

Graded Project

Business and Technical Writing Final Exam

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BUSINESS AND TECHNICAL WRITING FINAL EXAM

For this exam, you'll submit a completed proposal in letter format presenting your solution for the problems at the Roanoke Branch. Your proposal should include an introduction as well as these labelled headings:

- Background
- Proposal
- Schedule
- Staffing
- Budget
- Request for Authorization

The Grading Criteria section below makes a good checklist for the expectations for each heading in this assignment in terms of content and format.

PREPARATION

Before you begin this project,

- Review the full information provided in the exam section of *Organizing, Illustrating, and Researching Your Material*.
- Review the content related to writing informal, internal proposals in *Proposals and Special Projects*. Study the differences between proposals and reports (like your field investigation report). The example used in the Informal Proposal section shows the general style and basic format you'll use for this final exam.
- Review the formatting for a full-block style business letter, covered in *Writing Effective Communications*.
- Review the explanation provided in each study unit related to writing style, tone, audience, word choice, grammar, spelling, and punctuation.

Gather the brainstorming, freewriting, and graded exams you've already prepared for previous assignments about Phoenix Advertising. You'll build on some of the details you developed and incorporate suggestions from the instructors evaluating your previous work. You'll also have to brainstorm further in order to create facts, figures, names, numbers, analysis, and proof to support your plan of action in your proposal.

Important Note: Do *not* submit your final draft for this project until you've received the evaluations of all your previous written exams, so you can make use of the evaluators' comments to improve your final project.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Phoenix Advertising, with its main headquarters in Charlotte, North Carolina, serves clients that include banks, insurance companies and local businesses such as restaurants and shops. You're the vice president of human resources management at Phoenix, and you report directly to Gregory S. Forest, the president of the company.

Mr. Forest advises you that in the last month, four clients have complained about the advertising work produced by the Roanoke, Virginia branch of the agency. He reminds you that the Roanoke branch and its clients are vital to the overall success of the company.

You've already investigated the branch and provided a report on the problems there and your recommendations for managing them (for study units *Organizing, Researching, and Illustrating Your Material* and *Writing the Report*). Mr. Forest has reviewed that report and now wants you to present to the executive team a specific proposal developing one of the recommendations you gave.

Consider the problems outlined in the background as well as the underlying causes you discovered and reported on previously.

Three graphic designers and four copywriters have threatened to quit because their creative contributions on projects are being rejected or revised without their input. They want to be part of a collaborative team, not to simply produce work that the art directors and account executives can alter arbitrarily. These changes to projects have also caused tension between the creative teams and account managers, causing an art director and an account manager to leave the agency.

In addition to the four clients who complained, others have not renewed their contracts with Roanoke. Several have posted poor reviews of the Roanoke branch on social media sites, leading to a drop in profits.

In an attempt to increase revenues, the branch is accepting new clients without evaluating the effects of the new accounts on the current project workload. As a result, without notice or compensation for the additional hours, all salaried employees are required to work long hours several days each week. Employee morale and productivity are declining day by day.

For your final project, you will write an informal proposal that focuses on one of the recommendations you made in your informal report. The following instructions show to properly complete this project.

PROCESS

Step 1

Choose one of the problems. Use your brainstorming notes and the investigative report for the recommendations you listed to solve that problem. Brainstorm further about the reasons for and causes of that one problem by delving even further into the “whys” of that problem. As you did previously, list several questions and review the answers you’ve discovered.

Explore those answers in greater depth to determine the fundamental causes of the problem. (Think of the problem as a set of symptoms of an illness that you need to treat. What disease is causing the symptoms? What areas of the body are affected by the disease?)

