

Technical Communication Graduate Handbook

M.A. in Technical Communication

Graduate Certificate in Technical Communication



BOISE STATE UNIVERSITY

COLLEGE OF ARTS AND SCIENCES

Department of English

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Program Introduction

The technical communication program at Boise State University offers two options for graduate-level study:

- M.A. in Technical Communication
- Graduate Certificate in Technical Communication

At Boise State, we see technical communication as a humanistic discipline; that is, we approach it as a set of principles, tools, and practices that enable people to communicate with each other for mutual benefit. Technical communication is a major means by which people navigate through a high-tech world, but our emphasis always remains on the needs of people.

This means that students in the technical communication graduate program are given practical, rhetorical, and theoretical knowledge about how to write with and about technical, scientific, medical, and/or environmental topics by using modes and technologies such as websites, graphics, text, audio, video, and more. Students in the technical communication program at Boise State become experts in learning about technical or scientific information and then communicating that information to everyday audiences.

Virtually everyone who holds a job does some technical communication, but there are some 50,000 technical communicators in the United States who are specialists in creating, shaping, and transmitting technical information so that people can use it safely, effectively, and efficiently. Although most of the courses in our program involve high-technology tools, the core of technical communication is clear written and oral communication. The study of ethics is fundamental in our approach to technical communication: the writer's understanding that the people who read and use the information must be treated with dignity, as people rather than simply as users. Also fundamental is the writer's awareness that technical communication can affect various constituencies—from co-workers to customers to the general public—and even the environment itself.

Why earn a graduate degree in technical communication at Boise State University?

- You will learn valuable skills relevant to today's changing workplace.
- Our graduate program caters specifically to working professionals with flexible evening, hybrid, and face-to-face courses. Plus, our graduate certificate can be earned in conjunction with any other degree on campus.
- Our faculty-to-student ratio is low.
- We are located in Idaho's state capital, providing excellent networking and employment opportunities.

Our graduate programs are designed to meet your goals, whether it's to increase your current skills, start a new career as a technical communicator, or pursue doctoral study. Technical communication is a strong and growing profession, and the development of new communication technologies such

as XML and single sourcing suggests that the market for graduates who can think and communicate effectively about technical subjects will continue to grow.

M.A. Technical Communication

Students in our M.A. in Technical Communication (MATC) program learn both the theory and practice of technical communication, drawing on such disciplines as professional writing, rhetoric and composition, STEM communication, linguistics, cognitive psychology, human-computer interaction, sociology, and cultural and gender studies. They also get hands-on experience in writing, editing, print and digital design, web development, and usability studies, as well as a foundational understanding of both ethics and oral communication.

Graduate Certificate in Technical Communication

The Graduate Certificate in Technical Communication enables students in any field to choose a unified, coherent group of courses in technical communication and related disciplines.

Learning Outcomes for Graduate Programs in Technical Communication

Upon completion of the M.A. in Technical Communication or the Graduate Certificate in Technical Communication at Boise State University, students will be able to:

- Analyze the rhetorical situation and respond in an effective and ethical way that acknowledges diversity.
- Effectively plan, design, and ethically create innovative technical communication artifacts for targeted audiences.
- Collaborate and communicate with classmates, instructor, and stakeholders to create technical communication artifacts that meet the needs of the target audience.
- Edit technical documents, and communicate chosen revisions empathetically, clearly, concisely, and ethically to various stakeholders.
- Evaluate audience characteristics and needs to improve user experiences, as well as plan, design, and conduct usability tests to solve specific problems.
- Plan, design, deliver rhetorically appropriate oral communication.
- Engage in the profession/community of technical communication and effectively advocate for its value.

Contact Information

For questions about applying to a graduate program in technical communication, please contact Lauren Hershey, Administrative Assistant II, at laurenhershey@boisestate.edu.

For questions about the graduate programs in technical communication, please contact Dr. Roger Munger, Director of Technical Communication, at rmunger@boisestate.edu.

Visit us online at <https://english.boisestate.edu/techcomm>.

Application and Admission

Application Process for M.A. in Technical Communication

Applications for the M.A. in Technical Communication program are reviewed as they are received; there is no application deadline for regular admission. You may enter the program in either the fall or the spring semester. However, **if you wish to apply for a [competitive assistantship](#), you must submit all materials by January 15.**

To apply, you will need to upload the following documents to your application file via the Graduate College Graduate Admissions Application system at <https://graduatecollege.boisestate.edu>.

- A 1,000-word statement on why you wish to enter the MATC program. In part, this statement functions as a writing sample. In part, it helps the faculty determine if this program is appropriate for you; that is, it helps faculty decide whether this program will help you achieve your educational and professional goals;
- Three letters of recommendation, from employers or professors. The faculty are looking for whether the references think you have the talent, skill, and professional work habits that will make it likely you will succeed in this graduate program; and
- A current résumé.

