

Technical Writing (A704029)

Course size *(nominal values; actual values may depend on programme)*

Credits 5.0 **Study time 150 h**

Course offerings and teaching methods in academic year 2023-2024

A (semester 1)	English	Gent	independent work	0.0h
			seminar	0.0h
			lecture	0.0h

Lecturers in academic year 2023-2024

Daems, Joke LW22 lecturer-in-charge

Offered in the following programmes in 2023-2024

	crdts	offering
Master of Arts in Technology for Translation and Interpreting	5	A
Postgraduate Certificate Computer-Assisted Language Mediation	5	A

Teaching languages

English

Keywords

Structured writing, information models, DITA, technical documentation

Position of the course

How can we efficiently transfer knowledge? This course covers the base principles of technical writing and teaches students how to go from complex ideas and information to clear instructions. Through a live demonstration and hands-on sessions, students learn how to write technical documentation and which tools and information models can support this writing process.

Contents

- The course starts with a general introduction on **the basic principles of technical writing**, during which students gain insight into the work of a technical writer and the **importance of clear documentation** in function of the target audience.
- We dive deeper into **XML and DITA**, the information model used by most companies to develop technical documentation. Based on a **live demonstration** of a specific procedure (for example: repairing a bicycle tire, replacing a CPU's thermal paste, cleaning a horse bridle,...), students learn **how to write structured documentation** themselves.
- Throughout the course, we work with **software that is also used by professional technical writers** (Oxygen XML) and students gradually learn more complex ways of managing documentation and adding structure (different forms of reuse, making variants for different types of users or models).
- Where possible, **technical writing experts** are invited for one or more **guest lecture(s)**.

Initial competences

No subject-specific prior knowledge is required. Students must have a good command of English and must be computer-literate.

Final competences

- 1 Convert complex processes and information into easy-to-understand descriptions and instructions, taking target audience into account.
- 2 Apply the basic principles of technical writing to improve existing documentation.
- 3 Justify choices made when creating or improving technical documentation.
- 4 Correctly implement the DITA information model.
- 5 Use software to handle XML files more efficiently.
- 6 Independently solve problems via existing documentation.

Conditions for credit contract

This course unit cannot be taken via a credit contract

Conditions for exam contract

This course unit cannot be taken via an exam contract

Teaching methods

Seminar, Lecture, Independent work

Learning materials and price

All materials can be found in the online learning environment (slides + exercises + references to external resources)

References

- <https://www.oxygenxml.com/dita/styleguide/index.html>
- <https://www.oasis-open.org/committees/dita/faq.php>

Course content-related study coaching

Support via Discussion forum on the online learning environment. Individual feedback on assignments + group feedback summarising and clarifying the main problems from the assignments.

Assessment moments

continuous assessment

Examination methods in case of periodic assessment during the first examination period**Examination methods in case of periodic assessment during the second examination period****Examination methods in case of permanent assessment**

Skills test, Assignment

Possibilities of retake in case of permanent assessment

examination during the second examination period is possible

Extra information on the examination methods

Throughout the semester, students have to make some practical assignments. At the end of the course, they complete a technical writing project from start to finish (improving a bad manual) and critically reflect on the different stages.

Calculation of the examination mark

- skills test (assignments during the semester): 40%
- assignment (final project): 60%

In order to pass, students must participate in at least 80% of all evaluations and obligatory activities such as guest lectures. If a student is absent due to a legitimate reason, an individual alternative assignment can be given.

Deadlines for assignment and skills tests must be respected. In case of a late submission without notifying the lecturer beforehand, the score for that assignment will be reduced to 9/20 (if the student would otherwise have received a passing grade).

During the second examination period, students must (re)submit their final assignment. If the student received a passing grade for their skills tests during the semester, they keep that partial score, which will make up 40% of the final grade. If a student did not receive a passing grade for their skills tests, their final assignment will make up 100% of the final grade.

Facilities for Working Students

Class attendance is strongly recommended.

Limited possibility of feedback via e-mail, restricted to answering specific questions.