



Love where you learn



## TECHNICAL COMMUNICATION CERTIFICATE PROGRAM ONLINE

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## How do I apply?

Complete an Application for Admission (\$35.70 one-time fee).<sup>\*</sup> Application is available from <http://pr.viu.ca/techcomm/application.asp>.

**Required:** English 12 with a grade of "C" or higher, or equivalent (documentation may be required, see Application for Admission). Successful completion (80% pass) of Computer Basics test, OR completion of Vancouver Island University introductory computer course within the past two years, or equivalent skills (see Technical Requirements, this page).

You may take individual courses or you may register for the full program.

## What is Vancouver Island University?

Vancouver Island University is a publicly-funded and accredited Canadian University-College with its main campus in Nanaimo on Vancouver Island ([www.viu.ca](http://www.viu.ca)). Vancouver Island (formerly Malaspina University-College) has been in existence since 1969 and offers both vocational and credit degree programs in a wide variety of disciplines.

## In what order should I take these courses?

We recommend taking the Technical Writing Tools and Technical Writing & Editing courses towards the beginning of the program, since these courses teach basic technical communication skills and provides students with a foundation to build on throughout the program. The only courses with prerequisites within the program are the following electives (see course descriptions on the following two pages):

- Technical Writing & Editing II

## What texts or course materials do I need to buy?

Most of the course resources are completely online. Other courses require manuals or online resources. See individual course requirements.

## What software do I need to buy?

You will not need to purchase any specialized software for the core courses in this program. Most course electives have been structured to use free, downloadable trial versions of the software studied. You do need to be aware of the computer and system requirements outlined under 'Technical Requirements' on this page. Check individual course listings (online) for specific software requirements.

## What is the workload like?

The workload varies depending on the course you are taking (as well as the skills you are bringing to that course). On average, you can count on a commitment of about six hours per week per course (three hours in the online classroom, three hours offline for reading and assignments). You will have two years to complete your certificate. A passing grade for each course is 65%.

## How was this program developed?

We've followed the basic curriculum guidelines of the Canadian Interest Committee (1997). This committee was comprised of STC professionals who were tasked with determining what a technical communication program should include. Our courses are continually updated to reflect the changing needs of this dynamic profession. For more information on the CIC, check out the link from [www.pr.viu.ca/techcomm/programdev.asp](http://www.pr.viu.ca/techcomm/programdev.asp)

## How does our program compare to other similar Technical Communication programs?

Our program is similar in scope to certificate programs offered at other public post-secondary institutions. A key advantage of our program is the flexibility it offers through its completely online format. For more information visit [www.pr.viu.ca/techcomm/comparison.asp](http://www.pr.viu.ca/techcomm/comparison.asp)

## How can I get credit for previous education and experience?

We have a formalized Prior Learning Assessment (PLA) process, which was set up to allow us to recognize and place students appropriately based on their prior learning and experience. For more information, check out [www.pr.viu.ca/techcomm/pla.asp](http://www.pr.viu.ca/techcomm/pla.asp)

## Required computer skills

You must have basic computer skills in order to participate in these classes. A self-assessment quiz is available to help you determine your skill level at: <http://pr.viu.ca/online/ComputerBasicsQuiz.htm>. The Application for Admission requires you to outline your computer background and skills, which will be considered when determining whether you meet entrance requirements for the certificate program.

## Computer & system requirements

- access to a computer (PC or Mac) with Microsoft® Word® 2003 or later (PC), or MS Word X or later (Mac)
- IMPORTANT: some courses have specific system requirements. Go to [www.pr.viu.ca/techcomm](http://www.pr.viu.ca/techcomm) and click on the course you're interested in to view any special system requirements for that course. Courses with specific system requirements are marked in this program guide with two asterisks (\*\*).
- email access
- Browser specifications can be found at:  
<http://www.viu.ca/iel/elearn/system.asp>

## Sample Our Online Learning Environment

1. For anyone not already familiar with Moodle® technology (the software used for your online courses), it is recommended that you attend an online Orientation session. This will help you learn how to use the online classroom and will ensure that you don't fall behind—it will make your online experience a much happier one! You can also attend this orientation and sample our online learning environment free of charge, without having registered for a course.
2. The Orientation can be done at any time, but be sure to give yourself a few days to complete it since it involves a few sample lessons and information regarding using the online classroom. Total time required for Orientation is only a few hours. The website address for Orientation instructions is:  
<http://pr.viu.ca/online/documents/Moodle-FOLO.pdf>
3. When you get to this location, follow the instructions for accessing the free Moodle online resources.

