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Creative component curriculum development: Applied Communications in Agriculture

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Creative Component: Curriculum Development

by

Stacey Geerdes

A creative component submitted to the graduate faculty
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF SCIENCE IN AGRICULTURAL EDUCATION

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Program of Study Committee:
Dr. Michael Retallick, Major Professor
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The student author, whose presentation of the scholarship herein was approved by the program of study committee, is solely responsible for the content of this creative component. The Graduate College will ensure this creative component is globally accessible and will not permit alterations after a degree is conferred.

Iowa State University

Ames, Iowa

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CHAPTER I

DEVELOPING A CURRICULUM FOR AN APPLIED COMMUNICATIONS
IN AGRICULTURE COURSE TO UTILIZE FOR STUDENTS IN TWO-YEAR
AGRICULTURAL PROGRAMS.

Introduction

Communication is one of many skills that is highly desired in the agricultural industry and is considered to be a skill that agriculture graduates should possess when they begin entering the workplace (Ahrens, Meyers, Irlbeck, Burris, & Roach, 2016). One aspect of communication is written communication. In an evaluation done by Andrew Zekeri and Pauline Baba, agriculture alumni from land grant universities rated skills that were needed to be taught in education. Written communication was ranked as the third essential skill that they needed to acquire in their college education (Zekeri & Baba, 2014).

For these skills to be developed, employers expect that colleges prepare students with the basic written communication skills that they need within the agriculture industry. Educators in agricultural programs are responsible for making sure the students within these majors are given the opportunity to learn and develop these skills and are prepared to enter the industry to meet this communication demand (Leggette, Sitton, & Blackwell, 2011). Even within a farming or ranching operation, writing is necessary. Farmers and ranchers need to have the ability to communicate with others, whether it be selling their product such as livestock, communicating with their bank, creating loan proposals, or communicating with their landowner. There are times when students need to be able to write important documents and communicate, but along with this, they should also be able to understand and interpret what is presented to them.
With the mindset that written communication still plays an important role in the agriculture industry, the curriculum should be designed to enhance those skills in particular areas that they will be most useful in being utilized. Agricultural programs, whether it be two-year or four-year programs, implement courses that are designed to develop some type of written communication skills. Written communication courses that are commonly implemented into agriculture program’s curriculum are generic, so they aren’t specifically geared towards or have objectives that are directly related to written communication practices commonly utilized within the agriculture industry. Those written communication courses are designed to teach basic written communication skills.

More specifically, at Iowa Lakes Community College there are currently two course options listed to fulfill the general written communication requirement for the two-year Associate IN Applied Science (A.A.S.) agriculture programs. The two courses that are offered include Composition I and Written Communications in the Workplace. Both of these are classified as communication courses, but they are not specifically focused on written communication in agriculture. Of the two courses, the most common one that is taken by the A.A.S. agriculture students is Written Communications in the Workplace. The current course description for the COM-781, Written Communications in the Workplace, is, “This course focuses on composition and editing of curriculum-specific technical and business-related writing projects. Instruction includes formatting, information gathering, document drafting, editing, and written employment strategies.” (Jedlicka, 2018, p. 1).

**Need**

With written communication being a desired skill that the agriculture workplace is looking for, it would be ideal that we implement a course into the curriculum that helps the agriculture students develop written communication skills that they can utilize in their work
areas. The ultimate goal of this particular course would be to prepare them for the workplace once they graduate with their A.A.S. degree. Not only is communication important between coworkers, but it is also important to have those communication skills needed to communicate with people outside agriculture. The two current written communication courses that are offered to the Iowa Lakes Community College A.A.S. agriculture students are built to help students improve their writing skills and help them produce a quality paper. However, the courses lack the agriculture focus.

Back in the early 1900s, roughly 41% of the United States’ workforce was involved in agriculture in some way, whereas in the year 2000 only about 2% of the employed labor force in the nation worked in agriculture (Dimitri, Effland, & Conklin, 2005). During this shift, the number of small farms throughout the U.S. has also decreased while the average farm size has increased. This shift in agriculture has occurred for various reasons including technological development, consumer influence, and American farming integration increasing with national and global markets (Dimitri et al., 2005).

