# COUNCIL FOR PROGRAMS IN TECHNICAL AND SCIENTIFIC COMMUNICATION (CPTSC)
# GUIDELINES FOR SELF-STUDY TO PRECEDE CPTSC VISIT
## Drafted October 1991, Last updated April 1999

This document is intended to support program reviews under CPTSC consultation. The purpose of the review is to help develop strong programs in technical and scientific communication, not to compare or rank programs, and not to establish certification for programs or their graduates.

CPTSC helps interested programs find suitable reviewers. It is up to the program and the assigned reviewer(s) to work out the details for expenses, honoraria, and reporting requirements.

This document contains two parts: **Part I** is an initial questionnaire designed to acquaint CPTSC representatives in a broad way with the program and its goals prior to any review activity. **Part II** is intended to lead the program representatives through a structured self-study process as a prelude to the onsite visit of the program reviewer. Programs should adapt these instruments as necessary in light of their purposes for review.

Please direct any questions about the review process, the application, and the accompanying self-study materials to the following CPTSC representative:

Professor Carole Yee
Department of Humanities
New Mexico Tech
Socorro, NM 87801
505-835-5323
cyee@nmt.edu

## Part II: GUIDELINES FOR SELF-STUDY TO PRECEDE CPTSC VISIT

At least one month before the CPTSC program review team consultants are scheduled to visit your campus, you should prepare a self-study document to acquaint the consultants with your institution. The self-study is basically a narrative that addresses the following concerns.

### *I. Focus of the Evaluation Visit*

What are the program's current concerns?
What changes (if any) is the program planning to implement?

### *II. Curriculum*

#### *A. Courses and Goals*

1. What Scientific and Technical Communication courses are currently taught in your department? How are they related? Indicate which courses are required, and which ones require prerequisites.
2. What courses supporting Scientific and Technical Communication do areas outside your department offer? Indicate which courses are required and which ones have prerequisites.
3. What are the goals of the program?
4. What goals do the administration and faculty in other departments think the program should have?
5. What are the program entrance requirements?

#### *B. Syllabus*

1. Does each Scientific and Technical Communication course have a standard syllabus?
2. Is there a logical sequence of courses and of course units or assignments for each course?
3. Are there opportunities for faculty to share and develop syllabi? What control does the Scientific and Technical Communication program administrator have over syllabi and their development?
4. What opportunities exist for experimentation?
5. How is class time apportioned per day, per week, per term?
6. How much writing, and what kind of writing, must students do for each course?
7. What labs, if any, are students required to take as part of their major?
8. Are there courses in the program in speaking and oral presentation? Is an oral component part of any other classes required for the major?
9. Are there any courses in the program specifically devoted to reading skills?
10. Are there any courses in the program dealing with research methodology?
11. Are there any courses in the program dealing with the pedagogy of Scientific and Technical Communication?

#### *C. Instructional Methods and Materials*

1. What methods are used to deal with student writing in the program's writing courses? Are these methods consistent with the program's goals?
2. What kinds of classroom activities are most common?
3. Do the writing courses use textbooks? How many and what kind (handbooks, rhetorics, anthologies, workbooks, dictionaries, etc.)? Which books are used in which courses?
4. Who makes decisions about texts? What options are available for faculty and for teaching assistants or adjunct faculty?
5. Why is the program using the textbooks it is currently using?
6. What instructional materials and media does the program use other than textbooks?
7. Does the program use student writing as instructional material? Are there reproduction facilities readily available to duplicate student work for classes?
8. Do writing teachers have adequate office space for conferring with students?
9. Do teachers in the program require use of the computer for any courses? What computer facilities are available for faculty and to students? What fee structure or other course requirements are used to control access to computing? What kinds of computer applications are used or available?

### *D. Testing*

1. What tests and testing procedures does the program currently use for placement and exemption? Why are these particular tests used? Have they been validated for the population of students they are administered to at this institution?
2. How are placement decisions made and carried out? Does the program evaluate proficiency? If so, how?
3. How are the tests administered? Who administers them? Who scores them? How are those who administer and score tests compensated? What kind of and how much compensation do they get?
4. What is the program's policy on transfer students?

### *E. Grading Practices*

1. What is the institution's grading system? How does the program's grading system relate to the institution's grading system?
2. How are grades determined in individual courses? Are there agreed-upon criteria? If so, how are these criteria enforced? If not, how does the program arrive at uniformity in grading?

### *F. Internships*

1. Does your program have an internship option for students?
2. Are internships supervised? Who is responsible for supervision?
3. Where, typically, have students been placed for internships?

## *III. Program Administration*

### *A. Institutional and Program Structure*

1. What is the size and makeup of the department or administrative unit in which the Scientific and Technical Communication program is housed? What is the governing structure of that department or unit? What percentage of full-time faculty at each rank, adjunct faculty, and graduate student teach in the program?
2. How many writing courses do faculty at each rank or status teach?
3. What is the internal governing structure of the Scientific and Technical Communication Program? Is there a Scientific and Technical Communication program administrator ("director of technical communication," "scientific and technical communication committee chair," etc.?) If so, what is this person's administrative relation to other levels of administration? To whom is this person responsible?
4. How is the Scientific and Technical Communication program related through administration and curriculum to other departments and divisions in the institution?
5. If there are night school or nondegree programs, what control does this administrator have over the way the Scientific and Technical Communication courses are taught in those programs? How does the administrator exercise that control? What responsibility does the administrator have for the teaching of technical communication (e.g., "Technical Writing for Engineers") in other departments or colleges within the institution?
6. Where do the funds that support the Scientific and Technical program come from? Who administers that money? What is it spent on?
7. Who hires, promotes, tenures, salaries, and assigns courses to Scientific and Technical Communication staff?
8. How are new teaching positions in the Scientific and Technical Communication program determined, and by whom?
9. Who determines class size, curriculum, and teaching load?
10. How are the programs internal problems solved? Who decides on syllabi, testing procedures, textbooks, curriculum, etc? What voice do full-time faculty, part-time faculty, teaching assistants, and students have in shaping scientific and technical program policies? What permanent or ad hoc committees relevant to the Scientific and Technical Communication program exist? How are these committees appointed? What do they do?
11. What are the procedures for negotiating complaints about grading, teaching, and administrative processes and policies?