This non-credit Technical Communication Certificate Program is conducted completely online. Interaction with instructors and other students takes place via an online bulletin board system.

## REQUIRED CORE COURSES

### Technical Writing & Editing

Product manuals, project status reports, technical articles, proposals and websites all reflect the work of technical writers, often collaborating with subject matter experts. How do you become a technical writer? What kinds of skills does it require? This course is intended for you, if you want to explore the basics of technical writing and editing and learn about some of the theories behind today's approach to technical communication. The course examines the role of the technical writer and the skills and attitudes required for success. You will practice writing and editing by completing an individual term project stage by stage, over the eight weeks of the course. As well, you will have the opportunity for individual practice of selected problem areas in technical writing. Instructor: *Kathy McTaggart*

*PDTW 001 F12W01: 9 weeks, Sep. 10 - Nov. 9/12 (\$399)*

*PDTW 001 S13W01: 9 weeks, Jan. 14 - Mar. 15/13 (\$399)*

### Technical Writing Tools \*\*

Students are introduced to the usage of computer tools in technical writing - from word processing to desktop publishing to operating systems and the basics of using a network. They will not be expected to become experts in these areas, but should be able to evaluate tools and understand compatibility issues, and learn to choose and use the appropriate tool for the job.

*Instructors: Jessica Colasanto & Julie Clarke*

*PDTO 001 F12W01: 9 weeks, Sep. 4 - Nov. 2/12 (\$399)*

*PDTO 001 S13W01: 9 weeks, Jan. 7 - Mar. 8/13 (\$399)*

### Designing Documents

Students learn how best to present different types of information, and to analyse the information to produce layout pages for a printed or online document.

Course includes instruction on:

- Styles and style sheets
- Typography
- Page layout
- Perception and colour
- Clip art
- International symbols and icons
- Selecting and integrating text and graphics
- Selecting appropriate graphic formats
- Electronic drawing tools

*Instructor: Carol Ramsay*

*PDDD 001 F12W01: 9 weeks, Sep. 24 - Nov. 23/12 (\$399)*

*PDDD 001 S13W01: 9 weeks, Jan. 21 - Mar. 22/13 (\$399)*

## Project Management for Technical Writers

Technical writers who hope to move forward in their careers may seek to become head of a writing department, manager of a team, or an independent contractor working on a project-by project basis. Unfortunately, many brilliant writers learn in the process that a whole new set of skills are required - skills that have little to do with a carefully constructed sentence or a well-written product description. After completing this course you will be able to scope a technical communication project, schedule it, staff it, and complete it following industry best practices.

*Instructor: Tom Whitlam*

*PDPM 001 F12W01: 9 weeks, Oct. 9 - Dec. 7/12 (\$399)*

*PDPM 001 S13W01: 9 weeks, Feb. 4 - Apr. 5/13 (\$399)*

## Writing Manuals

One of the major tasks a technical writer may be asked to do is to write manuals. Manuals are written for a multitude of reasons: to document how to use products; to inform others as to how a system works; to ease future maintenance, etc. Students in this course will follow the document development cycle through analysis, outlining, writing, revising, testing, and production. They will receive training to enable them to produce manuals in a reliable and systematic manner. Course will cover:

- Types of manuals
- Barriers to good manuals
- The Document Development Cycle (audience and task analysis, outlining, designing the document-subject to instructor and peer review, developing a first draft and final copy, and revising)
- Conducting interviews and working with technical experts
- Technical review, walkthroughs
- Usability testing
- Developing a table of contents, indexing and glossary
- Revisions and maintenance