Our technology over the years has grown rapidly from machinery to advancements made in plant and animal breeding to enhance productivity. These advancements have reduced the number of people involved in agriculture because we have become more efficient with production and shifted to larger-scale operations. With there being fewer people involved in agriculture, consumers are becoming further removed from the agricultural industry which has led to a disconnect and decrease in agricultural literacy among consumers (Rumble & Irani, 2016). This can have a negative impact on agricultural production because consumers have an influence on what is being produced and farming caters to the demand of products that shifts to fit the needs of consumers such as
convenience, cost, and health-based preferences. We are also at a time where it is easy to search various topics and there is a lot of misleading information out there which is also why this disconnect and lack of agricultural literacy and communication can be a problem. All these changes have led to the way communication expectations have changed and how the communication skills the employers are needing and wanting from their employees is altering (Doerfert & Miller, 2006). The internet has become vastly popular which in turn has led to the way we communicate changing rapidly. The agriculture industry needs to adapt to the changes that have occurred with communication and this includes the written communication skills we are teaching to our students.

With written communication being one of the top skills that employers look for in students, we need to help the students acquire the skills that employers are looking for to adapt to the rapidly changing ways in which we communicate. Having a course that specifically addresses different types of written communication that are most commonly utilized in the agriculture industry not only will help them prepare them for their future, but it could also help bridge the communication gap that we currently see between producers and consumers. The skills we give our future agriculturalists in written communication could determine the success of agriculture.

**Purpose and Objectives**

The purpose of this creative component is to design an agriculture communication course that can fulfill the general credit requirements for written communication within the two-year A.A.S. agriculture programs at Iowa Lakes Community College. To develop this course, similar courses will be evaluated along with looking into what types of written communication are most necessary for the agriculture workplace. The main sub-objectives of this project are to:
1. Evaluate current written communication curriculum utilized in two-year agriculture programs at community colleges, specifically Iowa Lakes Community College.

2. Determine the accreditation requirements for the course being developed.

3. Evaluate and compare the course objectives and descriptions between previous courses used and the course being developed.

4. Develop the syllabi and curriculum for the course based upon other written communication courses and resources.

These objectives will help ensure that the creative component has been completed by developing a curriculum for a new course that fulfills its purpose. The result of this curriculum development is to have a course that can replace the existing written communication course built into the curriculum for two-year A.A.S. agriculture programs at Iowa Lakes Community College.
CHAPTER II

ACCREDITATION REQUIREMENTS AND LITERATURE REVIEW

Accreditation Requirements

Iowa Lakes Community College has been granted accreditation through the Higher Learning Commission. They were first granted accreditation in 1976 by the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools and continue to maintain accreditation and participate in the Academic Quality Improvement Program (AQIP) (Iowa Lakes Community College, 2018, Accreditation).

There are different accreditation requirements depending on courses and programs. Associate in Applied Science programs need at least fifteen general education credits built into their curriculum (Iowa Department of Education, 2014). The credentials that an instructor needs in order to teach a course depends on how the course is being utilized. At the community college level, if the class is designed just for career technical programs and is a vocational course, the credentials for an instructor would be to possess a bachelor’s degree or higher in the field of instruction or to possess training, education, and at least 6,000 hours of relevant experience in the field of instruction that the instructor is teaching classes in (Iowa Department of Education, 2018). If the course is adapted and utilized for transfer programs, such as Associate in Arts and Associate in Science, the instructor will need eighteen or more master level credits in the field they are instructing or they need a master’s degree in the area they are teaching (Iowa Department of Education, 2018).

At Iowa Lakes Community College, there is a form that the faculty members have to complete when they want to add a new course (see Appendix A). During the development of a course, there are details that need to be addressed. These details include what to name the
course, how to number it, and where does the course fit into the program. Before naming and numbering a course, the course should be compared with existing course’s descriptions, objectives, and standards to see if the developing course fits in with existing courses both at Iowa Lakes Community College and with other community colleges within Iowa (Iowa Department of Education, 2017). If the developing course aligns with an existing course, it will adopt its name and number. If there isn’t a course that fits exactly what the instructor is looking for, the instructor searches to find similar courses and considers the different contents to develop the new course. Once the course has been compared to other courses in the database and developed, the faculty within the department has to approve and sign-off in agreement that the course should be incorporated into the curriculum. Lastly, the course has to go through the approval process by the committee at the college.

**Literature Review**

In Iowa, there are several community colleges that have two-year agricultural programs. I utilized the CurricUNET website to limit my search to agriculture programs that resulted in an Associate in Applied Science degree. When looking at the curriculum design for many of the A.A.S. agricultural programs that community colleges offer around Iowa, there was a common theme where they required an oral and written communication course as part of the general course credits. However, it did not appear within the descriptions of the courses that they have an agriculture focus but instead focused more on general written communication skills.