You are encouraged to apply to the M.A. in Technical Communication program if you possess a bachelor's degree with at least a 3.0 GPA. If you have a lower GPA, you may be admitted with provisional status, which stipulates that you must achieve a 3.0 GPA in the first 12 credits of your graduate coursework. There is no GRE requirement.

[Click here to apply to MATC via Boise State's Graduate College.](#) You will be instructed on how to upload the required documents.

Application Process for Graduate Certificate in Technical Communication

The minimum requirement for admission to the Graduate Certificate program is a baccalaureate degree from a regionally accredited college or university and admission to the Graduate College. To apply, you will need to upload the following documents to your application file via the Graduate College Graduate Admissions Application system at <https://graduatecollege.boisestate.edu>.

- A 500-word statement explaining how the Graduate Certificate relates to your broader educational goals; and
- A current resume.

[Click here to apply for a Graduate Certificate in Technical Communication via Boise State's Graduate College.](#) You will be instructed on how to upload the required documents.

Application Process for Non-Degree Seeking Students

If you are not interested in earning a degree but wish to take only one or several courses, you should apply to Boise State University as an unclassified graduate student. If you later decide that you wish

to earn the MATC, you must then be admitted to the MATC program. Of course, you may apply for admission to the Graduate College and matriculate in the MATC program at the same time.

Please note [this policy](#) restricting the awarding of MATC credits: a student may apply to the MATC degree requirements no more than 9 credits earned before he or she is accepted in the program.

The application process for non-degree seeking students is the same as it is for MATC applicants. You will need to upload a 1,000 word statement, three letters of recommendation, and a resume.

[Click here to apply as a non-degree seeking graduate student via Boise State's Graduate College.](#) You will be instructed on how to upload the required documents.

Graduate Assistantships

The MATC program offers funding through competitive teaching and Writing Center assistantships. Teaching assistantships allow graduate students to teach in our nationally-recognized first-year writing program, as well as potentially teach English 202: Introduction to Technical Communication in their second year. Writing Center assistantships provide opportunities for students to serve as writing consultants, mentor new consultants, and participate in Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC) activities. Students who secure an assistantship are also eligible to apply for the Graduate Residential Scholars Program (GRSP).

Non-resident students are also encouraged to apply for our [GEM Grad Scholarship](#).

Note: The annual deadline to apply for an assistantship is January 15.

Teaching Assistantship

The M.A. in Technical Communication (MATC) program offers teaching assistantships over a two-year period. The positions are competitive, and the number of new assistantships available each fall varies. Assistantships carry stipends of at least \$10,451 per year plus a waiver of in-state or out-of-state tuition and fees. They are renewable for a second year given satisfactory performance in both teaching and graduate coursework.

Graduate teaching assistants teach three courses a year, starting with one course in their first semester. In a week-and-a-half workshop before classes begin in the fall, and in a course during their first semester (ENGL 598), they receive intensive training in teaching freshman composition, including mentoring in pedagogy and composition and rhetorical theory. MATC teaching assistants may use ENGL 598 as an elective course toward their MATC.

Teaching assistants receive intensive training in teaching freshman composition and work with a faculty mentor as well as peers in the teaching assistantship program. MATC teaching assistants have the opportunity to teach an introductory technical communication course in their second year.

Writing Center Assistantships

In addition to the teaching assistantships, the MATC program also offers competitive assistantships in the Writing Center, which carry the same stipend and waiver of tuition/fees. Students interested in this position must apply for a teaching assistantship, but also include an additional page in their application that discusses their experience with and interest in writing center work (see directions below). This assistantship may be renewed for a second year, given satisfactory performance in the Center and in graduate work, but a student may choose to switch to a teaching assistantship instead.

The graduate writing center assistant is responsible for holding several consultation hours in the Center each week, for mentoring new consultants, for designing and producing resource materials for students and professors, and for helping the Director coordinate writing workshops and Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC) activities. Previous experience in a writing center is highly encouraged.

How to Apply for Assistantships

For Students Also Applying for Admission

To apply for a Teaching Assistantship, submit the following materials online through the Graduate College Graduate Admissions Application system at <https://graduatecollege.boisestate.edu>.

1. Submit all [required MATC program application materials](#), by January 15, in addition to the following materials.
2. Compose a one-page, single-spaced statement indicating why you would like this assistantship, what special qualifications you bring to it, and how the experience will affect your later professional plans. If you are interested in the Writing Center Assistantship, include a *second* one-page, single-spaced statement that discusses any previous writing center experience you have had and tells why you would like to be considered for this position.
3. Complete the [Teaching Assistantship for English Composition Application form](#). Your responses to the questions and the student essay in this application offer us more information about your background. We believe that as writers and students you have had enough experience to assess how a piece of writing can be improved.

Students are responsible for making sure that all application materials have been received.

