

# Eastern Washington University Technical Communication (TCOM) Department and Amazon.com Learning Partnership Proposal

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## Introduction

The purpose of this document is to outline a potential learning partnership between the Technical Communication department (TCOM) at Eastern Washington University (EWU) and Amazon.com.

If successful, the partnership between EWU TCOM and Amazon.com will:

- Grant students access to industry tools, processes, and career planning
- Solve Amazon's resource issue in a frugal way
- Increase notability of the TCOM program at EWU, bringing more students to the program
- Provide Amazon direct access to students from the only Bachelor of Arts degree in Washington state

## Partner Overviews and Need Statements

### EWU TCOM Overview

Eastern Washington University offers the only Bachelor's degree in Technical Communication in Washington State. The program takes two years to complete and includes a focused minor. Students have two options for their focused minor (see [Appendix A](#)):

- Visual Communication Design and Public Relations (Option A)
- Information Systems and Web Application Design (Option B)

The TCOM program at EWU gives students hands-on industry experience. Students have worked with such companies as Kaiser Aluminum, Habitat for Humanity, the City of Airway Heights, Eastern Washington University itself, and a few other, local companies. The projects allow students to work with real clients, on real projects, and produce real solutions. Past projects have included requests for proposal, recommendation reports, documentation redesign, document revisions, style guide recommendations, and organizational materials for city planning. When required, students and professors sign NDA forms to protect proprietary information.

### Needs

The goal of the EWU TCOM program is to provide students with applicable, industry experience. For the partnership to be successful, the EWU TCOM students need:

- To use industry specific tools such as Adobe FrameMaker and MadCap Flare
- Experience writing and revising procedural documentation for a technology company
- Networking opportunities with experienced Technical Writers
- To make connections with potential mentors
- One-on-one collaboration with Subject Matter Experts
- Documents for their portfolio, or recommendation letters
- Potential internship opportunities (5 credits per student, see [Appendix B](#))

### Amazon.com Overview

The goal of Amazon.com Technical Writers is to create high-quality, training content for our international stakeholders. Amazon.com works with Software Development Engineers (SDEs) and Training Program Managers (SMEs) to create high-quality content for training and informational purposes. The content is distributed to international stakeholders, who train new Amazon.com employees.

## Needs

Amazon Technical Writers publish an array of technical training material. Teams deal with under-resourcing throughout the year. In order to maintain high-quality documents, the content teams need more Technical Writers. For the partnership to be successful, Amazon needs:

- To frugally meet their resource needs
- Dedicated, technically-savvy Content Writers
- NDAs from every individual who will access proprietary information and documents

## Solution

### EWU TCOM solutions to Amazon.com needs

#### Frugally meeting resource needs

Amazon will not be charged for in-class projects. However, Amazon representatives must present the project outline in-person at the beginning of the designated project term. Amazon must also provide access to any project-specific software that students do not currently have free access to through the university (see [Appendix C](#)). In return, student groups need feedback from their direct supervisor.

Each student is responsible for the terms of negotiation of any resulting internships. EWU TCOM students must complete 5 total internship credit hours to meet their graduation requirements (see [Appendix A](#) and [Appendix B](#)).

#### Dedicated, technically-savvy Technical Writers

Each TCOM course has between 30 – 40 undergraduate students, and 5 – 10 graduate students, depending on the year and course. The students split into group of between 5 – 7 people, depending on class size.

By the time students take courses that offer external-client projects, they have experience working with many different types of technology. Technical Communication naturally attracts students with more experience in technology because of the courses required.

#### Signed NDAs

EWU TCOM students and professors will sign and follow any required NDA forms. The act of signing the forms gives students exposure to such forms for future career opportunities. However, students need to build their print and web portfolio. Negotiations with Amazon.com, Amazon's legal department, and EWU TCOM professors will be made in regards to dictate what students can and cannot use in their web and print portfolio.

### Amazon solutions to EWU TCOM needs

#### Using Industry Specific Tools

The Amazon.com Content Team uses MadCap Flare and Microsoft Office to create training documents. Both are common industry specific document development tools. T-TAG uses SharePoint and CloudForge for content management, which also qualify as industry specific tools.

#### Writing and Revising Procedural Documentation

The Amazon.com Content Teams have step-by-step instruction documents that need writing and revising. Additionally, the content team works on eLearning, procedural illustration, style guide development, and content

organization projects. Specific project needs will be addressed during project negotiations. Example projects may include:

- Step-by-step instructional documents for creating T-TAG documents
- Announcements for new technology and software updates
- Introduction documents to inform Amazon stakeholders about the role of technical writers

### Networking with Experienced Technical Writers

As a company that encourages mentorships, Amazon offers the opportunity for Student Technical Writers to connect with full-time, professional Technical Writers. Such connections provide previously unheard of networking opportunities, and open a door to possible sponsorships. If Amazon works directly with EWU TCOM students, the students will have the opportunity to expose their potential, connect with a mentor, and therefore work towards a more successful job search post-graduation. If offered Amazon internships, EWU TCOM students would be in the unique position to start an Amazon job without any ramp up time; putting them in a more favorable position than outside applicants. The situation is rewarding for both Amazon and the students.