As I previously mentioned, the oral and written communication courses that the A.A.S. agriculture programs at Iowa Lakes require the students to take currently includes two types of written communication courses: Written Communications in the Workplace and
Composition I. The written communication course that is COM-781, Written Communication in the Workplace, is not transferrable and is the most common choice for agriculture A.A.S. students to take. Methods that are utilized in this course include: writing in class, doing assigned writing, online assignments, cooperative learning, and group projects (Jedlicka, 2018). The syllabus describes the course as “focuses on composition and editing of curriculum-specific technical and business-related writing projects” and states that “instruction includes formatting, information gathering, document drafting, editing, and written employment strategies” (Jedlicka, 2018, COM-781 Written Communications in the Workplace). Lastly, the objectives for Written Communications in the Workplace include:

1. Recognize the relationship of effective written communication skills to academic, work, and social success.
2. Plan and develop messages that achieve the objective and maintain goodwill
3. Develop acceptable communication skills to produce clear, complete, organized, accurate and neat messages.
4. Learn to think creatively when making written communication decisions.
5. Produce final copy after evaluating, revising and editing preliminary drafts.
6. Correct unacceptable sentence structure, eliminate mechanical and spelling errors.” (Jedlicka, 2018, COM-781 Written Communications in the Workplace)

Although the Written Communications in the Workplace course is designed to improve general written communication skills, it doesn’t specifically address different formats of written communication in the agricultural industry. This can be an issue when it comes to making sure students are prepared to enter the agriculture workplace after graduation because they may not necessarily be developing certain skills they need for effective communication within the industry.

**Hybrid Courses**

One format for teaching courses that is becoming increasingly popular is called hybrid courses or also known as blended courses. The term “hybrid course” refers to a
course that was designed for both face-to-face interactions and online learning activities (Garnham, C. & Kaleta, R., 2002). It is expected that the students spend time both in the classroom and online for working on material in the course. The purpose of a hybrid course is to provide the student with one-on-one time in class and reinforce what was discussed in class online. This type of course gives flexibility to both students and faculty for time.

Many instructors who have taught hybrid courses and students who have taken a hybrid say they would do it again (Gouge, 2009). In some cases, faculty have reported that the performance of their students has improved, including increased interactivity and goals being accomplished (Gouge, 2009). Students can benefit from hybrid courses in multiple ways. For personal growth, students learn how to manage their time better and can develop critical thinking and problem-solving skills (Gouge, 2009). They also learn how to become more independent. Additional skills that hybrid courses can help students develop are computer skills which are desired skills that many professions are looking for, including the agriculture industry. Although there are many benefits of hybrid courses, some disadvantages and challenges that hybrid courses face are challenges with scheduling, technology training for faculty and students, the administrative structures can be complex, and determining the best methods to use for assessment of the program (Gouge, 2009). There could also be those who want to resist change and using technology.

Just like designing any other course, there is a lot of considerations to take into account when creating a hybrid course and several different ways that hybrid courses can be set up and utilized. Sandra Poirier discussed in her article, “A Hybrid Course Design: The Best of Both Educational Worlds”, some approaches to consider when designing a hybrid course (Poirier, 2010). One of the most important steps in designing a hybrid course is the
planning process. Once you have gotten to the point in the planning process that you have determined what it is the students need to learn, there is a great deal of consideration that goes into deciding what activities are best suited for face-to-face and online learning interactions. The grading system will also have to be considered between the two different formats. When the course is completed, it is also important to remember that the course should be assessed and updated based upon the student’s feedback (Poirier, 2010).

Similarly, assistant professor Gordon Hensley at Appalachian State University wrote about his experience with creating and distributing a hybrid course and gave notes and recommendations for beginners (Hensley, 2005). Some suggestions he gave about designing a course and the development of content was writing the objectives and learning outcomes in the appropriate language for the student age level and clearly stating them in the course syllabus. He also suggested using modules to make the content available to students while also restating the objectives of the lesson (Hensley, 2005). To enhance the content, he suggests using technology tools on the course website including adding visual and auditory effects such as videos and narrations to content. He also talked about the importance to discuss the interaction and collaboration expectation of the course including how the students are expected to participate and making the environment collaborative by having discussions (Hensley, 2005). With technology being a big component of the hybrid course, the students should understand what technological tools are available to them and how to utilize it. There is also the reminder that being creative with technology can be difficult, especially since there could be connectivity issues.

