ICaP Professional Email Instructor Guide

Common Assignment Pilot Fall 2018
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Assignment Introduction

Description

The professional email assignment is meant to serve as an introduction to the rhetorical situation and to help students understand how to compose *with* purpose to *achieve* a purpose. Writing a successful professional email requires audience analysis, consideration of the author's own ethos, and the use of rhetorical appeals to craft a request within a specific—and immediate—context. The aim of the professional email assignment is to begin considering how and why writers make certain decisions to accomplish a specific goal.

Rationale

Part of the transition to higher education involves learning to operate within new rhetorical situations, and navigating that space through writing means working to recognize the conscious decision making that goes into creating any text. With the introduction to rhetoric via the professional email assignment, students will begin learning to make more effective decisions as rhetors who must make rhetorically effective choices beyond the bounds of the classroom.

We've chosen the professional email assignment as a pilot for the ICaP common assignment for the following reasons:

1. It aligns easily with ICaP outcomes, particularly rhetorical awareness (Outcome 1) and writing with conventions (Outcome 2). These outcomes are essential to what we teach in ENGL 106, and we want to be able to demonstrate that we teach them well.
2. By performing our pilot of the common assignment at the beginning of the semester, we can establish the effective foundations of rhetoric as taught in ENGL 106.
3. A professional email assignment is brief and can be slotted into a variety of approaches to teaching ENGL 106 without disrupting assignment scaffolding.
4. The skills required to compose strong professional emails are among those most highly prized by departments outside CLA.

Common Assignment Pilot Requirements

Sequence
The professional email assignment should be administered as part of the first or introductory unit of the semester, as an introduction to rhetoric in ENGL 106. The professional email assignment should be completed by students and turned in by the end of week two.

Shared Rubric
The professional email assignment operates with an outcomes-based rubric, which will be used to assess de-identified student writing samples from the assignment. You must include the outcome rubric criteria in your own classroom rubric for the assignment. With that said, we recognize that this may not be the format for evaluation you would like to provide directly to your students. You may customize the format of the shared rubric for your students--for instance, you may translate it into a holistic rubric, or use a scale without points attached, so long as you are still teaching students with the shared rubric criteria in find. When collecting the common assignment, ICaP will ask for your students' email assignments in addition to your graded rubric evaluations.

Assignment Sheet and Topics
This common assignment uses a common assignment sheet included in this guide. You may customize its format to be consistent with your course, but please preserve the two email scenarios, which will be used for assessing the students' writing.

Project 1: Professional Email (50 points)

ENGL 106E: Digital Rhetorics
Fall 2018

Description of the Assignment

Writing email suitable for variable professional situations is a skill that takes time and practice, and is an exemplary introduction to the idea of a rhetorical situation. A strong email will anticipate information the recipient may need, answer questions before they are asked, be tonally appropriate, and accomplish the sender's objective. Thus, in order to write an appropriate, clear email, a sender must consider these basics foundations of rhetoric:

1. **Audience:** Who will be receiving my message and what do I know about them?
2. **Message:** What do I need to say?
3. **Purpose:** What do I want to accomplish? What's the best outcome?

In this assignment, you will write **two** distinct emails for two distinct situations:
1. In the first email, you will write to an instructor about a missed assignment or exam you would like to attempt to make up. You will create your own reasons for the make-up.
2. In the second email, you will write to a fellow student with whom you're working on a group project that isn't going so well. This email is meant to help establish better deadlines, clarity, communication, teamwork, or any of the above—you can invent a situation for this email or consider a problematic group project you've worked on in the past to create your reasons for this email.

In both situations, you will need to consider the rhetorical situation and how to address your recipient in order to get what you want. You also need to consider the most appropriate ways to address these individuals—not only **what** you say but **how** you say it. How do you address them in terms of salutation? How do you consider word choice and tone? How do you approach a situation in which you desperately need a little consideration?

Note: you will submit this assignment as a document uploaded to Blackboard, *not* as an actual email. This is an example of *writing in scenario*, which means we enter a situation and treat it as though it is a real-world scenario even though we are merely practicing for class.

