

# Graduate Certificate in Technical Writing (Distance Learning)

## **Introduction**

Technical communication is a fast-growing discipline worldwide, as communication media become more pervasive and technology more complex. The University of Limerick pioneered a full-time programme in technical communication in 1995. Since September 2001, UL has offered a Graduate Certificate in Technical Writing by distance learning.

## **Objectives**

The aim of this distance learning programme is to offer flexible access to certification through distance learning for people who lack qualifications in Technical Communication. The programme emphasises that the job of a technical writer entails more than writing – graphics, cultural issues, layout, and design all play a part, and students receive tuition on all of these areas.

The specific objectives are:

- To provide distance learning students with a thorough grounding in the theory and practice of technical communication.
- To prepare students for productive employment as effective technical writers in industry.
- To provide people who lack qualifications in technical communication with access to certification via distance learning.

On successful completion of the programme, graduates will be able to:

- Design and deliver instructional materials.
- Use a number of multimedia applications.
- Manage complex writing and design projects.
- Write clear, correct, precise content.

## **Careers**

Graduates will be unique in Ireland, qualified to work as technical writers, and in a variety of related roles such as editing, web design, and technology journalism. In addition, graduates may be eligible to gain employment in the areas of instructional design and e-learning as they also receive tuition in these areas. Typically, our graduates gain employment in Ireland but as the programme is university-accredited, it is also possible to gain employment abroad.

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## Entry Requirements

Normally, a primary degree in any discipline is required for admission to the course. Prior experience working as a technical writer or instructional designer will also be an advantage. Applicants lacking a formal degree can apply to be considered through RPL (Recognition of Prior Learning) using the standard application form, but they must provide *evidence* of relevant prior learning and experience.

Applicants must have a high standard of written English.

Applicants must be proficient computer users. Whilst an ECDL qualification is not compulsory, applicants should have a similar level of computer experience i.e. a very good working knowledge of Microsoft Office applications and the Internet.

Applicants must have access to the Internet (Broadband ideally), as the course is delivered online.

During September or October, students will be invited to attend a workshop at the University of Limerick campus. This workshop will be held on a Saturday. In addition to receiving tuition on how to use the software, students will have the opportunity to visit the campus and meet their lecturers and classmates. Students are not obliged to attend these workshops, however, and the workshop materials will be posted online for *all* students.

## Programme Structure

The programme comprises four modules. Students normally complete the course over four semesters (two academic years), taking one module each semester (autumn and spring). The programme follows the same term structure as on-campus programmes at UL, so module assignments must be completed within that timeframe. Each module is intensive as there is continuous coursework (no end-of-semester examinations) and students are expected to login to the Web portal several times a week (although they are not obliged to login at specific times).

Academic Year	Autumn Semester	Spring Semester
Year 1	TW5211 Principles of Professional and Technical Communication and Information Design (9 ECTS)	TW5212 Workplace Issues in Technical and Professional Communication (9 ECTS)
Year 2	EL6041 Instructional Design (9 ECTS)	EL6072 Interactive Courseware Workshop (9 ECTS)

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## **How to Apply**

For details of the application process, and to download an application form, please visit:

<http://www.ul.ie/cpe/HowToApply>

If you do not have a primary degree, you must include copies of any relevant certificates/ courses, and original writing samples. Where such samples/ certificates are unavailable, you may be required to complete a writing test at the University of Limerick.

For additional information on the *application process*, please email [cpe@ul.ie](mailto:cpe@ul.ie). For information on *programme content and structure*, please contact the Acting Programme Director, Elaine Walsh, at [elaine.walsh@ul.ie](mailto:elaine.walsh@ul.ie).

## **Frequently Asked Questions**

### **When will the applications system be open to new applicants?**

The application system will open in April 2019. We will only accept applications when the system is officially open.

### **When is the closing date for applications?**

We will accept applications until the end of June 2019. We will only accept applications after that date if places are still available.

### **How many students take the programme each year?**

We usually accept 15 to 20 new students per year.

### **When does the programme start?**

The programme follows the same semester structure as full-time programmes at the University of Limerick. In the 2019/20 academic year, the programme will officially start on Monday, September 9<sup>th</sup> 2019. For other important dates in the 2019/20 academic year, please visit

<https://ulsites.ul.ie/academiccalendar/academic-calendar-1920>

### **Is the programme run completely by distance learning?**

None of the four modules requires attendance on-campus, since all the modules are assessed online by continuous assessment. However, we do offer occasional on-campus software workshops (not more than one Saturday per semester). Although attendance at the workshops is not compulsory, if students do not attend, they must take responsibility for learning the software themselves because knowledge of the software packages is required for completion of some projects. Note: All students will be granted online access to the workshop materials, even if they do not attend the workshops.

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## **What are the fees for the programme?**

The cost for EU students for the academic year 2019/20 is €814 per module. This includes the student levy of approximately €45 per semester. For non-EU students, the fees are significantly higher. Prospective students can contact the Fees Office at UL by email ([student.fees.office@ul.ie](mailto:student.fees.office@ul.ie)) or telephone (061 202026/ 213137/ 213436). See also <https://ulsites.ul.ie/finance/finance-documents-0#fees> and <http://www.ulsites.ul.ie/finance/frequently-asked-questions-student-fees> for further details.

## **Are there any other costs associated with the programme?**

As well as the fee per module, students must pay for Internet access and books (on average two books per module). Students will also have access to some e-books through the UL Library website. For some assignments, students can use free limited-period trial versions of software tools. Other options include purchasing monthly subscriptions through the Adobe Creative Cloud (<http://www.adobe.com/ie/products/creativecloud.html>) or educational licenses through Micromail (<http://www.micromail.com/>).

## **If I do not have a primary degree, can I apply?**

Normally, a primary degree in any discipline is required for admission. However, applicants lacking a formal degree can apply to be considered through RPL (Recognition of Prior Learning), using the standard application form. Prior experience working as a technical writer, instructional designer, or in a writing-related field, will be an advantage but applicants must provide *evidence* of this experience in their applications.

## **Can I proceed to the MA in Technical Communication and E-Learning on completion of the Graduate Certificate programme?**

Currently, there is no direct route to the MA from the Graduate Certificate programme. However, there is a direct correspondence in terms of modules between the Graduate Certificate programme and Year 1 of the part-time MA. It is possible to undertake the Graduate Certificate modules on Year 1 of the part-time MA programme and to exit with a Graduate Certificate award. Students on the part-time MA, who wish to exit with a Graduate Certificate award, will complete the course over two semesters (one academic year), taking two modules per semester (autumn and spring). If you wish to complete the programme in one academic year you must apply for the MA programme.