### Adding to their Portfolio

An EWU TCOM student's portfolio already contains many examples of service learning projects; however, most of the companies are not as easily recognized as Amazon would be. Amazon's global recognition, both for product and rigorous work demands, would enhance student portfolios. Even if students are unable to place Amazon documents into their portfolio, but receive a letter of recommendation from their direct supervisor, the work with Amazon verifies the student's quality of work.

## Points of Contact

### Amazon.com

Daniil Millwood – Technical Writer

### Eastern Washington University Technical Communication Department

Teena Carnegie, PhD – Professor

# Technical Communication

at Eastern Washington University

what is

## Technical Communication?

Technical writers, also called technical communicators, prepare instruction manuals, journal articles, and other supporting documents to communicate complex and technical information more easily. A technical communicator can also be responsible for designing graphics, websites, copyediting, examining documents for usability, and much more. As such, in addition to English courses, the Technical Communication program includes classes in Design, Journalism, and Communication. <sup>1</sup>

**Technology**

Microsoft Word  
Excel  
Powerpoint  
Notepad ++

Adobe Photoshop  
Illustrator  
InDesign  
Dreamweaver

\*\*\*\*\*

**Acquired Skills**

Word processing  
Desktop publishing  
Distributing  
Graphic Designing  
Web page Creating  
Acquiring Product Knowledge

\*\*\*\*\*

**Industries**

Professional  
Scientific  
Technical Services  
Manufacturing

\*\*\*\*\*

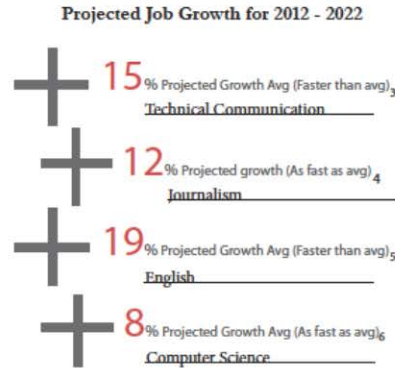
**Work Style**

Attention to Detail  
Dependability  
Integrity  
Cooperation  
Initiative  
Effort  
Persistence  
Adaptability  
Patience

\*\*\*\*\*

**Specialties**

User-Interface design  
Usability Testing  
Technical Editing  
Information Architecture  
Web Master  
Globalization / Localization / Translation<sup>11</sup>



## Job Outlook for a Technical Writer



### Technical Communication

- ENGL 360 Language Structure and Use
- TCOM 205 Introduction to Technical Communication
- TCOM 305 Research in Technical Communication
- TCOM 309 Grammar for Professional Writers
- TCOM 404 Instructions and Procedures
- TCOM 407 Proposal Writing
- TCOM 409 Editing in Technical Communication
- TCOM 490 Senior Capstone
- TCOM 495 Professional / Technical Communication Internship

### Design: IS/WebApp Track

- CMST 200 Intro to Speech Communication
- CSCD 110 Introduction to Programming
- CSCD 210 Programming Principles I
- CSCD 211 Programming Principles II
- CSCD 300 Data Structures
- CSCD 327 Relational Database Systems
- CSCD 378 Web Application Development
- CSCD 379 NET Web Application Development
- DESN 100 Drawing for Design
- DESN 216 Computer Graphics
- DESN 368 Web Design

### Design: VCD/PR Track

- CMST 200 Introduction to Speech Communication
- JRNM 451 Public Relations Theory
- JRNM 452 Advanced Public Relations Theory
- JRNM 453 Public Relations Writing
- DESN 100 Drawing for Communication
- DESN 216 Computer Graphics
- DESN 360 Publication Design
- DESN 368 Web Design I
- DESN 375 Digital Video
- OR DESN 350 Digital Imaging Photography
- OR DESN 378 Web Design 2
- TECH 393 Technology in World Civilization

### Courses include:

- Electives - select one:**
- CMST 340 Intercultural Communication
  - ENGL 380 Survey of Native American Literatures
  - DSST 310 Disability, Culture, and Society
  - ENGL 389 Women, Literature, and Social Change

Bachelor of Arts  
91-101 credits

Undergraduate Director: Dr. Teena Carnegie  
Graduate Director: Dr. Molly Johnson

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203 Patterson Hall Cheney WA 99004  
Phone: 509.359.4039  
Fax: 509.359.4269  
Website: www.ewu.edu



## Appendix B – Credits to Hours Conversion table

Based on an 8- to 10-week quarter

Credits	Hours per week	Hours per quarter
1	4 hours	32 – 40 hours
2	8 hours	64 – 80 hours
3	12 hours	96 – 120 hours
4	16 hours	128 – 160 hours
5	20 hours	160 – 200 hours
6	24 hours	200 – 240 hours

## Appendix C – Free Software Access from EWU

1. Microsoft Office 365
2. MadCap Flare
3. Adobe InDesign, Photoshop, and Illustrator