Format

Include the information that would be present if you were to print an email, except for the date/time, like so:

From: Student McStudentson smcstuden@purdue.edu
To: Stuffy Professor stuffyprof@purdue.edu
Re: WHOOPS LOL I MISSED THE TEST

Yo Prof–

Here you'll write the body of the email, with salutation and closing as appropriate. Emails shouldn't be any longer than necessary for the situation. Also Make *sure* you coinsidier editing and Formatting for READABILITY.

Don't forget to include an appropriate signature block (with name and identifying information).

Insert a horizontal line or some other break between the two messages. Both e-mails should be written in the same document.

Thanks,

Student McStudentson
Student's Info Signature Block

Submission and Due Date

[Instructors: Insert your own submission and due date information, but we have included an example below you may find helpful.]
This assignment is worth **50 points**, should be approximately **200 words** in length, and is due (on Blackboard) **Thursday, August 31, by 11:59 P.M**. *Late papers will not be accepted or graded*. Once your papers have been uploaded, I will grade and leave feedback on Blackboard.

Grading Criteria

[Instructors: We have provided both a grading rubric and the assessment rubric, as well as the following list of criteria effective emails should demonstrate. You may create your own rubric if you like, but we wanted you to be aware of the rubric used for assessing the assignment at a departmental level. You may use the criteria below in your assignment sheet, for your lesson plans, or not at all; it is purely informational.]

Focus and Development:
- The professional email includes a clearly and concisely presented central problem regarding making up an assignment and seeks a resolution to this central problem
- The body of the emails present this central idea with relevant explanation and contains details and descriptions that assist the reader in understanding its central problem
- The email assignment has a clear audience, purpose, and message
- The professional email assignment anticipates information the recipient may need and covers its topic in appropriate depth

Organization and Coherence:
- The professional email has a clear beginning, middle, and end, and the paragraphs are organized appropriately
- The assignment is clearly organized and is formatted in a clear understandable way
- The assignment includes two separate emails—one to me, and one to a more formal professor

Sentences, Phrasing, and Tone:
- Each sentence contributes to the main points of the professional email
- There is appropriate variety in sentence construction
- The overall tone of the email assignment is consistent, professional, and appropriate for the audience's expectations

Editing, Proofreading, and Design:
- Sentences are consistently correctly phrased and punctuated
- The language is precise, and the wording exact and accurate
- Mechanics, usage, grammar, and spelling are correct

Professional Email Outcomes Rubric: Outcomes #1 & #2

	1 (Poor)	2 (Fair)	3 (Good)	4 (Excellent)
Genre Conventions	The writer uses few genre conventions of emails, such as appropriate length, body structure, subject line, salutation, and closing/signature.	The writer uses some genre conventions of emails, such as appropriate length, body structure, subject line, salutation, and closing/signature.	The writer mostly utilizes genre constraints and conventions, such as appropriate email length, body structure, subject line, salutation, and closing/signature.	The writer leverages understanding of genre constraints and conventions, such as appropriate email length, body structure, subject line, salutation, and closing/signature.
Rhetorical Awareness & Situation	The writer does not respond to different audiences, contexts, and rhetorical situations.	The writer employs some strategies to respond to different audiences, contexts, and rhetorical situations.	The writer employs purposeful strategies to respond to different audiences, contexts, and rhetorical situations (one email to a professor and one to a peer).	The writer employs effective strategies to respond to different audiences, contexts, and rhetorical situations (one email to a professor and one to a peer).
Purpose & Persuasion	In each email, the writer makes no request or attempt to persuade.	In each email, the writer makes an unpersuasive request.	In each email, the writer makes a somewhat persuasive request.	In each email, the writer is persuasive in making a distinct, measurable request.
Polished Writing & Credibility	The writer fails to produce polished or readable prose.	The writer produces prose with some errors that impact readability.	The writer produces prose with few errors that impact readability.	The writer builds credibility through polished, readable prose.

Sample Adapted Classroom Rubric for Professional Email

__/5 Creator Ethos – All required parts of assignment (two distinct emails) are present, and in the format required (Word document recreating email situation).

__/15 Genre Considerations – Emails include clear, specific subject lines; email signature is present; closing and sign–off is present and appropriate to the rhetorical situation of each email.

__/10 Purpose – Each email includes a distinct "ask." Emails avoid vague language. Emails anticipate information recipients may need and topics are covered in sufficient depth.