Step 2

Freewrite further on each recommendation you made in your investigative report for resolving this problem. Ask yourself questions about what must change, what you must make happen with the employees and departments at Roanoke to solve the problem so it won’t reoccur. Remember that your primary goal for the proposal is to revitalize the employees and departments in order to restore the Roanoke branch to full productivity. Use as a starting point any of the following that apply to the problem you’ve chosen:

- What can the executive team do to reverse the downward spiral of employee morale and increased workload requiring overtime?
- How can the executive team help the Roanoke branch retain its current clients and gain new ones?
- Is training needed for employees and/or managers? If so, what types of training are required? How can the executive team accomplish training over time to minimize impact on business?
- What can be done to streamline or reorganize the office procedures or to incorporate new technology to improve productivity? What training/support will then be needed to enable the office employees to embrace the changes and succeed?

Make sure you’ve done enough exploring in Step 1 to guide your creative efforts toward the changes you’ll make in Step 2. You want to ensure permanent change, so you must understand the exact nature of the causes in order to develop a detailed, logical solution.

Step 3

Wait a day or two before you review your prewriting, so you can return with fresh eyes to the project. Mark the information you'll use in your proposal and freewrite as needed to develop your ideas on resolving the situation and accomplishing your goal. Break the overall plan into individual parts or actions so you can develop each step in the process separately, organizing a logical flow for each phase from beginning to end.

- How much time is needed to accomplish each component or stage of your plan?
- Are there steps that must be completed before another phase can begin?
- How long will it take to complete each step?
- How will it impact the daily operations of the branch and headquarters?

Step 4

Now review the people at Roanoke and across Phoenix Advertising who you'll need to accomplish each part of your plan. Your proposal must use people from within the company—don't hire outside personnel. Create names and job titles as well as qualifications to fit your plan. Review your list of steps and for ask yourself:

- Who at Phoenix Advertising and/or the Roanoke branch has the experience, training, and qualifications to achieve this stage of my plan? What proves he or she is the one for the particular phase?
- What exactly do I want that person to do to accomplish this step? When? How?
- Who oversees the implementation of each phase?
- What progress reports must be provided to the executive team and when?
- What's my part in the proposed plan of action?

Step 5

Your next step is to itemize the costs involved in accomplishing each component of your plan as you outlined it in Step 3. You may need to research current costs of additional employees, training/motivational programs, or technology. Your figures should have some realistic basis. Remember to factor in costs such as the following:

- The number of employees involved in each phase
- The loss of employee time from completing regular obligations of current job
- Any travel or materials/workbooks needed for training

Create appropriate budgetary categories related to the stages of your plan. Establish an overall cost for each phase and within each phase itemize the different costs involved. Itemizing is important to provide clear support for your numbers and line items the executive team can review if the total cost for the proposal is too much for the company's budget.

Step 6

Organize your prewriting from Steps 1–5 using the following main headings:

Introduction

Background

Proposal

Schedule

Staffing

Budget

Request for Authorization

Step 7

Following the outline in Step 6, write a 2–5 page draft of your proposal in letter format. Use single spacing (unless the format requires more spacing), bold for headings, and italics for subheadings.

Introduction. Your Introduction is the only section not labeled with a heading. As your opening paragraph, it must begin with an interesting hook, contain your qualifications to prepare this proposal, and summarize the general problem and the benefits of your plan.

Background. The Background section must persuade the executive team that a dire need exists. Summarize the field investigation of your chosen problem and describe the causes of that problem. Include specific numbers and percentages (facts and figures) with explanations to show how you determined each contributed to the problem. Your

reasons must be based on the facts you uncovered, not the feelings of employees at the branch. End this section with a bulleted list of the key phases (stages) you'll develop in the proposal section to solve the causes. Phrase each stage as a key action goal.

Proposal. In your Proposal section, develop the steps needed to solve the problem. Use a phrase or word for each goal you listed in the Background section and italicize it. (You'll use the same phrases or words in the Schedule and Budget sections.) Then write at least one paragraph for each goal, outlining what actions are involved in that phase. Develop detailed, clear-cut solutions to the underlying issues and causes you identified in the Background section.

Schedule. Your Schedule section must use the italicized words to outline the phases described in the Background and Proposal. Use column format.