Hensley continues to talk about how assessment is also a big part of the class which includes assessment of the student and the course itself (Hensley, 2005). The assignments
that are created in the hybrid course should encourage the students to think critically, but they also have to align with the objectives of the course. Whether they are face-to-face or working online, the assignments that the students have should apply the different concepts and skills that they have learned throughout the course (Hensley, 2005). The students should clearly understand what the expectations of the assignments are, and they should be given the opportunity to do self-assessment and assessment of the course. And lastly, since it is a course that is partially online, the students need to be aware of the learner support that is accessible to them which includes being able to easily communicate with their instructor and receiving reminder emails regularly. They should also have access to links of resources such as help with writing, tutorials on applications, how to contact the instructors, and on how to use tools they have access to (Hensley, 2005). This is to help ensure that they have access to the assistance and resources they need.

**Curriculum Design Techniques**

According to the article, “Curriculum Approaches in Language Teaching: Forward, Central, and Backwards Design”, there are three dimensions of curriculum development (Richards, 2013). These are input, process, and output. Input involves the linguistic content of the course that leads to the development of the syllabus (Richards, 2013). It helps formulate what linguistic content should be taught before teaching actually takes place. Once it is organized into teaching units, it is then put into a syllabus. Another dimension of curriculum development is process. With process, this involves the methodology on how teaching is carried out by using different methods related to types of learning activities that can be utilized by teachers when they teach (Richards, 2013). This dimension is important for determining what resources and activities can be used to engage students throughout the
learning process. The last dimension of curriculum development is output. Output refers to the learning outcomes, or in other words, how are the students able to take what they learned and apply it to real life situations (Richards, 2013). Students should be assessed to determine if the learning outcomes have been achieved. All three of these dimensions play an important role in curriculum development, and language curriculum development can start at any of these three dimensions.

Richards also described three different options for curriculum design approaches that can be utilized when designing a course: forward, central and backwards design. Within the forward design, it flows from input to process to output (Richards, 2013). As previously mentioned, input focuses on the content of instruction that leads to the development of the syllabus. It starts by taking the knowledge of the subject and selecting skills and concepts of that knowledge to formulate a syllabus that is developed around the subject being taught. This leads to the methodology which includes determining what different types of methods are going to be utilized to carry out the teaching. Lastly, the outcomes of the course are determined by figuring out what the students are to gain from the course and assessment is done to determine if this was achieved.

With central design, curriculum development begins by selecting different teaching methods and activities that would be utilized during the learning process. In this case, the first dimension in the development is process. Central designed is considered to be learner-centered because it places emphasis on the learning process rather than the objectives and syllabus (Richards, 2013). The input and output come later with this method of curriculum development.

This last curriculum design that Richards discusses in his article is backward design.
Backwards design develops the learning outputs from the beginning to use them for creating instructional processes and input. It starts with determining the desired results, outcomes, and learning objectives for the course and takes those outcomes to identify the linguistic content and skills needed to achieve the objectives (Richards, 2013). From there, performance tasks are determined along with other evidence tasks such as evaluation and assessment to be used for determining if the desired outcomes are being met. Lastly, a course plan is prepared to develop teaching methods, activities, and materials needed for the implementation of the course (Richards, 2013). The learning experiences with the instruction are planned out for the course. Of the three designs Richards discusses in his article, the design that has prominently been used for language curriculum development is backwards design (Richards, 2013).

Similarly, Ryan Bowen discusses the stages and benefits of backwards design in his article “Understanding by Design” (Bowen, 2017). Bowen states that one of the benefits of backwards design is it creates intentionality by causing the “instructor to establish the purpose of doing something before implementing it into the curriculum” (Bowen, 2017, Understanding by Design). In other words, it causes the instructor to think more about what knowledge needs to be learned and what is useful for getting the students to understand the information before putting it into the curriculum. Developing the assessment and instruction is easier to do once there are learning outcomes and goals established.

**Teaching Strategies Implementation**

When choosing instructional techniques to apply within a course, there are several factors to consider for what may be the best option to use for teaching strategies. Planning Programs for Adult Learners states that there are eleven major factors to take into
consideration: “learning techniques, instructors, learners, context, social media, transfer of learning, content, technique characteristics, variety, logistical constraints, and time” (Caffarella & Daffron, 2013, pp 186). Of those eleven factors, the four that lay the foundation for developing instructional techniques and teaching strategies include the capabilities of the instructor, the background and the experiences of the student learner, the focus of the learning objectives, and the learning context (Caffarella & Daffron, 2013, pp 186-187). Correspondingly, the book Adult Learning Methods: A Guide for Effective Instruction describes four similar factors in determining teaching methods to enhance the teaching-learning transaction (Galbraith, 2004). For the capabilities of the instructor, it is important for the teacher to understand their teaching style, identify their own personal educational philosophy, and to assess their own beliefs (Galbraith, 2004). Learner as a factor refers to the different types of needs and interests that will encompass the students in the course. Each student has their own learning style that involves characteristics related to how they process information, their behavior, and their feelings in the learning environment (Galbraith, 2004, pp. 184). The content, or what is being taught, also has an influence on the teaching strategy. The way certain content is learned is dependent on the cognitive process that is used by the learner. Lastly, the situation, or learning context, is a factor that influences teaching strategies. It is important to know what resources and facilities are available for learning and it is also important to know how the information is going to be relayed, such as either in a face-to-face classroom setting, hybrid, or strictly online.

