**PLA Guide**

**Business Communication**

**How to Use this Guide**This guide is meant to help you understand the knowledge and skills typically expected of someone who has a college-level understanding of **Business Communication.**

This guide is also meant to help you go through the processes of thinking about your learning and writing your Prior Learning Request by answering the following questions, which will be explained more fully in the section Writing your PLA Request:

1. Describe what you do.
2. Compare a real and hypothetical situation in this field.
3. Identify informal “rules” in this field.
4. Examine the role of a professional in this field.
5. Apply your knowledge in a problem-solving situation.
6. Identify critical issues in the field.
7. Teach others.
8. Offer additional information or evidence of your learning.

**IMPORTANT NOTE:** In addition to answering the questions in this guide, you may be asked to submit samples of your business communications that show your understanding of form and organization of typical business documents (e.g. reports, executive summaries, resumes, letters, proposals).

**Typical Learning Experiences**

The following list is not all inclusive; you may have learned in other ways.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Secretary | Team Leader |
| Administrative Assistant | Event Planner |
| Manager / Supervisor | Fundraiser |
| Human Resources Professional | Professional in any field: human services, nursing, education, computers, non-profits, etc.  |

**What is Business Communication?**
Business communication is the sharing of information between individuals and groups in an organizational setting. Business communication modes include written, oral, and digital formats, in real or virtual time, using standard conventions of that mode. Underlying all modes is the communication process, which is important to understand and which may include collaboration, teams, and new communication technologies.

The following diagram lists some different types of business communications as well as important conventions and processes. Your learning may fall within some areas and not others, based on your personal experience, and that’s o.k. You may also consult other guides, such as Public Speaking, or use the general guide, if they are more appropriate to your learning*.*

**Business Communication Modes**

**Other important aspects of business communication include:**

**Conventions:** grammar, style, document formatting, practices of different media

**Processes:** audience considerations, role identification, medium, formatting, teamwork, evaluation of communication effectiveness

**Writing Your PLA Request**
Answer all eight questions. Please think in terms of written, oral, and digital communications as you answer.

1. Describe what you do (answer a – d)

1. What communications do you regularly develop and deliver?
2. If you were to write a book on this subject based on your personal experience, what would the chapters be titled?
3. What formal or informal training have you had in business communications?
4. What is your basic approach when you create business communication?

2. What happens when communication is not effective? Choose a real business communication challenge you experienced, and explain how you dealt with it.

3. How do you develop a business communication for an audience you’re unsure about or an audience of multiple backgrounds?

4. Your organization has been asked to participate in a fundraiser for a local charity. Write three brief e-mails to encourage participation : 1) one to your boss, 2) one to your co-workers, and 3) one to your company’s customers. Write just the subject line and body of each e-mail.

5. Choose one of the scenarios (or offer your own) to show how you determine what type of communication to prepare, to what groups, and in what mode.

Sample Scenarios

* Your company has a new policy on flex time. How would you communicate the new policy within your organization? What communications would you create, using what modes, and to whom?
* There have been a number of customer complaints recently about lack of service. How would you communicate your concern within your organization? What communications would you create, using what modes, and to whom?
* A fellow colleague inappropriately forwarded an email to the whole organization, an email that contained confidential information to a specific group. You’re tasked with damage control. What communications would you create, using what modes, and to whom?
* Your own?

6. What are critical issues affecting people communicating in business today?

7. What would you teach others? What training would you focus on to teach a person key concepts in business communication? What would be your top 4-6 priorities for this training?

8. Please offer additional information and evidence of your learning in Business Communication. You may explain ideas, concepts, or examples more fully, and/or submit samples of other business communications you have created. Your assigned evaluator may request additional samples of your writing.

**Information to Help you Decide Credit Specifications for Your Request**College-level learning means that you can talk about what you know in some detail, come up with some general insights and “rules” about the topic, and apply those insights and rules to new situations.

* **Introductory/Advanced:** Business Communication can be either intro or advanced level learning depending on your specific knowledge.
* **Liberal/Non-Liberal**: Business Communication is typically considered liberal but could be non-liberal if experience and learning is practical or skills-oriented.
* **General Education**: Business Communications sometimes fulfills General Education in Basic Communications, but could yield partial general education credit (or none) if experience and learning is practical or skills-oriented.

**Number of Credits**To determine the number of credits to request, think about your experience using this guide. If you answered most of the questions easily, and feel that you can confidently discuss areas related to this topic, you may want to request 3-4 credits, which is the equivalent of one college course. After your discussion, your evaluator will have the opportunity to recommend fewer or more credits based on his/her evaluation of your learning.

**Level of Credits**To determine the level of your request think about your comfort level answering the questions. Did you feel confident answering the questions that asked you to interpret, analyze, compare, or generalize? Reflect on your learning in light of the information below to help you determine whether to request introductory or advanced-level credit. If you aren’t sure, discuss this with your mentor.

**Introductory college-level learning** (freshman/sophomore) means that you understand:

* Basic concepts, theories, and principles of a topic.

**Advanced college-level learning** (junior/senior level) means that you understand the topic more broadly and deeply. You may understand:

* What the broader field is about, based on your experience.
* Why something is done in a certain way.
* What you, yourself, think about the topic or field, as a result of blending others’ perspectives with your own understanding and judgment.
* How to analyze, synthesize, and evaluate information more abstractly, applying methods usually used in that field.

**Examples of General PLA Topics and Level of Learning**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **PLA Topic – Building**  | **PLA Topic – Project Management** | **PLA Topic – Spanish Culture** |
| **NOT college –level** | Know how to put up wallboard | Work to complete items on a checklist given to you | Traveled in Spain twice, for two weeks each time |
| **Intro. college-level** | Understand why walls are constructed a certain way | Create a timeline and supervise the completion of tasks | Understand trends and practices related to daily life, holidays, food, religion, etc. Understand some Spanish history related to contemporary attitudes and practices |
| **Advanced college level** | ***Intro level plus:*** Understand how to design a building so the walls stay up | ***Intro level plus:*** Work to create cooperation of all parties concerned with the project; analyze problems or issues and amend the plan; evaluate the outcome of the project | ***Intro. level plus:***Understand nuances related to attitudes and practices. Know of and understand sub-groups within the overall culture. Understand more fully Spanish history related to contemporary attitudes and practices. |