Staffing. The Staffing section describes, in paragraph form, the specific people, their qualifications, and their assignments as related to each phase of the proposed solution.

Budget. Your budget section must itemize the primary steps of your plan. Use a table format with your own headings for each column. The first column will use the phases from the project outlined in the Proposal and Schedule sections. Be sure to show under each major phase the related costs for accomplishing it.

Request for Authorization. The Authorization section must suggest a time frame for approval of your plan. Since this section is also the last thing the executive team will read, persuasively provide assurance that your proposal will achieve your goal. Summarize the problems and describe the benefits of your plan for Roanoke branch, their clients, and Phoenix Advertising as a whole.

Step 8

As you write, follow the ABC's for constructing your paragraphs. Allow your first draft to sit for several days before you revise it. During that time, review those sections of the study units discussing various aspects of writing, revising, and editing, such as

- Correct, varied construction of sentences
- Coherence
- Appropriate word choice for purpose and audience
- Grammar, spelling, and punctuation

After revising and editing your first draft as best as you can, ask another person to read your proposal aloud. Listen for awkward phrases, missing words, and unclear sentence flow. Also ask for the reader's feedback on clarity, logical flow, and so on. Finally, refer to the evaluation criteria and Step 7 as you give your work one final review before you complete your final draft.

SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

Prepare your final draft following the above formatting requirements. Type your work and save it as a text document. Include the following information at the top of each page of your proposal. The best way to ensure the information is on each page is to use the Header option in your word processing software.

Name, Student Number Exam number Page X of Y

Mailing Address

Email Address

Example:

Jane Smith, 12345678 35089400 Page 1 of 4

111 Education Drive

Any Town, PA 18515

jane.smith@yahoo.com

If you don't include the above information at the top of each page of your document, your exam may not be processed for grading.

GRADING CRITERIA

Your instructor will use the following criteria to evaluate the elements of your proposal.

	Skill Realized A / 100-90	Skill Developing B / 89-80	Skill Emerging C / 79-70	Skill Not Shown F / 69-0
Introduction: Clearly stated your qualifications for conducting the investigation and identified the problem the proposal will address.	5-4	4-3	3-2	2-0
Background: Provided detailed description of the problem, its causes and effects, and included a bulleted list of specific objectives.	15-14	14-13	13-12	12-0
Proposal and Schedule: Effectively developed each objective to address both the problem and the underlying issues that caused it; Provided detailed timeframes for completing each objective.	25-23	22-21	20-19	18-0
Staffing: Clearly identified in-house personnel to take responsibility for each objective; effectively described each employee's qualifications for the position.	10-9	9-8	8-7	7-0
Budget: Used a table (columns and rows) to clearly identify each line item in the budget, and expenses to objectives.	5-4	4-3	3-2	2-0
Request for Authorization: Effectively persuaded the team to adopt your plan; made a clear request for approval, and included a specific time frame for a response.	5-4	4-3	3-2	2-0
Audience, Tone, Diction and Coherence: Effectively maintained a professional tone as part of the company team; developed and organized information clearly and logically.	10-9	9-8	8-7	7-0
Grammar, sentence structure, and mechanics: Edited and proofread to ensure correct application of standard written conventions for American English.	15-14	14-13	13-12	12-0
General format: Correctly applied format for business letter; used headings for each section; used correct font, justification, header info.	10-9	9-8	8-7	7-0

SUBMITTING YOUR PROJECT

Each project is individually graded by your instructor and therefore takes up to a few weeks to grade.

Be sure that each of your files contains the following information:

- Your name
- Your student ID number
- The exam number (35089400)
- Your email address

To submit your graded project, follow these steps:

1. Go to <http://www.pennfoster.edu>.
2. Log in to your student portal.
3. Click on **Take Exam** next to the lesson you're working on.
4. Follow the instructions provided to complete your exam.

Be sure to keep a backup copy of any files you submit to the school!