

Public Document: Assignment Guidelines

Deliverables

Group:

- Public Document
- Project Assessment Document

Individual:

- reflective response

Specifics

For this assignment, you will be working in groups to write a public document for a particular organization or group connected with Purdue for which you have determined there is a real need (and thus a built-in audience). You will be working in class to generate some ideas about what you could write, for whom, why, and in what format. Here are a few things to consider:

- Public documents grow out of a genuine need and are created for a specific purpose. That is, the document will have to represent a group of people who need a particular document written.
- The most important part of writing a public document is the process of negotiating what the document will say and how it will say it. You cannot write a set of rules for class discussion in your English class, for instance, without negotiating with the members of your class what would be acceptable rules.
- Visual design and formatting play an important role in writing a public document, so you will want to investigate other documents similar to yours to get an idea of what would be acceptable in terms of both format and language.

Here are some examples of public documents that have been written by students in the past:

- A smoking policy for a Co-Op
- A petition to increase the pay of the janitorial staff
- A charter for a new student organization
- Revision of the Stadium Guidelines regarding student conduct to reflect the students' belief that cups should not be thrown after touchdowns
- A manifesto for a campus political organization

Writing a public document is an opportunity to be involved in work of real consequence, work that can affect your life in any number of ways. It is a process that takes time and negotiation among various people. How your work represents the group for whom you are writing is one issue, how much time and energy you spend working on it is another, which can be seen from every step of your work: planning, drafting, revising, and finalizing. And it should be evident that you did appropriate research before writing the draft.

Research

Your group will need to research the organization or group for which you are creating your public document. You should understand their needs and expectations before you begin drafting the document. To gain this insight, you will contact a member of the organization or group to get information (through personal interview, email correspondence, telephone conversation, etc.). You also may need to complete library or web research in order to better understand the group and their need for the document. These resources might help you find samples of similar documents, as well.

Length and Format

Your individual rhetorical situation (the purpose of your document, the audience, how you want to get your document in the hands of the audience, etc.) will dictate the format and length of your document. You will select your genre and how you visually present your work according to your purpose and audience.

Project Assessment Document

Your group needs to complete the provided Project Assessment Document which explicates your process of writing the public document. The Project Assessment Document is due with the final draft of your public document.

Reflective Response

Each student individually will write a brief in-class description of what each of your project group members contributed to the group effort on the day the public document final draft is due. This work will be confidential, and it will give me a sense of who contributed what and how well your group members worked together to get your project done.

Criteria

The content and visual design of your public document should accurately represent your organization or group. Your public document and your Project Assessment Document should demonstrate that you researched and are familiar with the Purdue organization or group for which you are creating your public document, the purpose of the document, the needs of potential users of the document, and the conventions of the genre. Your public document and your Project Assessment Document should demonstrate a process of negotiating what the document will say and how it will say it, including grammatical and mechanical appropriateness. Overall, the public document should be purposeful and appropriate to the rhetorical situation.

I encourage you to visit the Writing Lab at any stage of the writing process.