

Connecting COM Learning to Your Program Courses

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This brief introduction explains how we work with students to develop writing skills in COM 101/111 and how you can support the ongoing development of student writing in your courses.

What we do in COM 101/111

Instead of focusing on one type of writing, COM 101/111 introduces students to writing in three areas: academic, workplace, and public communication. Typically, students in COM 101/111 will practice professional correspondence (emails/letters), academic essays, and writing for public and digital media (e.g., blog posts, op-eds). Skills include critical reading, summarizing, research and APA citation, creating informed arguments, and adapting style and tone to suit audience and purpose. Students in COM111 have an extra three periods a week for language and grammar development.

Since we cannot teach all the categories of writing our students will encounter in their other courses and professional lives, we give them practice in identifying the questions they need to ask when faced with a new writing task:

- Who is my audience and how does that affect the way I write?
- What is my purpose? Am I writing to inform, persuade, request, reflect, or a combination of these purposes?
- What genre am I writing in? What are the “rules” of this genre? How is information organized? How is it cited? How is it formatted on the page or screen? What style or tone is expected – Formal? Informal? Neutral? How can I find out more about these requirements?

How you can support student writing in your courses

Learning to write well is an ongoing process. Just as a first-semester course in accounting or physics does not produce accountants or physicists, COM 101/111 will not produce

professional writers in 14 weeks. Below are some ways to help students build on their skills and apply them in your program or discipline:

1. Reinforce the importance of effective communication – allocate a percentage of your grades for clear, correct writing and comment on the readability of your students' work.
2. Build the core concepts of audience, purpose, and appropriate style into your writing assignments; for example, have students summarize their research findings in an email to their classmates or a work supervisor.
3. Encourage students to evaluate sources and evidence, and to separate assumption from evidence (especially with online content).
4. Maintain academic integrity by reinforcing APA citation or by helping students learn the citation style in their field or discipline.
5. Help students connect the writing in your course with professional standards. Make the writing and research conventions of your discipline or program area explicit: what are the professional or academic expectations for content, evidence, organization of ideas, formatting, and style? Provide examples of the kinds of writing you expect.
6. Refer students to the Learning Centre for ongoing help with language and grammar.

Creating a strong link between COM 101/111 and your course will reinforce the importance of good communication skills and strengthen students' writing in their work here at Seneca and beyond.



To our program faculty colleagues: write a brief summary for the next Academic Newsletter to demonstrate how you are connecting the COM101/111 course approach to your own your assignments and/or teaching! Laurel will provide a fabulous prize. Challenge accepted?

Image credit: "[Megaphone](#)" by Creative Stall from [the Noun Project](#)

View the [December 2019 issue of the Academic Newsletter](#).

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