Writing and Communication Skills for Security Professionals
(CDSE ED 201**)**

Defense Security Service (DSS)
Center for Development of Security Excellence (CDSE)
Education Division

SAMPLE COURSE SYLLABUS*

1   Course Description/Overview

The main purpose of the *Writing and Communication Skills for Security Professionals* course is to introduce students to the fundamentals of writing and presentation in the context of the Department of Defense. Mastering these fundamentals will allow students to communicate more effectively to a variety of audiences, using a range of methods. This course will focus primarily on the formal writing and communication tasks that security professionals are required to perform as a part of their jobs and to be successful as students in college-level or graduate courses. These tasks include:

- Identifying core components of effective writing and communication
- Applying logic and collected research to analyze a security concern or issue
- Writing oral presentations to various audiences
- Writing technical reports, recommendations, and incident reports
- Taking written statements in the course of an investigation
- Writing relevant portions of policy and regulatory documents
- Writing an academic paper in Chicago format

Although the specific writing and communication tasks discussed will be those most common to security professionals, the *Writing and Communication Skills* course will explore the fundamentals of effective writing and communication regardless of the specific output. These fundamentals are focus and coherence, organization and structure, development of ideas, voice, word choice, and conventions (such as punctuation, grammar, spelling, and research citation).

Because learning to write and to communicate both require practice, the course will include many opportunities for students to apply the fundamentals of writing and communication and to perform the most common types of writing tasks required of security professionals. In addition, students will read effective examples of these types of writing and will peer review each other's work against a defined rubric. Throughout the course, students will learn to perform thoughtful analysis, write clearly and simply, apply the Chicago style, and avoid grammatical mistakes, no matter the method of delivery or the content.

*Sample syllabus is subject to change each semester.

2   Target Audience/Prerequisites

The target audience for this course is DoD civilian and military defense security professionals from a variety of specializations. This course is designed at the collegiate level.

This course has no prerequisites.

3   Student Outcomes/Objectives

This course will enable students to:

1. Apply the six fundamentals of effective writing (focus and coherence, organization and structure, development of ideas, voice, word choice, and conventions)
2. Demonstrate the ability to write effectively in a variety of modes, including oral presentations, recommendations, incident reports, and policy documents
3. Write an academic research paper/report on a complex, security-related topic using the Chicago style

4   Delivery Method/Course Requirements

This is a college-level, distance-learning course in writing and communication skills for security professionals. The course consists of readings, prerecorded lectures and presentations, participation in the discussion forum, and written assignments.

The assigned course readings draw from a variety of resources, such as general and DoD-specific writing guidance, articles and essays on writing approaches, and examples of effective and ineffective writing products. Students are expected to familiarize themselves with the assigned topic and readings each week and be prepared to participate in the online discussion forum to discuss the readings critically.

Access to and ability to use a library will be necessary for course completion and success. It is recommended that students become acquainted with their local public, university, or DoD (such as the Pentagon or NDU) library. In many cases, these institutions will allow library cardholders remote access to their databases and electronic publications. As many resources as possible will be posted on CDSE's Sakai Collaborative Learning Environment (CLE).

5   General Course Requirements and Late Policy

Class participation is important and required. The completion of all readings assigned for the course is assumed. Since the class will be structured around discussion, completion of readings and all class assignments is crucial. It is

expected that assignments will be submitted on time (before midnight the day they are due).

However, it is recognized that students occasionally have serious problems that prevent work completion. If such a dilemma arises, students should contact the instructor in a timely fashion and will be expected to post their responses and submit their assignments in the following week.

Penalties will apply to students who fail to contact the instructor in advance of missing deadlines. Students will not receive credit for class participation that week. Students will have one additional week to submit a written assignment for credit; however, the instructor will deduct 10% from the final grade for accepting the late submission.

6 Academic Integrity Policy

Please refer to CDSE's Academic Integrity Policy for guidance on adhering to their high standards of academic integrity and security. You must acknowledge that you have read the CDSE policy by posting to the appropriate discussion Forum in Sakai, where you will find a copy of this policy. You will be held to these standards for every writing assignment you submit for this course.

7 Grading

The following provides an approximate breakdown of how each assignment contributes to the overall performance in the class.

Component of Grade	Percentage
Participation	15%
Paper 1: Audience Analysis	Pass/Fail[1]
Paper 2: Security Briefing Oral Presentation	5%
Paper 3: Analysis of Effective DoD Recommendations	10%
Paper 4: Recommendation	15%
Paper 5: Proposal and Annotated Bibliography	5%
Paper 6: Incident Report	10%
Paper 7: Policy Document	10%
Final Research Paper	30%
TOTAL	**100%**

[1] Students will receive a pass/fail grade for this assignment as part of their overall participation grade.