For Current MATC Students

To apply for a Teaching Assistantship, complete the following steps:

- Complete items 2-3 above.
- Obtain three letters of recommendation from people familiar with your academic work.

For current students, all Assistantship application materials must be submitted directly to the [Director of the M.A. in English](#).

Students are responsible for making sure that all application materials have been received.

Graduate Program Requirements

Program Requirements for M.A. in Technical Communication

The MATC curriculum consists of five required courses, five electives, and a culminating portfolio.

Required Courses

- ENGL 511: Rhetorical Theory for Workplace Writers (3 credits)
- ENGL 512: Technical Rhetoric and Applications (3 credits)
- ENGL 513: Technical Editing (3 credits)
- ENGL 515: Visual Rhetoric and Information Design (3 credits)
- ENGL 535: User Experience (3 credits)
- ENGL 592: Portfolio (1 credit)

Elective Courses (Choose Five)

- ENGL 516: Topics in Print Document Production (3 credits)
- ENGL 518: Writing Software Documentation (3 credits)
- ENGL 519: Technical Publications Management (3 credits)
- ENGL 521: Topics in On-Screen Document Production (3 credits)
- ENGL 536: Proposal Development (3 credits)
- ENGL 537: Writing for Social Media and Online Communities (3 credits)
- ENGL 590: Internship (1-3 credits)

Program Requirements for Graduate Certificate in Technical Communication

The graduate certificate consists of three required courses and two electives.

Required Courses

- ENGL 512: Technical Rhetoric and Applications (3 credits)
- ENGL 513: Technical Editing (3 credits)
- ENGL 535: User Experience (3 credits)

Elective Courses (Choose Two)

- ENGL 511: Rhetorical Theory for Workplace Writers (3 credits)
- ENGL 515: Visual Rhetoric and Information Design (3 credits)
- ENGL 516: Topics in Print Document Production (3 credits)

- ENGL 518: Writing Software Documentation (3 credits)
- ENGL 519: Technical Publications Management (3 credits)
- ENGL 521: Topics in On-Screen Document Production (3 credits)
- ENGL 536: Proposal Development (3 credits)
- ENGL 537: Writing for Social Media and Online Communities (3 credits)
- ENGL 590: Internship (1-3 credits)

Electives Taken Outside the Technical Communication Program

Many of our students use outside electives to gain knowledge and skills that align with their academic and career goals but are not offered by our technical communication courses. Students have taken courses in such fields as business, communication, curriculum and instruction, educational technology, computer science, public policy and administration as well as from our English literature and rhetoric and composition programs. If you plan to take one or two outside electives, please review the prerequisites for the courses you are considering. Some require one or more graduate-level courses from that discipline as prerequisites.

Students using catalogs before 2016-2017 may apply to the degree no more than three credits in subjects other than technical communication. Student using 2016-2017 or more recent catalogs may apply to the degree no more than six credits in subjects other than technical communication. If you wish to apply courses outside of technical communication as electives, please contact the Director of Technical Communication (Dr. Roger Munger, rmunger@boisestate.edu) for approval before enrolling in the courses. In your message to the director, please explain how the course fits into your academic and/or career goals.

Internships

Enrolling in an internship is an elective option for our MATC and graduate certificate students. An internship allows you to gain valuable workplace experience and to investigate a specific career path. Typically, students complete three credit hours of internship. Students earn one credit for each 45 hours of internship work. Students may break up the three credit hours at different internships and during different semesters. For example, you might complete a two-credit internship at Company X in the summer and then complete a fall one-credit internship at Company Y. You can learn more about locating, evaluating, and succeeding in an internship by [reading this article](#) and by visiting our [Career Center](#).

For information about arranging internships and contacting our Internship Director, see the [internships information page](#) on the English Department website.

Please consult with your advisor to determine if an internship would be right for you.

Technical Communication Graduate Faculty

Our faculty are experienced and dedicated to helping our students succeed. Most of our faculty have several years of professional experience working as technical communicators, and many of our classes leverage our connections with the Boise State campus and local area community to help our students network, land internships, and learn through hands-on, real-world application.

The below are technical communication faculty who teach in our graduate programs.



Roger Munger, Professor; Director of Technical Communication

Ph.D. in Communication and Rhetoric, Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute

Interests: Writing for not-for-profits, Web 2.0, intercollegiate athletics, publications management, service learning



Carly Finseth, Assistant Professor

Ph.D. in Technical Communication and Rhetoric, Texas Tech University

Interests: Games and virtual worlds, documentation, instructional design, usability and interaction design, digital rhetorics



Jenn Mallette, Assistant Professor

Ph.D. in English, Rhetoric and Composition, University of Arkansas

Interests: Gendered experience on writing and professional identities in engineering disciplines, rhetoric of science, feminist science and feminist composition, public science



Michael Markley, Lecturer

M.A. in Technical Communication, Boise State University

Interests: Managing technical communication teams and projects, writing for nonprofit organizations, and emerging platforms for delivering technical content



Debra Purdy, Lecturer

M.A. in Technical Communication, Boise State University

Interests: Technical writing, writing pedagogy, visual communication and rhetorics

Graduate Advisor and Supervisory Committee

Once you are accepted into the MATC program, you will be assigned an advisor in the technical communication program, with whom you will meet to discuss your program of study. Your advisor will discuss with you your options regarding transferring graduate credits earned at other universities, selecting appropriate courses, and choosing the right culminating activity. If you have a preference about which technical communication faculty member you wish to be your advisor, please express that preference to Dr. Roger Munger (rmunger@boisestate.edu), the Director of Technical Communication, and he will try to accommodate you.

