

# FA 291 The Business Document: From Inception to Execution

DePaul University  
School for New Learning

---

**Semester:** Spring 2009

**Faculty:** Richard G. Paszkiet  
773/296-1606  
E-Mail: paszkier@staff.abanet.org

**Hours:**  
Tuesday, 6 p.m. to 8 p.m.  
March 31, 2009 to June 2, 2009

**Location:** Loop Campus

**Competencies Offered:** A-1-X, H-3-D, F-X

## **Biographical Information:**

Richard G. Paszkiet is deputy director of ABA Book Publishing at the American Bar Association. He received his undergraduate degree from Knox College in Galesburg, Illinois, and his master's degree from the William Allen White School of Journalism at the University of Kansas, Lawrence. He has been a Senior Editor at Dearborn Financial Publishing in Chicago, specializing in financial planning and investing. He has lectured frequently on business writing and communications.

## **Course Description:**

This ten-week course concentrates on the entire process of creating, planning, developing, and analyzing a business document. Because most professionals are faced with creating large, complex writing projects in the workplace, this course will teach students how to structure, write, and control such demanding projects. Students will learn about the various classifications of business documents (from basic reports to training guides) and how they can use a business-writing structure to relate information, interpret data, and recommend solutions to business problems.

**Prerequisites:**

This course focuses on the more complex and sophisticated business document. Therefore, the student is expected to already possess minimum writing skills (knowledge of grammar, punctuation, spelling, etc.). The course will concentrate on helping the student develop a writing style that can be effectively used in the workplace. Clarity, conciseness, and consistency will be the major *writing* goals for the student.

**Learning Strategies:**

Class time will be spent in learning the various ways to outline, plan, develop, and evaluate a business document (average class time is usually two hours). Also, class discussions will cover the pros and cons of using certain business document formats and what, in turn, makes them effective. The student will learn to recognize the elements contained in a high-impact, well-developed business document.

Class attendance is required. If a student will not be able to attend one of the sessions, he or she should contact the instructor. A portion of the student's final grade (approximately 10 percent) is based on class participation.

On completion of this course, the student will possess the necessary skills and confidence that will allow him or her to develop a sophisticated and highly professional business document.

**Required Texts:**

*The Associated Press Stylebook and Briefing on Media Law.* Perseus Books, 2004.

Bremner, John. *Words on Words.* Fine Communications, 1998.

Lesikar, Raymond V. *Report Writing for Business*, 10th Edition. Homewood, IL: Richard Irwin, 1998. (Both hardcover or softcover editions are fine.)

**Student Objectives:**

The student will demonstrate his or her F-X competency by:

- planning and outlining a business document that incorporates the challenges and limitations of a workplace environment;
- using the information in the assigned readings to demonstrate the principles of good writing and how such principles can be applied to a workplace business document; and
- creating a business document that reflects the needs and goals of a workplace.

The student will demonstrate his or her A-1-X competency by:

- planning and writing a business document based on the skills and structures discussed in this course; and
- using the information in the assigned readings to demonstrate the principles of good writing and business style.

The student will demonstrate his or her H-3-D competency by:

- writing a business document that incorporates the ideas, opinions, and suggestions of others in a cohesive manner; and
- writing a detailed memo that explains how the student conducted negotiations and, when necessary, mediation to resolve business problems.

*DePaul University's guidelines on academic integrity, as discussed in the Student Handbook, will be upheld when evidence is submitted by students in achieving his or her competence.*

### **Grade Evaluation by Competency:**

#### **Arts and Ideas Category:**

Grade is based primarily on final project 75 percent, the remainder from class participation and class assignments.

Final paper is eight pages long (page length does not include title fly, title page, table of contents, or appendix material). Paper will be graded on Lesikar text and *AP/Words on Words* style. The student is NOT required to compose a business document. Rather, the student can choose to write a paper based on the *theory* behind business documents, that is, comparing one document format to another; discussing the strengths and weaknesses of a document format; or critiquing a document. The topic must be approved by the instructor.

#### **Individual Focus Area:**

Grade is based primarily on final project 75 percent, the remainder from class participation and class assignments.

Final paper is eight pages long (page length does not include title fly, title page, table of contents, or appendix material). Paper will be graded only on precepts in Lesikar text, as well as basic college-level grammar. The student must create and execute a document that relates to his or her work environment. The topic must be approved by the instructor.

**Arts and Ideas Category and Individual Focus Area:**

Grade is based primarily on final project 75 percent, the remainder from class participation and class assignments.

Final paper is 15 pages long (page length does not include title fly, title page, table of contents, or appendix material). Paper will be graded on Lesikar text and *AP/Words on Words* style. The student must create and execute a document that relates to his or her work environment. In other words, this is a professional, working document that could be delivered to any company or organization.

**Human Community:**

Grade is based primarily on a detailed, five-page memo that explains:

- how the student resolved business problems with his or her colleagues;
- strategies used to foster negotiation and mediation; and
- an analysis of how such negotiations/resolutions will be incorporated into final business document.

Memo will be graded on Lesikar text and *AP/Words on Words* style.

*Assessments and feedback will embody the qualities of clarity, integrity, flexibility, and empathy.*

## Class Schedule

Session One: Introduction: What's a Business Document?

Date: March 31, 2009

Reading Assignments: *Report Writing* Chapter One (10th)

Writing Assignment: Describe Possible Topics for Final Project

---

Session Two: Choosing a Business Document Format / Reader Adaptation

Date: April 7, 2009

Reading Assignments: *Report Writing* Chapters Five and Eight (10th)

In-Class Assignment: Determine Audience and Format for Final Project

---

Session Three: Planning/Outlining the Business Document

Date: April 14, 2009

Reading Assignments: *Report Writing* Chapter 10 (10th)

Writing Assignment: Outline Final Project

---

Session Four: The Formal Report / Collecting Information

Date: April 21, 2009

Reading Assignments: *Report Writing* Chapter 11 (10th)

Writing Assignment: Write Introduction

---

Session Five: Good Grammar & Style / Business Manual and Trainer's Guide

Date: April 28, 2009

Reading Assignments: *Report Writing* Chapter 15 (10th)

Writing Assignment: Develop Deadlines and a Working Schedule

---

NO CLASS ON MAY 5, 2009

---

Session Six: Managing and Organizing the Business Document / The First Draft  
Date: May 12, 2009

Reading Assignments: *Report Writing* Chapter 16 (10th)  
On-Going Writing Assignment: Develop Final Project

---

Session Seven: Revision & Critique  
Date: May 19, 2009

On-Going Writing Assignment: Develop Final Project

---

Session Eight: Problem Solving & Objectivity  
Date: May 26, 2009

On-Going Writing Assignment: Develop Final Project

---

Session Nine: Communicating Your Document  
Date: June 2, 2009

In-Class Assignment: Presenting Final Project to Class

---