*Instructor: TBA*

*PDWM 001 F12W01: 9 weeks, Oct. 9 - Dec. 7/12 (\$399)*

*PDWM 001 S13W01: 9 weeks, Feb. 4 - Apr. 5/13 (\$399)*

## Course Descriptions & Schedules:

### Elective Courses (choose 3)

#### Job Search Using E-Portfolios

More than just a 'resume' tool for students, e-portfolios are being used for career documentation and are valuable in situations such as job evaluations and advancement. You will use projects created both inside and outside the Technical Communication program to create a picture of yourself as a Technical Communication professional. You will also learn how to market yourself using your e-portfolio and other self-marketing tools. This course is excellent for those searching for a job, shifting careers, or looking to advance within their current situation.

*Instructor: John Vigna*

*PDJT 001 I12W01: 5 weeks, Apr. 2 - May 4/12 (\$279)*

*PDJT 001 I13W01: 5 weeks, Apr. 3 - May 3/13 (\$279)*

#### Technical Writing & Editing II

Now that you've had some practice at technical writing, you're ready for more advanced work in revision and other editing tasks. This course will build on the skills that were introduced in Technical Writing and Editing. It concentrates on the editing process. This course will expand your ability to organize, write, edit and deliver accurate, readable, user-centred technical documentation. You will learn to edit the work of others and to edit in teams. Prerequisite: Technical Writing & Editing (PDTW 001)

*Instructor: Kathy McTaggart*

*PDTW 002 S14W01: 9 weeks, Mar. 3 - May 2/14 (\$399)*

#### Adobe Acrobat \*\*

Sharing documents can sometimes be an issue when people are using various hardware and software platforms. Adobe Acrobat® allows businesses to simplify document processes using Adobe Portable Document Format (PDF). A standard adopted by governments and enterprises worldwide, Adobe PDF is a reliable format for electronic document exchange that preserves document integrity so files can be viewed and printed on a variety of platforms. This course will instruct you on the basics of using Adobe Acrobat to help you increase your marketability as a technical writer.

*Instructor: Julie Clarke*

*PDAA 001 F12W01: 7 weeks, Oct. 22 - Dec. 7/12 (\$349)*

#### Adobe InDesign \*\*

Learn to create and format basic print publications and get introduced to the concept of master pages. You will develop basic skills in: document setup, working with text and graphics, colour selection and usage, character and paragraph formatting, applying transparency, using tables, and preflighting for print service providers.

*Instructor: Carol Ramsay*

*PDID 001 F12W01: 8 weeks, Sep. 4 - Oct. 26/12 (\$349)*

*PDID 001 S13W01: 8 weeks, Jan. 7 - Mar. 1/13 (\$349)*

## STC STUDENT DISCOUNT

\$25 off all courses in this program for STC members. Make sure to provide your STC membership number when you register!

## Adobe Photoshop \*\*

Gain a working knowledge of the Photoshop interface, including arranging palettes and navigation. Learn to resize images and adjust resolution for print or web applications. You will work with the various image selection tools available in Photoshop to discover the appropriate use of each tool. You'll also learn about the layering concept and how to work with layers. Get introduced to photo editing tools and get an overview on working with colours, as well as the basics of image enhancement. Required text (see Software & Course Manuals).

*Instructor: Jessica Colasanto*

*PDPH 001 S13W01: 10 weeks, Jan. 7 - Mar. 15/13 (\$409)*

## RoboHelp \*\*

RoboHelp® is required by over 50% of posted Technical Communication jobs, and is a vital tool for technical writers who are involved in creating web-based and desktop help systems. The first part of this course is spent planning the help system—everything from logical progression through creating a Table of Contents to Indexing. The second part of the course is spent on hands-on usage of RoboHelp and completing the final project for the course.

*Instructor: Julie Clarke*

*PDRH 001 F12W01: 5 weeks, Sept. 4 - Oct. 5/12 (\$279)*

## Designing Online Information

Moving technical writing online means that materials must be designed, structured, and written differently than for paper-based publications. Students will learn the principles of online information design.