### *B. Scientific and Technical Communication Administrator's Job Description*

## *IV. Faculty Development*

### *A. Current Conditions*

1. How many full-time and part-time people teach program courses?
2. What training and experience do these teachers have? What professional organizations do they belong to? What is their record of research, publication, and conference participation?
3. How are high-quality teaching and research rewarded, especially in terms of salary increase, promotion, and tenure?
4. What courses, speaker programs, workshops, awards and support series does the program offer or support to encourage excellence in teaching scientific and technical communication? What opportunities for faculty development already exist? Who uses them? How do faculty find out about them? In what ways are faculty encouraged to avail themselves of these opportunities?
5. What kinds of work and activities occur during department or program staff meetings? How frequently are these meetings held? Who attends them?

### *B. Support for Faculty Development*

1. How is "faculty development" defined as a goal of the institution, the department or administrative unit, and the Scientific and Technical Communication program?
2. What financial resources are available for workshops, speakers, travel to conferences, developing research, and evaluating new Scientific and Technical Communication courses and new teaching techniques?
3. What is the faculty attitude toward faculty development? What is the faculty attitude toward training that is designed to improve the teaching of Scientific and Technical Communication? What is the attitude of composition teachers, speech teachers, humanities teachers, and literature teachers toward Scientific and Technical Communication teachers? What is the attitude of faculty in one area of the Scientific and Technical Communication program (e.g., speech, graphics, rhetorical theory, etc.) towards the other area or areas?
4. How are faculty encouraged to develop their skills in Scientific and Technical Communication research and teaching? What opportunities exist for learning about faculty development programs at other institutions?

## *IV. Support Services*

Definition: A support service is a facility that provides learning resources to expand and enhance classroom instruction. Examples may include such services as libraries, computer labs, a writing center, a computer center, a placement office.

### *A. Definition*

1. What support services exist at the institution? What specific kinds of help do these services offer to students and faculty?
2. What are the goals and instructional plans of each service? Do any services offered by the Scientific and Technical Communication program and the support services overlap? Do their common services reinforce each other or conflict?
3. How is each support service coordinated with the Scientific and Technical Communication program? Is it through scheduling, a coordinating committee, another way?
4. Do all the faculty in the Scientific and Technical Communication program and elsewhere in the institution know that all these services exist? What is the faculty attitude toward these services? Do they send their students to them, or use them themselves?
5. Who uses each support service? How are students placed in or referred to each support service? What is the profile of students who use each service? Of faculty who do so?
6. How is information about each service conveyed to students and faculty?

7. What evidence is there that each service meets the goals it sets for itself or that the institution has set for it?

***B. Personnel***

1. What are the qualifications for working in each support service? How are the director and staff selected for each? What is the institutional status (faculty, graduate student, full-time, part-time, etc.) of support service personnel? How are they compensated for their work? How is their work evaluated?
2. How are support service personnel trained?
3. What evidence is there of professional development among support service personnel?
4. What opportunities are there for professional development of support service personnel? How does the institution reward support service personnel for improving the service and for developing themselves professionally?
5. What kind of relationship exists between the Scientific and Technical Communication program faculty and support service personnel? How do support service personnel view the Scientific and Technical Communication faculty, and vice versa? Do writing program faculty and support service personnel meet regularly to discuss students involved in both programs? Is there an active exchange of information on curricular and administrative matters?
6. What role do support service personnel play in formulating Scientific and Technical Communication program policy? What role do Scientific and Technical communication program faculty play in formulating the policies and procedures of support services?

***C. Administration***

1. Do students get credit for work completed in support services? If so, how is credit determined?
2. How is each support service funded? Who decides how the money is spent? How is it currently being spent?
3. Does each support service keep records of expenditures, contact hours, enrollment, student work completed, services rendered, credit cards, etc.?
4. Does each support service follow-up on students who have used its services?
5. Is there continuing self-evaluation of each service by its staff? Does someone not actively involved in its work regularly evaluate each service?
6. What coordination exists between the support services, the Scientific and Technical Communication program, and the institution's admissions and recruitment officers?

You do not want to overwhelm consultants with background materials, but you will want to include the following in an appendix to the narrative report:

1. Statistical information for the previous and current academic year: enrollments, class sizes, composition of the teaching staff, final grade distribution.
2. A description of each course within the program(s) to be evaluated (objectives, syllabi, texts, placement and exemption procedures, grading criteria).
3. Tallies of evaluations completed by students and peers.
4. Materials pertaining to teacher training (for faculty, graduate students, adjuncts), including orientation meeting agendas, workshop descriptions, and syllabi for training courses.
5. Curriculum vitae and position description of program director(s).