In various communication courses, instructors have been trying to find strategies that work best in the classroom for reaching their objectives and developing communication skills. One of the biggest challenges college instructors face is that students will come from a
variety of backgrounds of experiences, abilities, and interests in improving their writing skills (Stowers & Barker, 2003). Robert H. Stowers and Randolph T. Barker discussed in their article, “Improved Student Writing in Business Communication Classes: Strategies for Teaching and Evaluation”, six teaching strategies that are important to consider during the teaching and learning process and each of these strategies have value towards improving teaching strategies in writing courses (Stowers & Barker, 2003). The purpose of the article is to help give guidance and tips to instructors for motivating students in their classroom to produce better-written products (Stowers & Barker, 2003, pp. 337).

The first strategy is the instructor setting clearly-defined course goals (Stowers & Barker, 2003). This involves not only the goals for the course but also goals for individual assignments and projects. If students see the connection between the goal that was set and the writing assignments and how they encompass what the instructor wants them to learn, students will more likely approach their assignment readily and value the learning experience (Stowers & Baker, 2003). The second strategy they discuss is investing time early which involves giving information about the assignments to the student right away so they understand what is all involved with the assignment and the purpose of the assignment. It is important to go over the specific instructions and objectives that formulate the assignment so students understand what is expected of them. In some cases, it can be a good idea to go over examples. Giving an example of assignments that are poor or good helps to show the students more of what is expected. Investing time early can also illustrate to the students how the assignment is practical and can be applied to their future career (Stowers & Barker, 2003). With this, it is also important to include how the assignment will be evaluated and how the student will be graded. A third strategy that goes along with strategy two, investing time
early, is making the expectation of the assignment clear. Effective assignments can share characteristics that include brevity, clarity, specificity, neutrality, and controversy (Stowers & Barker, 2003, pp. 342).

Strategy four is first establishing connections between the course and goals and then establishing connections with the materials that will be used to help the students reach the course goals (Stowers & Barker, 2003). This includes making it so students can see how the assignments they are doing apply to real-life experiences in the field they can go into. The fifth strategy is to have the student write their assignments to a specific audience. Writing to a specific audience can cause a student to think about their words from a different perspective and gain a better understanding of how their audience may interpret what they write. The last strategy is evaluation. It is important to make sure the objectives and expectations are clearly stated so students know what they are being evaluated on. Evaluation can be done by providing tools for the student to look at, such as a rubric or grading criteria, having peers evaluate each other, and providing instructor feedback by writing down notes next to what is good and what needs improvement (Stowers & Barker, 2003). Peer evaluation can be beneficial for both the writer and the reviewer because it helps teach students how to learn from praise and critiques while also learning how to critically think about another classmate’s work.

**Student Assessment**

As mentioned before, student assessment and evaluation can be done in various ways such as instructor evaluation, peer evaluation, and self-assessment. Assessment is a critical part to teaching because it not only helps improve instruction by knowing what material the students aren’t understanding, but it can also educate students in the learning process to help
them better understand what they don’t know. It can be useful in determining if the student learning outcome has been achieved throughout the delivery of the course.

Leggette, McKim, Dunsford wrote an article called “A Case Study of Using Electronic Self-Assessment Rubrics in a Core Curriculum Writing Course”, where they did a study that found students who did a self-assessment were able to more accurately assess themselves throughout the semesters (Legget, McKim, Dunsford, 2013, pp. 2). With writing being an important skill that is needed by agriculture graduates, doing assessments not only will help the students writing skills but it could also give them confidence with their ability especially for when they enter the workforce. Self-assessment can be beneficial for students because it can help them gain a better understanding of what their strengths and weaknesses are which lead them to understand themselves better overall. During the self-assessment process, students will learn how to more quickly identify what they need to work on and how to improve it (Leggette et al., 2013, pp. 2). Another benefit of self-assessment is that it causes the student to look over their work before they turn it in. By doing self-assessment, it could lead to the student focusing more on the writing process as a whole rather than getting to the end result.