A letter grade will be assigned to each graded assignment, following the grading scale below:

A = 90% – 100%
B = 80% – 89%
C = 70% – 79%
D = 60% – 69%
F = 59% and below

Written assignments will be graded following the rubric and the criteria below.

Note: The rubric below is a general one that will be used as a starting point for all assignments. It will be adapted specifically for each individual assignment.

Element Evaluated	Evaluation Criteria			
	A-Excellent 90-100%	**B-Good 80-89%**	**C-Below Standards 70-79%**	**D/F Failure 69 or below%**
Argument or Thesis	Strong and specific argument easily identifiable for reader	A solid argument identifiable to reader	Generalized or vague argument not readily apparent to reader	No identifiable argument to reader
	Major points and research reinforce the argument throughout the paper	Most points reinforce the argument throughout the paper	Some points reinforce the argument, but most body paragraphs fail to reinforce the argument	Body paragraphs lack cohesion and fail to express a uniform idea
Critical Thinking or Analysis	Clear presentation of critical thinking related to the issues, substance, points raised, and arguments	Demonstrates critical thinking well, but could develop some points or explore others in greater depth	Shows some critical thinking, but overall shallow analysis of topic—must delve deeper into subject or explore subject in depth	Fails to demonstrate critical thinking, shallow discussion of subject

Element Evaluated	Evaluation Criteria			
Development of Ideas	Ideas are fully developed	Most ideas are fully developed	Ideas listed or briefly explained	Little or no development of ideas
	Thought-provoking	Some ideas are thoughtful	Information left out leaves minor gaps between ideas	Missing information causes gaps that prevent understanding
Application of Theory and Research	Exhibits clear application of theory and research to reinforce the argument and the major ideas	Demonstrates a solid understanding of theory and research to reinforce the argument and most major ideas	Only demonstrates some understanding of theory and research and fails to use it to reinforce the argument and major ideas	Fails to demonstrate understanding of theory and research and no clear use of research to reinforce argument and major ideas
Word Choice	Use of terminology is correct in all instances	Terminology is mostly correct, only occasional use of jargon, acronyms, or imprecise terms	Multiple mistakes in terminology and frequent use of jargon and acronyms	Imprecise terminology used or heavy reliance on jargon and acronyms
	Strong use of simple, precise, and effective language	Minor problems with wordiness and/or repetition	Some problems with wordiness and/or repetition	Wordy and repetitive
Organization and Structure	Flow of thoughts is logical and easy to follow	Thoughts are mostly logical and easy to follow	Not always logical	Not logical
	Transitions are meaningful and effective	Good use of transitions	Ideas do not appear to be linked—need for transitions	Transitions absent or incorrectly used
	Overall structure is strong and contributes to understanding of meaning	Overall structure is sound	Overall structure is disjointed and distracts from meaning	Random, no organization
Grammar and Academic Conventions	Strong command of conventions	Good command of conventions	Limited command of conventions	Poor command of conventions

Element Evaluated	Evaluation Criteria			
	Few if any grammatical errors, and those errors do not affect meaning	Minor errors cause few disruptions in meaning	Errors do not cause the writing to be unclear, but weaken the effectiveness of the communication	Severe and/or frequent errors cause writing to be unclear and difficult to read
	All research is properly cited in footnotes and bibliography	Research is properly cited most of the time	Research is inconsistently cited	Research is not cited at all

7.1 Participation (15%):

The participation grade includes posting to the weekly discussion forums and responding to other students, completing the required readings and lesson presentations, conducting peer reviews, and submitting additional writing assignments and exercises for pass/fail credit. To receive full credit for the weekly discussion forums, students must post responses to all of the required questions and respond to at least one other student's post. Posts should be written in complete, grammatical sentences that provide a thoughtful, relevant, and substantive response to the question or topic. To receive full credit for the peer reviews, students must complete the appropriate peer review forms and offer constructive criticism of other students' writing.

7.2 Writing Assignments (55%)

Most weeks, I will assign small-scale writing assignments aimed at helping students to apply effective research, analysis, and writing techniques and practice creating several types of writing products that security professionals commonly produce. Some of these assignments are to be completed individually; others require peer review prior to final submission.

Some assignments will require research and analysis. Students must properly cite all research referenced for these assignments using the format laid out in *The Chicago Manual of Style*.

I will provide a specialized assignment sheet for each paper so that students can review details about its unique requirements and grading criteria. Again, I expect your assignments will be submitted on time (before midnight the day they are due). You can view specific dates below.