__/10 Audience Awareness –Each email demonstrates a clear understanding of its intended audience. Forms of address and tone may change between emails as appropriate.

__/5 Structure/Organization – Emails are of an appropriate length, with clear organization around the situation. Emails have a clear beginning, middle, and end.

__/5 Line-level considerations – Emails are devoid of typos or errors that impact readability.

(Note to instructors: This is only a sample rubric; you can adapt your own, in your style, but know that we will assess collected samples on the rubric in the previous page.)

Designing a Unit of Study for the Professional Email

Our students come into the classroom with different notions of "rhetoric," but all can agree that emailing someone to ask for help or consideration can be quite difficult. Thus the professional email assignment offers a route into the rhetorical situation—and the theory grounding our teaching of rhetoric—that is immediately pertinent to our students regardless of major, experience, or knowledge. Beginning the semester with a professional email assignment is a low-stakes way to talk about high-stakes issues and to set a foundation for the entire path of the course—and encouraging your students to begin immediately practicing writing rhetorical appeals grounded in theory allows for a more robust understanding of these concepts when they begin to leverage ideas of ethos, logos, and pathos to analyze and deconstruct texts.

No matter how in-depth an approach you take, your professional email unit should not require more than two weeks time from introduction to turn-in, making this a modular unit that can be fit into almost any classroom and approach.

Begin at the Beginning
Start students with readings and discussions on rhetoric, and ground examples for them in practical situations

Audience activity: consider having students try audience activities in class. What happens if they are involved in an auto accident? How do they text a friend versus a parent or other caregiver? How do they send a message about missing a coffee date when it's a friend versus a potential romantic interest? Use activities that demonstrate differences between receivers of messages and differences in how we craft messages for those receivers. Discussing strategies for the second email scenario in class may be particularly helpful; students may not know where to begin with addressing an underperforming colleague.

The Nuts and Bolts
Students know how an email should look; they've been sending them for years! But delving briefly into the history of emails and memos may help students see why some information is privileged in emails and to consider the crafting of emails from fresh perspectives.

Important topics to discuss: Subject line (best practices), salutations (do we need them?), forms of address (Mr./Mrs./Ms/Professor/Dr. - how do we know? How do we find out?), paragraph structure, closing (is "best" always best?), and email signature (what's included? How do you do it?).

Editing and Proofreading in the Rhetorical Situation
Professional emails become a lot less professional when they're full of typos, but this is a good time to get students thinking about the differences between editing/revising and proofreading.

Activities and approaches: Linda Haynes' Ape Exercise is a great conversation-starter for editing and what happens when we edit too much vs. too little, and working on the Paramedic Method can help students put editing skills into practice (https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/635/01/).

<u>**Ape Exercise (by Linda Haynes)**</u>
You need to set up the exercise properly.
First, the prep work:
1. Copy/paste the sentences at the bottom of this page. Increase the point size to 18-36 and put space around the sentences.
2. Print one copy for every team. (Put no more than 3 or 4 students on a team.)
3. Cut the sentences apart before you give them to the teams. Each team will have one set of sentences on slips of paper that they'll work with.

Next, in class:
1. Ask teams to agree on an order for the sentences that makes sense to them.
2. Next, tell the teams to combine the five sentences into a single sentence. Give them the proper guidelines for doing so: they may omit words, they may change words as long as they don't change the intent of the sentence, and they must use proper punctuation. As soon as they are ready, ask each team to write their single sentence on the board.
3. Count the words in each sentence before the writer sits down. Write the number of words and circle it next to each entry.
4. Begin a healthy competition by encouraging teams to reduce the number of words in their sentences. Depending on how you present this activity, the competition can be fierce.
5. At some point, you can stop the competition and talk about how meanings may have changed, what choices the writing teams made in their revisions, or about anything else that presented itself in the activity. You may be surprised at the issues that arise.

Hundreds of people dressed up in gorilla outfits.

They ran through the streets of London.

They wanted to bring awareness to the public.

The awareness they want to make public concerns the plight of apes.

The apes are endangered.

The original sentence, as taken off a trailer from CNN:
Hundreds of people ran through the streets of London dressed in gorilla outfits to bring awareness to the plight of the endangered apes.