

Writing and Communication Skills in the Security Environment
(CDSE ED202)

Center for Development of Security Excellence (CDSE)
Defense Counterintelligence and Security Agency (DCSA)

Sample Course Syllabus*

1. Course Description / Overview

The main purpose of the *Writing and Communication Skills in the Security Environment* 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 part of their jobs. These tasks include:

- Identifying core components of effective writing and communication
- Applying logic and collected research to analyze a security concern or issue
- Writing recommendations

Note: ED202 (8 weeks) and ED203 (8 weeks) are replacing ED201 (16 weeks). If you have taken ED201 before, the course material in ED203 will be similar to the first eight weeks of ED201.

Although the specific writing and communication tasks discussed will be those most common to security professionals, the *Writing and Communication Skills in the Security Environment* 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, and avoid grammatical mistakes, no matter the method of delivery or content.

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 Learning Outcomes

The course enables students to:

1. Develop effective workplace communications using strong and grammatically correct sentences in accordance with The Elements of Style and other guidelines for government writing.
2. Research, write, and revise an effective security related product informed by analysis of the audience

4. Delivery Method / Course Requirements

This is a collegiate-level, virtual instructor-led 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 National Defense University) 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 continuous 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 within this course, 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	20%
Assignment 1: Audience Analysis Paper	15%
Assignment 2: Analysis of Effective DOD Recommendations	15%
Assignment 3a: Draft Recommendation Paper	Not Graded
Assignment 3b: Peer Review of another student’s draft paper	10%
Assignment 3c: Final Recommendation Paper	40%
TOTAL	100%

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

Letter Grade	Learning Objectives
A+	Exceptional quality of work 97% - 100%
A	Mastery quality of work 93% - 96%
A-	90% - 92%
B+	87% - 89%
B	Above average quality of work 83% - 86%
B-	80% - 82%
C+	77% - 79%
C	Unsatisfactory quality of work 73% - 76%
C-	70% - 72%
F	Failure to meet the minimum standard 69% or less
I	0.00 Incomplete
WF	0.00 Effects GPA
WP	-.-- No effect on GPA

7.1 Participation (20%):

The participation grade includes posting to the eight 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 Assignment 1: Audience Analysis Paper (15%)

Students will describe how they would communicate security information to several different types of audiences.

7.3 Assignment 2: Analysis of Effective DOD Recommendations (15%)

Students will assess the overall effectiveness of a sample recommendation paper in the context of effective writing standards. They will assess the paper's clarity, conciseness, and completeness.

7.4 Assignment 3a: Draft Recommendation Paper submitted for Peer Review (draft not graded)

Students will use the analysis and writing skills they have developed in this course to write a recommendation paper. The draft recommendation paper will be submitted for peer review and critique by other students.

7.5 Assignment 3b: Peer Review of another student's draft (10%)

Based on criteria and a format presented in the course, each student will review and provide feedback on the draft recommendation paper submitted by another student.

7.6 Assignment 3c: Final Recommendation Paper (40%)

After receiving feedback from the peer review of their draft recommendation paper, students will revise and edit their papers for evaluation and grading by the instructor.

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 the following book.

- Strunk, William, and E.B. White. *The Elements of Style*, 4th Edition. New York: Longman Publishers. 2000

10. Course Outline:

During the eight weeks students will have assigned readings, presentations to review and discussion forums to participate in. Students will also complete three assignments. The topics for the eight week course include the following:

Weekly Topics

1. Course overview
 - Communication basics
 - Audience and purpose analysis
2. Writing basics
3. Writing basics II
4. Research and Analysis (methods, citation)
 - The Chicago Manual of Style Reading
5. Research and Analysis Part II Elements of rhetoric
 - Analysis (types, methods, considerations)
6. Recommendations
7. Peer review process
8. Grammar and Rewriting