Technical Communication Advisors

The following technical communication faculty are members of the Graduate Faculty with an endorsement to be a chair or major advisor for a graduate student in technical communication. One of these faculty will be assigned as your advisor. If you are in the MATC program, you will also have a second faculty member who will serve as a second reader for your MATC portfolio.

- Dr. Carly Finseth
- Dr. Jenn Mallette
- Dr. Roger Munger

Reporting Problems, Concerns, or Issues of Misconduct

If you have any problems, concerns, or need to report an issue of misconduct, you may talk with your program advisor, your instructor, or the Director of Technical Communication. You are encouraged to meet with the English Department's Associate Chair for any reason, as well.

Violations of written University policies or regulations contained in the *Boise State University Graduate Catalog* or *University Student Handbook* may result in disciplinary action. See the entire [Boise State Student Code of Conduct](#) for more information. Some offenses include the following:

- Academic Dishonesty
- Alcohol Violations
- Bribery and/or Extortion
- Discrimination
- Disorderly Conduct
- Drug Violations
- Firearms/Weapons Violations
- Harassment
- Hazing
- Physical Assault
- Relationship Abuse and Violence
- Sexual Misconduct
- Stalking
- Theft
- Trespassing
- Unauthorized Entry

Sexual Misconduct

If you or someone you know is the victim of sex or gender-based discrimination or harassment, sexual assault, domestic violence, dating violence or stalking, know that the University has a full range of supportive resources and has a process for responding to such incidents. See University Policy 1065 for detailed information.

Victims may seek confidential support through the Gender Equity Center ([208-426-4259](tel:208-426-4259)), University Health Services ([208-426-1259](tel:208-426-1259)), or University Counseling Services ([208-426-1459](tel:208-426-1459)).

Students are also encouraged to file a report to the Title IX coordinator ([208-426-1258](tel:208-426-1258) or reportdiscrimination@boisestate.edu). A crime can be reported to University Public Safety ([208-426-6911](tel:208-426-6911)) and/or mail to: Boise Police. In an emergency, always call 911. Emergency telephones are located throughout the campus.

If you or someone you know is accused of sex or gender-based discrimination or harassment, sexual assault, domestic violence, dating violence or stalking, the University also provides resources to you. See University Policy 1065 for detailed information.

Finally, you can talk with your program advisor, your instructor, or the Director of Technical Communication. You are encouraged to meet with the English Department's Associate Chair for any reason, including sexual assault and/or misconduct.

Emergency Resources

Emergency	911
Boise City Police	208-426-6911
Campus Security	208-426-6911
Domestic Violence Hotline	208-343-7025
Family Advocacy Center	208-577-4400
Sexual Assault Hotline	208-343-7273
Suicide Prevention Hotline	800-564-2120
Women's Children's Alliance	208-343-3688

Boise State University Resources

English Department Main Office	208-426-3426
Advising & Academic Enhancement	208-426-4049
my.BoiseState/Registrar	208-426-2932
Campus ID – Information Desk	208-426-4147
Career Center	208-426-1747
Counseling Services	208-426-1459
Educational Access Center	208-426-1583
Financial Aid	208-426-1664

Health Center	208-426-1459
Housing	208-447-1001
Office of Student Rights & Responsibilities	208-426-1527
Parking	208-426-7275
Testing Services	208-426-2761
Gender Equity Center	208-426-4259
Veteran Services	208-426-3744

Boise State University Non-Discrimination Policy

It is the policy of Boise State University to comply with all federal, state and local authorities requiring nondiscrimination, including but not limited to Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Civil Rights Restoration Act of 1987, Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA), the Age Discrimination Act of 1975 and Executive Orders 12898 (Environmental Justice) and 13166 (Limited English Proficiency). Boise State University is an equal opportunity employer.

The University does not exclude from participation in, deny the benefits of, or subject any individual to discrimination on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability, income, protected veteran status, limited English proficiency or any other status protected under applicable federal, state or local law. For Boise State’s non-discrimination policies and grievance procedures, please see Boise State Policies 1060, 1065, and 1070 at policy.boisestate.edu.

