Introduction

- Professional writing
  - Writing for business and the professions

Two questions:
- What types of writing are needed?
- What do we need to know in order to write business documents effectively?

Language

- Transactional and interactional functions of language

Refer to handout 1.

How would you feel if you were to receive a memo like this one?
Discuss the importance of the aspects pointed out in the self-evaluation questions.
Language

Transactional
• Get the message across – focus on content. Explicit meanings.

Interpersonal
• Relationship – focus on tone, style. Implicit meanings.

Language

1. Reader/Audience benefits

Sender focus: To enable us to update our shareholder records, we ask that the enclosed card be returned.
Reader/Audience focus: So that you may promptly receive dividend cheques and information related to your shares, please return the enclosed card.

Language

2. Polite “you” view

“I/We” view: I have scheduled your vacation to begin May 1.
“Your” view: Your vacation begins May 1.

Questions:
• Should the “you” view be used all the time?
• When should we not use the “you” view?

Language

3. Conversational but professional style

Unprofessional: He was badmouthed by his supervisor.
More professional: He was criticised by his supervisor.

Language

4. Positive language

Negative: We are unable to send you your shipment until we receive proof of your payment.
Positive: We look forward to sending your shipment as soon as we receive your payment.

Negative: As you haven’t submitted the receipt as proof of purchase, we are unable to process your claim for a refund.
Conversational: Please send us your receipt so that we will be able to process your request for a refund.
Language
5. Inclusive language

Non inclusive: Every lawyer has ten minutes for his summation.
Alternative 1: All lawyers have ten minutes for their summations.
Alternative 2: Lawyers have ten minutes for summations.
Alternative 3: Every lawyer has ten minutes for a summation.
Alternative 4: Every lawyer has his or her summation.

Language
6. Use familiar words instead of jargon/less known words.

Less familiar words: ascertain, rectify, conceptualise, encompass, perpetuate, perplexing

Simple alternatives: find out, correct, see, include, continue, troubling

Language
Sentence techniques – emphasising/deemphasising
1. Mechanics
Underlining, italics, boldface, font changes, capitals, dashes, tabulation. (Refer to text book for examples)

Language
Sentence techniques – emphasising/deemphasising
2. Use vivid words

General: The customer said he wanted the contract returned soon.
Vivid: Mr LeClerc insisted that the contract be returned by July 1.

Question:
In what situations should we be less vivid and more general instead?
Language
Sentence techniques – emphasising/deemphasising
3. Label the main idea.

Unlabelled: Explore the possibility of leasing as site but also hire a consultant.
Labelled: Explore the possibility of leasing as site; but most important, hire a consultant.

Language
Sentence techniques – emphasising/deemphasising
4. Placement of ideas in a sentence: place the important idea first or last in the sentence.

Emphatic: Productivity is more likely to be increased when profit-sharing plans are linked to individual performance rather than to group performance.
Emphatic: Profit sharing plans linked to individual performance rather than to group performance are more effective in increasing productivity.

Language
Sentence techniques – emphasising/deemphasising
4. Placement of ideas in a sentence: place the important idea first or last in the sentence.

Unemphatic: Profit-sharing plans are more effective in increasing productivity when they are linked to individual performance rather than to group performance.

Language
Sentence techniques – emphasising/deemphasising
5. Simple sentence and independent clause

Emphatic: You are the first trainee we have hired for this programme (use simple sentence)
Emphatic: Although we considered many candidates, you are the first trainee whom we have hired for this programme (independent clause contains main idea)

Unemphatic: Although you are the first trainee we have hired for this programme, we had many candidates and expect to expand the programme in the future. (main idea is lost in the dependent clause)

Language
Sentence techniques – emphasising/deemphasising
6. Active/passive voice
Active voice: emphasises the action and the doer of the action, gives a conversational/friendly tone, enhances clarity of meaning.
e.g. Celine will contact you to discuss your travel plans.

Passive voice: emphasises the action but not the doer, gives a formal tone.
e.g. You will be contacted for a discussion of your travel plans.

Language
Negative messages
Bad news and negative messages require more skill to write than good news or neutral/routine messages. Usually longer than good news/neutral messages
Sentence techniques for conveying bad news:
1. Indirectness
2. Use general words
3. Sentence subordination
4. Use of the passive voice
Language
Negative messages
1. Indirectness – focus on the positive/neutral, imply the negative
    Direct: Our records indicate that you are no longer with Denton Garments.
    Indirect: Our records indicate that you were recently fired.

Direct: If we do not receive your renewal payment by the end of May, we will have to cancel your subscription of the Discovery Magazine.
Indirect: When you send your renewal payment by the end of May, you will continue to receive without interruption, your Discovery magazine that opens the amazing world of science to you and your family.

Language
Negative messages
2. Use general words
    General: Our claims officer, Mr. Kent will get in touch with you to discuss your claims request.
    Vivid: Our claims officer, Mr. Kent will get in touch with you to investigate your claim for a refund and if the product is found to be defective we will send it for repair.

General: Our records indicate that your employment status has changed recently.
Vivid: Our records indicate that you were recently fired.

Language
Negative messages
3. Sentence subordination
    Bad news in subordinate clause: Although we are not able to offer the discount that ended last month, we will keep your name and contact in our preferred customer database to alert you on more promotions to come.
    Compound sentence, no subordinate clause: We are not able to offer the discount as the offer ended last month, but we will be glad to keep your name and contact …..

Language
Negative messages
4. Use of the passive voice
    Active: Our customer relations officer made the error in the report; however, his supervisor detected it and had it corrected.
    Passive: An error was made in the report; however it had been identified and rectified as soon as it was detected.
Purpose

- Letters – many types
  - Appointment
  - Sales
  - Inquiry
  - Complaint
  - Etc
- Reports
  - Incident
  - Progress
  - Feasibility
  - etc

The purpose of writing is closely related to the type of document that is being written.

- For example, a memo functions as a type of communication between members of an organisation (internal communication) on a less formal basis compared to letters.

At this point, we will not be looking at each individual type of document, but at the overall approach to writing using the direct or indirect plans.

- **Direct**: Purpose – to inform about routine matters, routine management communication, nothing shocking or unexpected, request for information/action, replying to requests, etc.
- **Indirect**: Purpose – to persuade reader to a certain point of view, to justify actions that are unexpected, to refuse requests, to convey bad news, etc.

Direct plan

- **Opening**: State the main idea/ State the most important request / Deliver the most important information
- **Body**: Provide background information and explain the main idea / Provide information or questions in logical sequence / Provide details to justify your claim
- **Closing**: request action, include end date if appropriate / summarise message / closing thought / end pleasantly
  
  See Handout 4

Direct Plan

- Openings – exercise
- **Refer to Handout 5**