As I previously mentioned from Stowers’ and Barker’s article about writing in business courses, the instructor personally evaluating the student is another option of assessment (Stowers & Barker, 2003). It’s helpful for students if they see what they are doing correctly and what they need to improve. In the article, it mentions that the student may not take the feedback well if the instructor only points out the negative parts of their work, so it is important to create a balance between both positive and negative feedback (Stowers & Barker, 2003).
Stowers and Barker also mentioned in their article that peer evaluation can be beneficial for student assessment because it teaches the student how to make constructive criticism and by reviewing others work it can help them reflect on their own strengths and weaknesses (Stowers & Barker, 2003). Not only does it teach them how to properly give constructive criticism, but it can also teach them how to praise others work as well. Those two skills can be challenging for people, especially in the workplace, but having those skills are necessary in some cases. They may run into a situation where they will need to review a coworker’s work. Research has also indicated that doing peer evaluation can enhance the student’s involvement with their own writings along with their classmate’s writing (Kastman & Booker, 1998)

Chapter Summary

Through the process of developing a course, there are various things to consider, such as accreditation, design techniques, dimensions of curriculum development, options for delivery, and how will assessment be done and utilized. As I go through the process of developing the curriculum for this course, I will have to research to see if there is currently a course like it being utilized by searching through CurricUNET. I will be comparing the course I am developing to the course it will be replacing to help determine what methods of delivery will work best for distributing information.

Once I have established this, there will be various curriculum design techniques that I will have to consider when going through the process of developing this course. To begin this process, I will first determine which curriculum design approach I want to utilize to help guide me through the process. Utilizing one of the models I discussed previously (forward, central, and backwards design) will help me establish the three dimensions of curriculum
development: input, process, and output.

Things I will have to consider about the three dimensions as I go through the process of developing the course will be: what type of audience am I working with, what are the capabilities of the instructors who will be teaching this course, what is the main focus of the learning objectives, and what is the learning context. Throughout the development process, I will be utilizing backwards design to help facilitate the process of creating and identifying the goals and objectives of the course, determining what performance tasks and assessments will be used, and how the learning plan will be created. These will all be a part of my consideration as I work my way through the curriculum development for Applied Communications in Agriculture.
CHAPTER III. CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT AND METHODS

Introduction

Throughout my creative component, I have reiterated that written communication is a skill that is highly desired in the agriculture industry. Employers want to recruit students who have skills developed when it comes to critical thinking, working with others, solving problems, and both the oral and written communication (Barnett, et al., 2009). The two A.A.S. agriculture programs that Iowa Lakes Community College offers, Agribusiness Technology and Ag Production Technology, students can go into careers anywhere from feed mills, grain elevators, livestock industry, back to the family farm, and other agriculture-related fields. There are a variety of job opportunities presented to these students. With that in mind as I begin to develop this course, there are three things I need to consider. The first one is how is the course going to fit into the curriculum of the current program including meeting the accreditation requirements. The second piece I want to consider is what are my end goals and objectives of the course. What do I want to the students to learn and take from the course, and how can they take what they learn and use it to prepare them for entering the workforce? Lastly, I need to think about the different learning styles that the students have and their backgrounds along with the instructor’s capabilities. Once I determine all of this, it will help me design and develop the curriculum and teaching methods that will work best to fulfill the needs of the course and of the students.

Accreditation Specific to Course

Associate in Applied Science programs need at least fifteen general education courses, which includes courses revolving around communication. The course that I am designing is meant to fulfill a written communication requirement for students who are
seeking an Associate in Applied Science (A.A.S.) agriculture degree at Iowa Lakes Community College. The course would be used to replace COM-781, Written Communication in the Workplace.

In Chapter 2, I discussed how the accreditation process works for implementing a new course into a program. I did my research on the CurricUNET website to determine if there was another course similar to what I am trying to create in the agriculture category. I limited my search to agriculture programs that resulted in an Associate in Applied Sciences degree. When looking at the curriculum design for many of the A.A.S. agricultural programs that community colleges around Iowa offer, there was a common design where they require an oral and written communication as part of the general course credits. These course descriptions include general written communication skills and therefore do not necessarily have an agriculture focus. It did not appear that there was a course that existed that was the same as what I am trying to create. In this case, the written communication courses I found that other colleges utilized were similar to the COM-781 and ENG-105 (Composition I) offered at Iowa Lakes, but I could not find any courses that were agriculture written communication specific for what I envision within the objectives and goals for the course. The main difference between what is currently implemented and what I am creating is that the course I am designing is geared towards agriculture writing practices. Regardless, the written communication course I am developing will have similar components to the current courses used to fill the written communication requirement.