7.3   Final Research Paper (30%)

The final research paper requires students to write a report of a complex topic, including background information, analysis, and recommendations. Students should select a security-related topic that generates debate and controversy. The instructor will provide topics suggested by the CDSE Education Division. Students may choose from the list of suggested topics or select one of their own; however, students cannot reuse a topic from a previous paper. Prior approval of the topic for the final research paper is required. **Students should submit a two- or three-page written description of their proposed topic and annotated bibliography for approval no later than Week 11. The proposal and annotated bibliography will count toward 5% of your total grade for the semester.**

Students will research the topic thoroughly in order to fully explore and analyze the varying perspectives regarding the selected issue. Students will properly cite all research referenced in the report, using the format laid out in *The Chicago Manual of Style*.

Students must have a draft of the report at least 75% complete and ready for peer review by another student in Week 13 of the course. During Week 14, students will review each other's research papers and provide constructive criticism. Students will have the remainder of the semester to complete the report. **The Final Research Paper is due at the end of Week 16.**

8   Course Evaluation

You will have the opportunity to evaluate the course by completing an online evaluation at the end of the semester. Your experience and feedback is invaluable to our ability to improve the course for future CDSE students.

9   Course Textbooks

Students must purchase or otherwise obtain these two texts for this course:

- Strunk, William, and E.B. White. *The Elements of Style*, 4th Edition. New York: Longman Publishers. 2000.
- *The Chicago Manual of Style*, 16th Edition. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. 2010.

10 Course Outline

The following pages break out the individual modules in the lecture portion of the course.

Note: Students will have no new course content due for one week of the

semester chosen at the instructor's discretion; this week will be designated as a no progress week.

Week	Topics	Instructional Method(s)	Student Assignments Due
1	- Course overview - Introduction to final project - Communication basics - Audience and purpose analysis - Oral communication basics	- Video and asynchronous presentation - Reading - Discussion	**Sunday, Week 1** Discussion forum
2	Writing basics	- Reading - Asynchronous presentation - Discussion	**Sunday, Week 2** - Discussion forum **Assignment 1: Audience Analysis**
3	- Grammar - Revisions	- Reading - Asynchronous presentation - Discussion	**Sunday, Week 3** - Discussion forum **Assignment 2: Security Briefing Oral Presentation**
4	- Research (methods, citation) - Elements of rhetoric - Analysis (types, methods, considerations) *The Chicago Manual of Style*	- Reading - Asynchronous presentation - Discussion	**Sunday, Week 4** Discussion forum
5	Recommendations	- Reading - Asynchronous presentation - Discussion	**Sunday, Week 5** - Discussion forum **Assignment 4: Recommendations topic selection**

Week	Topics	Instructional Method(s)	Student Assignments Due
6	• Presentation of ideas (format/structure of technical reports) • Survey of DoD writing products • Peer review procedures	• Reading • Asynchronous presentation • Discussion	**Sunday, Week 6** • Discussion forum • **Assignment 3: Analysis of Effective DoD Recommendations**
7	• Annotated bibliography • Chicago style	• Reading • Asynchronous presentation • Peer review • Discussion	**Sunday, Week 7** • Discussion forum
8	• Taking a written statement	• Reading • Asynchronous presentation • Peer review • Discussion	**Sunday, Week 8** • Discussion forum • **Assignment 4: Recommendation due to peer reviewer**
9	• Taking a written statement	• Asynchronous presentation • Discussion	**Sunday, Week 9** • Discussion forum • **Assignment 4: Recommendation due from peer reviewer**
10	• IRAC	• Reading • Asynchronous presentation • Discussion	**Sunday, Week 10** • Discussion forum • **Assignment 5: Proposal for Final Research Paper and Annotated bibliography**
11	• Incident/security violation reports	• Reading • Asynchronous presentation • Discussion	**Sunday, Week 11** • Discussion forum • **Assignment 4: Recommendation due**
12	• Incident/security violation reports	• Optional synchronous activity • Asynchronous presentation • Discussion	**Sunday, Week 12** • Discussion forum • **Assignment 6: Incident Report**

Week	Topics	Instructional Method(s)	Student Assignments Due
No Progress Week This Week No progress for the course. No assignments or discussion forums are due this week. The week selected will change every semester.			
13	• Policy writing	• Reading • Asynchronous presentation • Peer review • Discussion	**Sunday, Week 13** • Discussion forum • **Final Research Paper due to peer reviewer**
14	• Policy writing	• Reading • Asynchronous presentation • Peer review	**Sunday, Week 14** • **Final Research Paper due from peer reviewer**
15	• Final research paper work	• Independent work • Discussion	**Sunday, Week 15** • **Assignment 7: Policy Document** • Revising final research paper
16	• Final research paper work	• Independent work • Discussion	**Sunday, Week 16** • Discussion forum • **Final Research Paper**