

- Final assignments
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**Target Description:**
Program faculty will submit material for objective.

**Results Description:**

Our program has not produced a standard final assignment or a standard rubric for that assignment. To maintain faculty freedom, we discussed these issues in greater detail as a faculty and have allowed faculty to continue assessing their classes as they see best with an encouragement to emphasize situating scholarship and practice into the students' works. For the Portfolio Evaluation, we have removed the Print Portfolio requirement to give students more time to focus on the Critical Review, a substantial argumentative and reflective essay that students write during the portfolio course. More time on it means the faculty member teaching it can better assess how students are addressing scholarship during the semester and can make real-time adjustments as needed. Fall 2022 saw great success in this regard, and Spring 2023 is currently going well with this approach, too, though we will know more after Portfolio Evaluations at the end of April.

### Action - Produce Standard Course Requirements for Synthesizing of Scholarship in Technical Communication

**Action Description:**

Our program has not produced a standard final assignment or a standard rubric for that assignment. To maintain faculty freedom, we discussed these issues in greater detail as a faculty and have allowed faculty to continue assessing their classes as they see best with an encouragement to emphasize situating scholarship and practice into the students' works. For the Portfolio Evaluation, we have removed the Print Portfolio requirement to give students more time to focus on the Critical Review, a substantial argumentative and reflective essay that students write during the portfolio course. More time on it means the faculty member teaching it can better assess how students are addressing scholarship during the semester and can make real-time adjustments as needed. Fall 2022 saw great success in this regard, and Spring 2023 is currently going well with this approach, too, though we will know more after Portfolio Evaluations at the end of April.

Portfolio Evaluations in April went well, and we have a new approach to portfolios moving forward. We will not longer be focusing on producing a standard course requirement for synthesizing scholarship.

## Theoretical knowledge and practical experience

**Goal Description:**

Students will gain the theoretical knowledge and practical experience to enter the workforce as technical communicators.

**Providing Department:** Technical Communication MA

### Demonstrate key skills for technical communicators.

**Learning Objective Description:**

Students will be able to demonstrate key skills of technical communicators:

- Rhetorical awareness
- Document design
- Technical writing style
- Editing

### Demonstrate key skills for technical communicators

**Indicator Description:**

At the end of the program, students will curate representative works from across their graduate studies to produce two portfolio documents: a print portfolio and ePortfolio. These portfolios will satisfy the academic requirements for the MA in Technical Communication and demonstrate the students' abilities to potential employers. Students will present their portfolios to a committee of faculty from the program who will assess them according to a predefined rubric.

**Criterion Description:**

80% of students will score 80% or better. To establish this standard, the graduate faculty consulted other programs' plans and discussed desired outcomes. Because graduate students are required to maintain a B (or higher) average, an 80% score on the portfolio was accepted as the minimum goal; similarly, the faculty agreed that an 80% success rate among our students was the base-level representation of our meeting the needs of students and the program.

**Findings Description:**

All students who have taken the TCOM 6300 Portfolio course and sat for the Portfolio Evaluation (our program's comprehensive exam) have passed as of this writing (Spring 2023). This means 100% of students have scored an 80% or better on the portfolio.

RELATED ITEM LEVEL 3

**Demonstrate key skills for technical communicators**

**Action Description:**

All students who have taken the TCOM 6300 Portfolio course and sat for the Portfolio Evaluation (our program's comprehensive exam) have passed as of this writing (Spring 2023). This means 100% of students have scored an 80% or better on the portfolio. We will continue focusing on this action as the economy and landscape of higher ed continues to evolve.

RELATED ITEM LEVEL 3

**Focus Portfolio on Flagship**

**Action Description:**

To better address the work environment our students enter, we will tailor their portfolios to center around a flagship project, mirroring industry practices.

# Update to Previous Cycle's Plan for Continuous Improvement Item

**Previous Cycle's Plan For Continuous Improvement (Do Not Modify):**

**Closing Summary**

Throughout the 2021-22 cycle, we were able to gain training for our new director, meet assessment deadlines, elevate our students' mastery of important disciplinary competencies, and improve our students' abilities to synthesize important scholarship. Additionally, we hired two new tenure-track faculty members who add to the pedagogical value and tools we bring to our students.

For 2022-23, we need to focus more on recruitment and connecting our program to the wider technical communication industry while maintaining and seeking to further elevate our students' academic success.

Though we demonstrated that our students are mastering disciplinary competencies and improving in their synthesis of scholarship, we will complete the following actions to further elevate their success:

- Develop a second Portfolio course to adequately prepare students for critical reflection, synthesis, and professional development.
- Develop new courses to address student professional goals, including user experience design and a pedagogy course.

Our program needs to recruit more students to replace those graduating and grow beyond 20 students. We will undertake the following actions:

- Develop a comprehensive marketing plan that involves in-person and virtual events, social media, and professional outreach.
- Assess the current design of our curriculum and work to expand it with new courses and tracks.
- Develop a graduate certificate to attract more working professionals who want a new credential.

In service to both our students' academic success and our program's need for recruitment, we will attempt to connect our program more clearly to industry by taking the following actions:

- Create an advisory board comprised of local and national professionals.
- Establish partnerships with organizations to give students more opportunity for networking and practice.
- Showcase our program at national events.

**Update of Progress to the Previous Cycle's PCI:**

Though we demonstrated that our students are mastering disciplinary competencies and improving in their synthesis of scholarship, we will complete the following actions to further elevate their success (Red text in the secondary bullets represent our updates as of Spring 2023):

- Develop a second Portfolio course to adequately prepare students for critical reflection, synthesis, and professional development.
    - We submitted course proposals and received approval for a new 2-sequence portfolio process in which students will work on their portfolios for two semesters and engage in additional professional development with a single faculty member.
- Develop new courses to address student professional goals, including user experience design and a pedagogy course.
    - We submitted course proposals and received approval for courses in UX Research and Design and Teaching Technical Communication.

Our program needs to recruit more students to replace those graduating and grow beyond 20 students. We will undertake the following actions:

- Develop a comprehensive marketing plan that involves in-person and virtual events, social media, and professional outreach.
    - Though not comprehensive, we have established trends towards a marketing plan that focuses on recruiting more heavily for and from our minor, holding events, and engaging the profession on relevant social platforms.
- Assess the current design of our curriculum and work to expand it with new courses and tracks.
    - We have four new courses on the books for Fall 2023 that open up our curriculum and establish tracks for student interests.
- Develop a graduate certificate to attract more working professionals who want a new credential.
    - We discussed and planned a graduate certificate and received approval from our department chair to move forward with a proposal. We will continue working on it and hope to submit it next cycle.

In service to both our students' academic success and our program's need for recruitment, we will attempt to connect our program more clearly to industry by taking the following actions:

- Create an advisory board comprised of local and national professionals.
    - We have not made progress on this goal though we hope to in the future.
- Establish partnerships with organizations to give students more opportunity for networking and practice.
    - We have formalized a partnership with ORSP and are in the process of signing an MOU with the Houston Police Department to work on various communications projects with our students.
- Showcase our program at national events.

- We planned to exhibit at STC Summit in May 2023, but plans did not work out. We will plan to exhibit in May 2024.

## New Plan for Continuous Improvement Item

**Closing Summary:**

We will target the following goals for 2023-24:

- Revise our program's graduate handbook to reflect the changes in our new courses, tracks, and faculty.
- Implement more marketing actions that involve in-person and virtual events, social media, and professional outreach.
- Develop a graduate certificate to attract more working professionals who want a new credential.
- Focus on creating a stronger sense of community for our online graduate students to prevent attrition.