For more information or if you believe you have been subject to discrimination on the basis of sex, sexual orientation or gender identity, please contact Boise State’s [Office of Institutional Compliance & Ethics](#), Riverfront Hall, Room 306, [208-426-1258](tel:208-426-1258).

For more information or if you believe you have been subject to discrimination on any other basis, please contact Boise State’s [Office of Institutional Compliance & Ethics](#), Riverfront Hall, Room 306, [208-426-1258](tel:208-426-1258).

You may also file a complaint with: U.S. Department of Education - Office of Civil Rights (OCR) 810 3rd Avenue #750, Seattle, WA 98104 [206-607-1600](tel:206-607-1600) OCR.Seattle@ed.gov

Equal Access to Students with Disabilities

Boise State University is committed to creating a diverse and inclusive campus environment by abiding by the letter and spirit of the Americans with Disabilities Act and Section 504 of the

Rehabilitation Act. Accordingly, the University does not discriminate against persons with disabilities and strives to provide an exceptional academic experience for students with disabilities by providing reasonable and appropriate accommodations for equal and easy access.

Boise State University's Educational Access Center (EAC) coordinates services to meet the educational needs of students with documented disabilities. The EAC works with students and faculty to arrange reasonable accommodations and promote an environment that is free of both physical and attitudinal barriers.

Students with disabilities needing accommodations to fully participate in academic programming should contact the EAC. All accommodations must be approved through the EAC prior to being implemented. To learn more about the accommodation process, visit the EAC's website at <http://eac.boisestate.edu>.

Completing Your Program Development Form

After meeting with your advisor and completing the [Program Development Form](#), you begin your progress toward the degree by enrolling in required and elective courses.

You should be aware of four university policies at this point:

- [Restriction on awarding credits](#)
- [Time limits for completing the degree](#)
- [Acceptable academic performance](#)
- [Admission to candidacy](#)

Preparing the MATC Portfolio

The portfolio is the culminating activity for your M.A. in Technical Communication degree. It must contain five or six substantial samples of your work that best demonstrate your ability to produce several types of effective technical communication. Students have submitted portfolios to complete their MATC degrees for decades. The one-credit course ENGL 592 (graded with Pass or Fail) allows you to complete the final MATC degree requirement. You should sign up for the ENGL 592 course taught by your advisor in the semester when you want to graduate.

As of Fall 2017, students are required to complete the following experiences for ENGL 592:

- Submit their portfolios to two MATC faculty members for review, revision, and approval.
- Present their portfolios to an audience of technical-communication students.
- Share their portfolios informally with a working communications professional (the “outside reader”) for discussion and feedback.

How Do I Submit My Portfolio?

You should submit your portfolio digitally, either through a shared folder on a platform like Google Docs or Dropbox, or perhaps on a website or wiki. Whatever you create must be self-contained; it should not link to content you don’t control. We must be able to archive a digital copy of your work at Boise State. Please contact your advisor to discuss which mode(s) of delivery would be most appropriate for your portfolio, as well as a timeline to complete your portfolio.

Who Reads My Portfolio?

Two MATC faculty members will review your portfolio. The first is your advisor, who is also your ENGL 592 instructor. The second will be selected by the MATC program director.

Your advisor will make the first round of comments. After your advisor approves, you will share the portfolio with the second faculty member. After the second faculty member approves, you will be ready to present your portfolio to an audience of technical-communication students and to the outside reader.

The outside reader you identify should be a professional whose work activities and interests are similar to your own. This person will comment informally on your portfolio, but the two faculty members are the ones who will evaluate your portfolio thoroughly.

What Do I Put in My Portfolio?

Your portfolio should include an overview, a résumé, and samples of your work.

Overview

This document introduces your portfolio. Each person’s overview will vary, but all should answer several questions:

- What is your professional background?

- Why did you enter the MATC program?
- What are the most significant things you learned in the MATC program that you will carry forward in your career?
- What pieces have you included in your portfolio?

Résumé

Include a current professional résumé. This is a technical document in its own right; ensure that it provides useful information and reflects appropriate principles of typography and layout.

Samples of Your Work

You should submit five or six substantial samples of your work in technical communication. These may be prior course assignments, documents you produced at work or in an internship, or documents created for some other organization or project. *If you created a document as an intern or an employee, secure permission before including it in your portfolio.*

You may submit one or two documents created collaboratively if you created a substantial portion of each one and you specify what you did.

You should write a separate introduction for each work sample. Each introduction should describe the rhetorical situation for each work sample, explain the choices you made in creating it, and reflect on what you learned from creating it. If the document is static and you can't update it, explain any changes you would make if you could revise it. If you can revise the document, explain the choices you made when doing so.

As an example of the above, [please see this portfolio created by MATC graduate Anna Lee](#). The collection of documents you include, and how you present them, may vary. Please consult with your advisor if you have any questions.

How Will I Schedule My Presentation to Students?