*Instructor: Jessica Colasanto*

*PDON 001 S13W01: 8 weeks, Jan. 7 - Mar. 1/13 (\$349)*

## Copywriting Essentials

Marketing a product or service usually requires written promotional and informational materials, including brochures, advertisements, sales sheets, press releases, flyers and web sites. This course offers a hands-on introduction to writing to inform, to persuade and to sell. Although the course will focus on writing effective materials, we'll also look at some of the basics involved in production, from design and layout to printing, direct mail and web site options. This course is intended for anyone who wants to create marketing materials for a product or service, or who needs to learn enough to effectively oversee the production of such materials. Course examples will cover several types of products, and you will have the opportunity to practice writing for their own areas of interest.

*Instructor: John Vigna*

*PDMA 001 F13W01: 7 weeks, Oct. 8 - Nov. 22/13 (\$349)*

## Writing Reports and Proposals

Students will be introduced to the technical skills involved in writing reports and proposals for business and technical applications. Students develop basic skills in: format types and selection criteria; report and proposal organization; layout and structure; table of contents creation; referencing techniques, and the usage of style sheets.

*Instructor: Kathy McTaggart*

*PDWR 001 I13W01: 7 weeks, Apr. 8 - May 24/13 (\$349)*

## Adobe FrameMaker \*\*

Overview of the main features of Adobe FrameMaker as a tool for technical communicators. Topics include: creating master and body pages; creating reusable templates, character and paragraph definitions; page layout; inserting graphics; advanced editing features; creating tables; creating table of contents; conditional text; and converting FrameMaker files to pdf.

*Instructor: Julie Clarke*

*PDFM 001 S14W01 - 7 weeks, Feb. 24 - Apr. 11, 2014 (\$349)*

## Help Authoring Tools

An overview of current help authoring software tools available to technical communicators. Students develop basic skills in: industry-standard authoring tools; information and visual design for help systems; effective writing for help systems; indexing methods; and contextual help methodologies.

*Instructor: Julie Clarke*

*PDHA 001 F13W01: 7 weeks, Sept. 9 - Oct 25/13 (\$349)*

## CSS/XHTML Basics

Overview of CSS and XHTML coding as a tool for technical communicators. Topics include: creating a simple web page in HTML (header, body, metatags, formatting tags); styles and style sheets; inserting links, anchors, and images; XML concepts (extensibility, DTDs, well-formed vs valid documents, parent/child tags); and validating XHTML code.

*Instructor: TBA*

*PDML 001 S13W01; 7 weeks, Mar. 11 - Apr 26/13 (\$349)*

## INSTRUCTOR BIOS

**Julie Clarke** has an extensive background in computers and computer software, having spent a large part of her working career programming, developing, and maintaining computer software and hardware of all types. Currently responsible for managing Continuing Education at VIU's Powell River Campus, she has also taken on responsibility for online courses for several of VIU's campuses. Julie has a Masters in Business from the University of Toronto. She is in touch with both the day-to-day functioning of a wide variety of computer software as well as the larger picture of how software can be an invaluable tool in Technical Writing applications, such as desktop publishing and web development. Julie is keen to share her knowledge of computers and software!



**Jessica Colasanto** co-owns and runs a web site development company based in Powell River, British Columbia. She has more than 10 years experience teaching a wide range of computer software, specializing in web production and digital imaging applications. Jessica is originally from the Sunshine Coast and moved back here in 1999 after living in New York for many years.

**Kathy McTaggart** holds a Master's degree in Technical Communication from the University of Washington in Seattle, and has taught Technical Communication both in Canada and the USA to a wide range of students. She is a member of the Society for Technical Communication and has researched and presented professional presentations on such topics as 'Integrating Technical Communication into the High School Curriculum.' With a wide range of writing and software skills, Kathy brings her passions for teaching and technical writing together in teaching both levels of Technical Writing & Editing for Vancouver Island University.



**Tom Whitlam** comes to us with an extensive background in both Project Management and Technical Communication. He is past president of the STC Singapore chapter, a past senior member of the STC India chapter, and a current senior member of the Canada West Coast chapter. He has worked as a



Project Manager and Technical Communications Team Leader for a number of high-profile organizations all over the world, including Hexaware Technologies and Dell Inc. Tom is fluent in a number of languages, but his key occupational interests lie with Technical Communications and applying his talents in this area to project management and service delivery

**Carol Ramsay** is a dynamic instructor with a diverse background in a number of areas. She has a degree from the BC Institute of Technology in Human Resource Management, as well as a degree in Social Welfare. In her years of developing her desktop publishing skills, she has learned all the tricks and techniques of working with documents the hard way, and is now happy to pass along the knowledge she's acquired.



