

Building a Path to Success: Student Reflections on Work Terms as Instructional Design Assistants

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Aretina Chan is a student in the Technical Communication graduate certificate program at Seneca and recently completed a work term under the Work-Integrated Learning (WIL) program as an Instructional Design Assistant. Jessica Cheng is a first-year student in the Architectural Engineering program at the University of Waterloo and recently completed a cooperative work term as an Instructional Design Assistant. In this Spark Plug, they reflect on their experience and the opportunities provided to them by the Teaching & Learning Centre.

What were your goals coming into the WIL program, and did you meet them?

Tina: My goals coming into this was to gain real-world experience creating effective and engaging e-learning modules. I also wanted to learn more about my strengths, and interests within the field of Instructional Design and to envision the kind of work environment and job responsibilities that would suit me best.

Jess: My goal coming into the WIL program was exploring my passion in design. I love to design jewelry, clothing, graphics, architecture, etc. At the Teaching & Learning Center, I got to explore graphic design by creating icons and online course modules. I became very interested in learning about accessibility, and its significance when it comes to developing course material. I've taken graphic designer related positions in the past but was never taught accessibility. It is applicable to other forms of design such as architecture. I hope to apply this skill in my future co-op terms.

Can you describe your experience integrating into the team at the Teaching & Learning Centre?

Tina: I had a positive experience working with the Teaching & Learning Centre. Jess and I both worked with a great team of knowledgeable colleagues who provided us with plenty of feedback and advice, which helped us identify our strengths and opportunities for improvement. Our project manager, Anh Lam, was inspirational and gave us the autonomy to pursue projects that aligned with our strengths, interests, and goals. Overall, I felt I was able to form valuable connections and experiences with the help of a supportive and knowledgeable team at the Teaching & Learning Centre.

Jess: I agree, our team at the Teaching & Learning Centre was supportive and knowledgeable. In our first couple of weeks at the Teaching & Learning Centre, we were given thorough training in the different software and procedures we would be using. We were constantly reassured that we could ask questions whenever. I felt very supported throughout my time at the Teaching & Learning Center whenever I needed help and in my career interests.

How did you apply what you learned in your program to your WIL position?

Tina: Jess and I have different backgrounds and skills that we applied to our WIL positions. I come from a background in Technical Communication and had familiarity working with Adobe Captivate which was a stepping stone for learning how to use Articulate Storyline. I also had some experience creating accessible content (i.e., alt-text, color contrast, and font) and in instructional writing. However, the training provided by the Teaching & Learning Centre was crucial to my success and gave me a deeper insight into various aspects of design and creating accessible content that I hadn't previously considered.

Jess: In Architectural Engineering, it is important to consider not only the design aspect of a building but the functionality. This skill made it easy to consider and incorporate accessible designing and take note of technical flaws in the work I designed. Coming into this job, I was experienced in using Adobe Illustrator, InDesign, and Photoshop. These skills were very useful when creating illustrations and icons. Echoing Tina, many of our tasks required training in the beginning (learning Articulate Storyline, Rise, AODA documentation, etc). If you are interested in working in this position, and aren't sure you meet the required skills, I wouldn't tell you not to stress too much. The team at the T&LC are great mentors and helpers you can learn from as long as you are eager, and willing to learn!

What have you learned from the projects you've worked on?

Tina: During our WIL, Jess and I had the opportunity to work on real-world projects and gain valuable experience working with a great team at the Teaching & Learning Centre. While creating e-learning modules using Articulate 360, we learned how to incorporate various interactions to create engaging and effective learning content. We also worked on various

projects based on our interests. I was involved in creating Learn@Seneca tutorials and I appreciated the feedback my colleagues had each step of the way.

Jess: One of the first projects I worked on was designing an icon for the Sustainability Events course. I created this icon on Illustrator and submitted it to my manager, Anh. Later that day she called me, and she gave me a critique of the icon. I was used to creating illustrations in Illustrator which were detailed rather than icons which are very simple. She patiently taught me how to use different features on Illustrator, to help simplify the icon. I really enjoyed this tutorial and critique from Anh. These tools she taught me will be useful when it comes to editing renders and floor plans for architectural engineering!

How did working at Seneca affect your career path?

Tina: Working with Seneca has given me a better understanding of Instructional Design and the work that is involved in this career path. Similarly, I learned a lot about myself – my strengths, interests, and opportunities for growth. I now have a clearer sense of the type of work environment, team, and leadership style that I thrive in, which will guide me as I continue to explore different opportunities in the field of Technical Communication.

Jess: Again, I'd like to highlight Seneca's emphasis on accessibility. I hope to be able to prioritize and focus on accessible architecture in the future. For example, ensuring that buildings have ramp entrances for wheelchair users, strollers, and more.

We would like to thank Anh and team at the T&LC for a delightful experience working at Seneca College. Thank you, Dani and Janice, for answering our endless number of questions no matter how silly they were! Wishing you all the best!

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