At the beginning of your ENGL 592 semester, you will identify dates and times that you expect to be available for your presentation in weeks 11–14 of the semester. Your advisor will consult with the director of the MATC program to identify technical-communication classes that meet during those times. Your advisor will then coordinate with the instructor of a class that meets at the appropriate time to schedule your presentation.

Your presentation should last 20–25 minutes, plus time for questions from the audience. Your presentation should demonstrate that you have met the following MATC learning outcome (#7): Plan, design, and deliver rhetorically appropriate oral communication. Your ENGL 592 instructor (your advisor) will evaluate your presentation and determine if you have completed it successfully. Communicate with your advisor early to ensure you understand the criteria for evaluation.

How Will I Get Feedback from the Outside Reader?

Early in your ENGL 592 semester, you must work with your advisor to identify someone working as a professional communicator to give you feedback on your portfolio as an outside reader. You will share your portfolio with this person after your two faculty members have approved it.

The outside reader you identify should be a professional whose work activities and interests are similar to your own. Such people might include technical writers, technical editors, grant writers, usability specialists, proposal specialists, corporate communication experts, and so on. This person should not be someone you already know well; use this opportunity to expand your professional network.

After you have identified someone whom your advisor approves, ask this person if he or she will review your portfolio and provide you with informal feedback (via phone, email, in-person meeting, or video chat). The content of this feedback does not impact your grade, but you are required to receive this feedback. The outside reader should contact your advisor via email or phone to confirm having reviewed your portfolio and having talked with you about it.

Portfolio Development Timeline

Below is a general timeline for completing your portfolio in time to walk across the graduation stage to receive your MATC diploma. We advise you to start thinking about your portfolio before your last semester. Some MATC students have had their graduation delayed until the next semester because they failed to start early enough and failed to invest the necessary time to craft a passing portfolio.

Before Your Final Semester

1. Register for next semester's ENGL 592 Portfolio. You enroll in ENGL 592 in the semester in which you intend to graduate. Ask your advisor (who will serve as chair of your portfolio committee) for a permission number to enroll in his or her section.
2. Review the Registrar's [graduation checklist](#).
3. One to two months before your final semester, contact your advisor to discuss his or her specific guidelines for your portfolio. You might also ask to see examples of passing portfolios from prior semesters.
4. About a month before your final semester, send your advisor a list and brief description of the portfolio pieces you are considering for inclusion in your portfolio. Get approval to start assembling your portfolio.
5. Begin assembling your portfolio: start writing your overview and your reflective introductions for each portfolio piece.

Start of Your Final Semester

1. [Apply for graduation](#) on your my.Boisestate.edu account.
2. Begin thinking about who you will recommend as your third reader of your portfolio. This person should be a professional communicator. Although this person does not have to hold a job title of *technical communicator* or *technical writer*, this person must have the background to provide informal feedback on the quality of your portfolio work. Identify someone you have met through networking whom you do not already know well. Please send your advisor the name, job title, and email address of your choice for a third reader, as well as a brief description of why this person would be able to provide appropriate feedback.
3. No later than end of the second week of classes, share drafts of your overview and 1-2 reflective introductions with your advisor to make sure you are on target.
4. Identify some dates and times toward the end of the semester when you will be able to present your portfolio to an audience of technical-communication students. Your advisor will work with other faculty to identify a time and date for your presentation.
5. No later than week four, assemble a complete, well-edited first draft of your portfolio with all necessary elements and share with your advisor for feedback. Note: The two most common problems students encounter at this stage are (1) poor editing and (2) underdeveloped reflective statements, especially too brief a reflection on the weaknesses of a piece.
6. Make suggested revisions and resubmit to your advisor. Continue this process until your advisor determines your portfolio is ready for review by your second reader. Your second reader will be recruited by your advisor and is another technical communication faculty member.
7. No later than week seven, share your portfolio with your second reader. Make suggested revisions and resubmit to your second reader. Continue this process until your second reader determines your portfolio is ready for review by your third reader.
8. No later than week ten, share your portfolio with your outside reader identified and approved in step 2. The outside reader should provide informal feedback about how your portfolio is appropriate for the area in which you want to work. You may change your portfolio in response to the outside reader's comments before you submit it, but you don't have to. After you talk with the outside reader (via phone, email, video chat, or meeting in person), ask him or her to confirm your conversation with your advisor.
9. Present your portfolio to the audience of technical-communication students identified in step 4. Your presentation should last 20–25 minutes, plus time for questions from the audience. Your presentation should demonstrate that you have met the following MATC learning outcome: Plan, design, and deliver rhetorically appropriate oral communication
10. Provide your advisor with an electronic copy of your entire portfolio.

11. After presenting your portfolio to an audience, talking with the outside reader, and turning in your approved portfolio, you will receive a grade of Pass in your ENGL 592 course. You've cleared the last hurdle and you're ready to get your master's degree.