**John Vigna** is an award-winning writer who provides copywriting and editing services to a variety of clients through his company, John Vigna Ink. A 2002 Vancouver Entrepreneur of the Year in the Business-to-Business category, John has delivered a number of workshops and taught technical writing and business skills courses.



**Ellen Faden** is based in San Francisco and has been involved in technical writing and teaching for over 20 years. She holds a masters degree in English and currently consults to businesses and organizations about Web 2.0 products and services.



### Advisory Group:

The Technical Communication Certificate Program Advisory Group is drawn from seasoned professionals in the field who review and advise Vancouver Island University administration on issues relating to the relevancy, curriculum, and quality of the Technical Communication Certificate Program at Vancouver Island University. For more information: [www.pr.viu.ca/techcomm/advisory.asp](http://www.pr.viu.ca/techcomm/advisory.asp)

### Associations/Groups:

For the Society for Technical Communication (STC) Chapter in your area, check out <http://www.stc.org/membership/chapterSearch01.asp>. For a current listing of related associations, check out: [www.pr.viu.ca/techcomm/associations.asp](http://www.pr.viu.ca/techcomm/associations.asp)

### Materials/Texts:

Some course resources are completely online. Other courses require manuals or online materials. See individual course requirements for details. Strongly recommended: Handbook of Technical Writing (Gerald J. Alred, Charles T. Brusaw, Walter E. Oliu) ISBN 0-312-39323-7 <http://bcs.bedfordstmartins.com/alred/handbooks>

### Frequently-Asked Questions:

[www.pr.viu.ca/techcomm/faq.asp](http://www.pr.viu.ca/techcomm/faq.asp)

### Technical Communication Program Guide:

[www.pr.viu.ca/techcomm/documents/TechCommGuide.pdf](http://www.pr.viu.ca/techcomm/documents/TechCommGuide.pdf)

### Software for Students:

Some of the specialized software used in the elective courses is available through free trial downloads. Other electrives require students to purchase the software. Amazing discounts on software are available to students registered in the program. For more information, check out:

[www.pr.viu.ca/techcomm/software.asp](http://www.pr.viu.ca/techcomm/software.asp)

### Jobs:

[www.pr.viu.ca/techcomm/jobs.asp](http://www.pr.viu.ca/techcomm/jobs.asp)

### Skill Set:

A listing of the top skills requested by companies hiring Technical Communicators can be found at: [www.pr.viu.ca/techcomm/faq.asp](http://www.pr.viu.ca/techcomm/faq.asp)

My name is *James Branvold* and I've recently completed the Technical Communication Certificate program at Vancouver Island University. I have a bachelor's degree in Electrical Engineering and spent nine years as a semiconductor designer in Ottawa. With the decline in the telecom and semiconductor industries, I found myself unemployed in early 2003. I took some time off, then spent eight months looking for work before deciding to switch careers to technical writing. The opportunities for technical writing are more numerous than the highly specialized engineering work I was doing.

During my time off, I've become an accomplished house husband. I enjoy frequent naps throughout the day. I make a pretty decent bowl of cereal (my secret is to use milk AND sugar). I have the local pizza place phone number memorized. I am fortunate to have two young kids, 4 and 1.5 years, and—along with my online studies—I've been keeping pretty busy.

Now that I've finished the Technical Communications program, I am initially looking for either a contract or a full-time position in the high-tech sector in Ottawa. Although the downturn in technology has hurt many companies, the really strong companies continue to develop products which require technical writers to create manuals, white papers, marketing material and web content. I feel that a combination of my engineering skills and the technical writing skills I've developed over the past year will make a good impression on employers.