Since I could not find a similar course, I decided to look to see where this course could fit into the agriculture A.A.S. curriculum. One area that this course I am developing would fit under for course descriptions would be Agriculture-Comprehensive (AGC). In this
category, it could be considered a general education course to fulfill one of the fifteen credits needed and it could be taught by faculty within the agriculture department. If the course is placed into this category, it will be considered a career/technical course. In this case, the course number will be greater than 099 (Iowa Department of Education, Course Name Protocol for Iowa Common Course Number System). The alternative option would be the course could be placed into the Communication (COM) category. In either category, the course would have to be approved by faculty within that department to be accepted in. I took into consideration different names for the course and the name that I selected for this course is Applied Communications in Agriculture. I selected this name because written communication is going to be the main focus, but I am intending for the students to gain other communication skills through teamwork, discussion, and other activities in class that can be applied in the agriculture field.

**Delivery**

Since Applied Communications in Agriculture is being designed to replace COM-781, this course will be a three-credit course and offered as a hybrid. The purpose of a hybrid course is to allow flexibility and reduce time in the classroom. Part of the curriculum for the two agriculture A.A.S. programs offered at Iowa Lakes Community College includes the students participating in On the Job Training, also known as OJT. With the students having OJT during the semester, time and class scheduling can be difficult to manage and providing hybrid classes ensures the material is getting distributed to the students. Previously COM-781 at Iowa Lakes was taught Tuesday and Thursdays from 2:00-3:25 PM, and during the semester students would leave for OJT. The times that were scheduled meant the students would spend 50% of their time in the classroom and 50% of this time working
on the class online. The course I am developing is going to follow a similar format.

In order for this course to be successful as a hybrid, I will be utilizing Canvas for developing and distributing the course. Students will be able to log into Canvas and see what topics we will cover during the semester. It will also be the location where the students will find their resources when they are doing the online portion of the course. There will be assignments and activities located in Canvas that the students will be expected to complete.

The course will be organized into weeks designated to a certain topic. These topics will lead to achieving the course objectives and goals. To help with the layout and to gain a better understanding of what the students were previously learning about, I am communicating with the instructor for COM-781 to see how she structures the course within Canvas. This will give me insight into how she prepared a hybrid class. Although the two courses do not have the same goals and objectives, seeing how she delivers the course will still be beneficial since the course I am creating is intended to replace COM-781.

Methods and Teaching Strategies

When determining what teaching methods to utilize in the course, I need to consider who I am as an educator, what type of students I am going to working with, what content I am trying to teach, and the situation the course is in (Galbraith, Adult Learning Methods: A Guide for Effective Instruction). When talking to the instructor for COM-781, one of the biggest struggles she faced with the students was getting them to see how writing can be utilized in agriculture (Jedlicka, personal interview, September 17, 2018). Many of them are planning to work either at a local grain elevator or back on the family farm, and they don’t see the value of writing. Keeping this in mind, I will want to select methods that encourage participation from the students while also informing them of how they can apply what they
are learning to their career. At the start of the class, it will be important to establish the goals and the objectives with the students and to get them to see and understand just how communication can be applied and is essential in their future and in agriculture.

A common method that I plan to incorporate within face-to-face interactions will be lecture. Part of the purpose of lecture is to help “identify, explain, and clarify difficult concepts, problems, or ideas.” (Galbraith, Adult Learning Methods: A guide for effective instruction, pp 228). Through lecture, I can see it being used to go over writing basics and examples of the assignments they are going to be doing. This will be a time where the instructor can explain the information to them about the type of writing they are going to be doing and the expectation of that writing assignment. Using lecture will be beneficial during the face-to-face time because this method will help organize presenting the material to students in the short amount of time we have together. It will also be a time where it can be explained why a particular assignment can benefit them in an agriculture career and how items link together. Hopefully it will encourage the students to get involved and want to learn due to the benefits of the assignment presented. For the purpose of this course and the audience being taught, I do not plan to make lecture a main part of the face-to-face class time because many of these students learn best from being hands-on and gaining experience. Sitting there and listening is not something that typically interests them, so a challenge I will have to overcome is how can I make the lecture portion interesting and what other methods can be used during lecture.