Graduate Course Rotations

Our curriculum has been designed so that our required courses are offered every year, with some of our electives rotating based on the calendar year. See below for our specific course rotations.

Fall Courses

ENGL 511 Rhetorical Theory for Workplace Writers (3 credits)

Offered every fall!

An introduction to rhetorical theories and concepts relevant to workplace settings, such as rhetorical genre theory, applied linguistics, ethics, and the rhetoric of science. Interdisciplinary approaches include cultural studies, STEM communication, linguistics, psychology and sociology.

ENGL 513 Technical Editing (3 credits)

Offered every fall!

An advanced course in the editing of technical documents. Major projects are related to each student's field of interest. Topics of study include the theory and ethics of editing, content editing, copy editing, developmental editing, production editing, and online editing. PREREQ: ADM/PROG or PERM/INST.

ENGL 516 Topics in Print Document Production (3 credits)

Offered in even years (Fall 2018, 2020, 2022, etc.)

Study and application of the principles and techniques involved in taking print documents from conception to production. Topics will vary but can include desktop publishing, estimating time and cost, selecting paper and binding, working with pre-press and printing companies, and selecting appropriate distribution systems. The course assumes experience with personal computers and desktop publishing software. This course may be taken twice for credit. PREREQ: ADM/PROG or PERM/INST.

ENGL 535 User Experience (3 credits)

Offered every fall!

User experience focuses on understanding—and designing experiences tailored to—human behavior. In this course learn to create successful visual and emotional user experiences while exploring links between usability and desirability, humanity and technology. PREREQ: ADM/PROG or PERM/INST.

ENGL 536 Proposal Development (3 credits)

Offered in odd years (Fall 2019, 2021, 2023, etc.)

Study of principles of effective proposal development and grant writing for businesses and nonprofits. Topics include identifying funding sources, developing grant applications, creating proposals in response to requests/call for proposals, writing collaboratively within an organization, and giving convincing and audience-appropriate presentations. PREREQ: ADM/PROG or PERM/INST.

ENGL 590 Internship (1-3 credits)

Offered every fall!

An actual work experience during at least one semester in which the student creates a substantial body of work in technical communication for a specific audience. This body of work should demonstrate at a professional level the application of the principles learned in previous course work. For information about arranging internships and contacting the Internship Director, see the internships information page. PREREQ: None.

ENGL 592 Portfolio (1 credit)

Offered every fall!

A broad-based selection of significant student work that is used to appraise student performance and professional development. A portfolio reflects the depth and breadth of a student's educational growth since entering the graduate program. Portfolios may include, but are not limited to, classroom examinations, journals, writing samples, publishable scholarship, professional projects, annotated bibliographies, and artistic endeavors. Pass/fail only. PREREQ: Admission to candidacy and approval of the student's graduate committee.

Spring Courses

ENGL 512 Technical Rhetoric and Applications (3 credits)

Offered every spring!

An advanced study of technical communication for those students who are or expect to become professional technical communicators. Topics of study include modern theories of rhetoric, focusing on semantics, syntax, readability, pragmatics, and hypertext. Students will write reports, proposals, manuals, and online documents related to their own backgrounds and fields of interest. PREREQ: ADM/PROG or PERM/INST.

ENGL 515 Visual Rhetoric and Information Design (3 credits)

Offered every spring!

A study and application of the rhetorical elements of design, including color, line, form, images, and type. Students will be introduced to desktop publishing, graphics, and Web-authoring software. Students will apply principles of visual rhetoric in creating print and online technical documents. PREREQ: ADM/PROG or PERM/INST.

ENGL 518 Writing Software Documentation (3 credits)

Offered in odd years (Spring 2019, 2021, 2023, etc.)

The study and application of principles for creating effective print and online documentation. Topics can include content design and organization, writing style, graphic design, hypertext, and usability testing. The course also addresses strategies for working successfully as a technical communicator. PREREQ: ADM/PROG or PERM/INST.

ENGL 519 Technical Publications Management (3 credits)

Offered in odd years (Spring 2019, 2021, 2023, etc.)

Analysis and application of the principles of management and organizational behavior as they apply to the technical publications field. In a case-study environment focused on the publications process, students learn the techniques and practices of managing technical publications groups within organizational settings, while studying relevant principles of motivational theory and human behavior. PREREQ: ADM/PROG or PERM/INST.

ENGL 521 Topics in On-Screen Document Production (3 credits)

Offered in even years (Spring 2018, 2020, 2022, etc.)

Study and application of the principles involved in designing, creating, and managing information on the screen. Topics vary but can include advanced Web design, help systems, and multimedia applications. Students practice effective hypertext and screen-design techniques from the fields of cognitive science, software psychology, and human factors. This course may be taken twice for credit. PREREQ: ADM/PROG or PERM/INST.

ENGL 537 Writing for Social Media and Online Communities (3 credits)

Offered in even years (Spring 2018, 2020, 2022, etc.)