As I've been watching the job opportunities for technical writers, I've noticed a large portion of the positions are with the federal and provincial governments. As a backup plan, I am doing some research into the different needs of these jobs and looking for a competitive edge. For example, many government writing jobs involve online content. The Technical Communication program has taught me relevant software tools, such as Microsoft FrontPage, Adobe Dreamweaver, Adobe Robohelp and Adobe Photoshop. These courses have also taught me about designing for an online environment. I feel confident that I can step into a position with the latest tools and techniques for developing appropriate web content.

By spending the past nine months completing the Technical Communication Certificate Program, I've opened the door to many new opportunities that I didn't have before. It's been time well invested.



## Related Online Programs:

### DESKTOP & WEB PUBLISHING WORKSHOPS (ONLINE)

The Desktop & Web Publishing Workshops Program will give you a Vancouver Island University Statement of Program Completion, a portfolio of work to show potential employers, and invaluable knowledge of the most popular desktop publishing and web design software on the market today.

This program will be useful for office workers wishing to broaden their skills and will serve as an introductory program for those who wish to go on to more in-depth study in desktop and web publishing, such as the *VIU Internet Production (IPro) Diploma Program*

These workshops are offered exclusively online, and provide a basic introduction and hands-on practice with:

#### Adobe InDesign

Learn to create and format basic print publications; learn about master pages.

*Instructor: Carol Ramsay*

*DWPW 002 F12W09: 8 weeks, Sep. 4 - Oct. 26/12 (\$379)*

*DWPW 002 S13W01: 8 weeks, Jan 7 - Mar 1/13 (\$379)*

#### Design Concepts

Introduce yourself to best practice design concepts as they related to desktop publishing and web design.

*Instructor: Carol Ramsay*

*DWPW 001 F12W09: 9 weeks, Sep. 24 - Nov. 23/12 (\$429)*

*DWPW 001 S13W01: 9 weeks, Jan. 21 - Mar. 22/13 (\$429)*

#### Adobe Dreamweaver

Explore the Dreamweaver environment, and learn how to create a basic web page.

*Instructor: Jessica Colasanto*

*DWPW 003 S13W01: 8 weeks, Jan. 7 - Mar. 1/13 (\$379)*

#### Adobe Photoshop

Gain a working knowledge of the Photoshop interface. Discover the appropriate use of the various image selection tools and discover layering.

*Instructor: Jessica Colasanto*

*DWPW 004 S13W01: 10 weeks, Jan. 7 - Mar. 15/13 (\$439)*

#### Adobe Illustrator

Learn to navigate the Illustrator environment to create logos and advertisements.

*Instructor: Carol Ramsay*

*DWPW 005 S13W02: 6 weeks, Feb. 25 - Apr 5/13 (\$345)*

#### Adobe Acrobat

Discover the many uses of Portable Document Format (PDF) electronic files.

*Instructor: Julie Clarke*

*DWPW 006 F12W10: 7 weeks, Oct. 22 - Dec. 7/12 (\$379)*

#### Portfolio Prep

Pull it all together and show off your skill set by creating a portfolio.

*Instructor: Julie Clarke*

*DWPW 006 I13W03: 7 weeks (condensed), Mar. 25 - May 10/13 (\$425)*

## OTHER ONLINE PROGRAMS & COURSES AT VANCOUVER ISLAND UNIVERSITY:

**Advanced Diploma in GIS Applications (online credit):**

[www.viu.ca/adgisa/](http://www.viu.ca/adgisa/)

**Event Management (online credit) Certificate Program:**

[www.viu.ca/ccs/certificates/event.asp](http://www.viu.ca/ccs/certificates/event.asp)

**Microsoft Office Skills Training (online) Certificate Program:**

[www.pr.viu.ca/most/](http://www.pr.viu.ca/most/)

**Medical Terminology (Anatomy & Physiology):**

[www.pr.viu.ca/onthejob/medicalterminology.asp](http://www.pr.viu.ca/onthejob/medicalterminology.asp)

**Online Safety Courses:**

[www.pr.viu.ca/onthejob/](http://www.pr.viu.ca/onthejob/)



VANCOUVER ISLAND UNIVERSITY  
EXPLORE. DISCOVER. EXCEL.