Apply interactive Internet-based technologies to easily collaborate, share, link and generate content. Analyzing user-created content and online communities, students will learn techniques and best practices for using the social web to enhance workplace communication using tools such as blogs, micro-blogs, wikis, social networking sites, tag clouds, and syndication. PREREQ: ADM/PROG or PERM/INST.

ENGL 590 Internship (1-3 credits)

Offered every fall!

An actual work experience during at least one semester in which the student creates a substantial body of work in technical communication for a specific audience. This body of work should demonstrate at a professional level the application of the principles learned in previous course work. For information about arranging internships and contacting the Internship Director, see the internships information page. PREREQ: None.

ENGL 592 Portfolio (1 credit)

Offered every fall!

A broad-based selection of significant student work that is used to appraise student performance and professional development. A portfolio reflects the depth and breadth of a student's educational growth since entering the graduate program. Portfolios may include, but are not limited to, classroom examinations, journals, writing samples, publishable scholarship, professional projects, annotated bibliographies, and artistic endeavors. Pass/fail only. PREREQ: Admission to candidacy and approval of the student's graduate committee.

Graduate Course Planner

Our coursework has been designed so that working students can complete an M.A. in Technical Communication in just five semesters. If students want to graduate sooner, they may take more courses each semester, or take an elective course or two in summer sessions.

See below for our recommended course schedules. We strongly recommend that working students take no more than two courses a semester. This allows students to balance their courses with work and family duties. Full-time students take three courses each semester. If you have any questions about what may be the best choice for you, or if you would like to pursue an alternate plan, please contact your advisor.

For Students Who Will Start Coursework During a Fall Semester:

Semester 1 (Fall)

- ENGL 511: Rhetorical Theory for Workplace Writers; and
- ENGL 513: Technical Editing

Semester 2 (Spring)

- ENGL 512: Technical Rhetoric and Applications; and
- ENGL 515: Visual Rhetoric and Information Design

Semester 3 (Fall)

- ENGL 535: User Experience; and
- If an in even year (Fall 2018, 2020, 2022, etc.):
 - ENGL 516: Topics in Print Document Production
- Or, if in an odd year (Fall 2017, 2019, 2021, etc.):
 - ENGL 536: Proposal Development

Semester 4 (Spring)

- If in an odd year (Spring 2017, 2019, 2021, etc.):
 - ENGL 518: Writing Software Documentation; and
 - ENGL 519: Technical Publications Management
- Or, if an even year (Spring 2018, 2020, 2022, etc.):
 - ENGL 521: Topics in On-Screen Document Production; and
 - ENGL 537: Writing for Social Media and Online Communities

Semester 5 (Fall)

- **Graduation!**
- If in an even year (Fall 2018, 2020, 2022, etc.):
 - ENGL 516: Topics in Print Document Production;
 - ENGL 590: Internship; and
 - ENGL 592: Portfolio
- If in an odd year (Fall 2017, 2019, 2021, etc.):
 - ENGL 536: Proposal Development;
 - ENGL 590: Internship; and
 - ENGL 592: Portfolio
- If for some reason you have already taken both ENGL 516 and ENGL 536, see your advisor about exploring additional elective options.

For Students Who Will Start Coursework During a Spring Semester:

Semester 1 (Spring)

- ENGL 512: Technical Rhetoric and Applications; and
- ENGL 515: Visual Rhetoric and Information Design

Semester 2 (Fall)

- ENGL 511: Rhetorical Theory for Workplace Writers; and
- ENGL 513: Technical Editing

Semester 3 (Spring)

- If in an odd year (Spring 2017, 2019, 2021, etc.):
 - ENGL 518: Writing Software Documentation; and
 - ENGL 519: Technical Publications Management
- Or, if an even year (Spring 2018, 2020, 2022, etc.):
 - ENGL 521: Topics in On-Screen Document Production; and
 - ENGL 537: Writing for Social Media and Online Communities

Semester 4 (Fall)

- ENGL 535: User Experience; and

- If an in even year (Fall 2018, 2020, 2022, etc.):
 - ENGL 516: Topics in Print Document Production
- Or, if in an odd year (Fall 2017, 2019, 2021, etc.):
 - ENGL 536: Proposal Development

Semester 5 (Spring)

- ***Graduation!***
- ENGL 592: Portfolio; and
- If in an even year (Spring 2018, 2020, 2022, etc.): your choice of ***two*** of the following:
 - ENGL 521: Topics in On-Screen Document Production;
 - ENGL 537: Writing for Social Media and Online Communities; or
 - ENGL 590: Internship
- Or, if in an odd year (Spring 2017, 2019, 2021, etc.): your choice of ***two*** of the following:
 - ENGL 518: Writing Software Documentation;
 - ENGL 519: Technical Publications Management; or
 - ENGL 590: Internship