To increase participation and involvement during the lecture, a couple of methods I can include is showing examples and resources about the topics and assignments, and I can also ask questions for the students to answer and involve short in-class activities. With
showing examples, I can show the students good and poor examples of the assignment they will be creating to help give them a better understanding of the expectations. This will also give them an opportunity to ask me questions about the topic being covered and assignments. Using in-class activities will also be beneficial to incorporate during class time because it can test the knowledge of the student and creates teamwork opportunities. Incorporating teamwork can simulate some aspects they may encounter if future workplace experiences (Kastman & Booker, 1998). Working in groups can also help develop their critical thinking, problem-solving, and research skills.

Another method that I plan to use to enhance cognitive skills is creating case studies. Students tend to like to see how they can take what they are learning in the classroom and link it to how they can apply it in real life. With this, it can get the students to critically think about solutions to the problem presented to them. This will also develop problem-solving capabilities. It can cause them to think about the different possible solutions and which approach they think is best to use. A benefit that can come from case studies is that they can be assigned either as groups or individually. Doing it as a group can teach the students how to work together whereas doing it individually can give them a chance to develop their critical thinking skills and creativity. Another benefit of this method is the flexibility of it being able to be used both during face-to-face class time and online.

Discussion is a common method that can be used and it can increase participation. This is a good method to include because it can help the student get other opinions on topics and approaches, learn how to problem solve, and learn how to critically think (Galbraith, Adult Learning Methods: A Guide for Effective Instruction). It also can cause the student to explore different concepts more in depth, and depending on the topic, may alter the way they
feel or think about a topic. The discussions I implement will include the necessary resources and instructions included to help facilitate the discussion and get the students started. I should also have an idea of what kind of background and experiences my students have to help with making sure conflicts can be avoided. Discussion is another method that would be great to utilize either face-to-face or on the online Canvas discussion board. Likewise, discussion can also have the teamwork method incorporated into it. The challenge with using discussion is that it can go any direction. Considerations that will have to be done is how to facilitate the discussion and keep it on track with the topic.

Lastly, I want to incorporate writing assignments that cause the students to cater their writing to a specific audience. The purpose of doing this is getting them to think more about the words they are using and how the reader might interpret them. Knowing how to pick the right words is important to cater to different age groups and backgrounds that people may be from. There are many people out there today who are reading about agriculture and yet they have no background in agriculture. Depending on a person’s background in agriculture, it can greatly influence the way you should word and use terminology and concepts.

**Assessment and Evaluation**

Throughout the semester, students’ work and progress should be continually assessed by providing instructional feedback, having peer review, and doing self-assessment. These modes of assessment may not necessarily be used for each assignment given to the students with this course, but they will be utilized. I believe it is important for the instructor to provide feedback to the student that is positive while also explaining areas of weakness in the writing. This can be beneficial because it can still encourage the student by showing them what they are doing right but can also explain to them where improvements can be made
(Stowers & Barker, 2003). To do the instructor feedback, there will be either rubrics or grading criteria created for assignments to assist with the grading process. In order to provide supportive feedback, the instructor will also include additional notes for the students to view on areas that they did well on and areas that they can improve. The rubrics and grading criteria will be made available for the students to view beforehand, so they can see what the expectations are and how they will be graded.

Canvas also has a feature that enables the instructor to assign peer reviews. Peer reviews are beneficial for both the writer and the reviewer because it teaches students how to professionally critique one another’s work and how to accept critiques. This is important because they may be in a profession where they have to receive feedback from co-workers that are at the same level as them. It can also teach the students how to critically look at other’s work and to evaluate it. Being reviewed is a process that students may face in the future workplace, so this is another way to help prepare them.

Lastly, the students will be asked to self-assess themselves. Doing self-assessment can teach them to see how they’ve been improving during the semester. This also gives them a chance to look over their work to see if they met the expectations of the assignment, and as they assess themselves more, they will be able to identify areas that they need to improve in their writing (Leggette et al., 2013).

**Course Development and Curriculum Topics**

Taking into account all the information I have learned through my graduate coursework and by researching, I began to organize my ideas and develop a plan for creating the curriculum for Applied Communications in Agriculture. For developing the curriculum, I decided to follow the stages of the backwards design model to help guide me through the
process of creating my course. To do this, I looked at various templates for the backwards
design model and created my own template to help organize my ideas and to get my thought
process going. The first thing I did for developing the course is create the objectives and
goals, which I plan to include within the syllabus.

One resource that I utilized for formulating the objectives and goals was working
with the instructor for COM-781, Renee Jedlicka who teaches Written Communications in
the Workplace course. Renee gave me permission to become an observer in her class
through the Iowa Lakes Canvas Portal to see how she structured the class for students in
these programs. Within this, I am able to view the assignments and the syllabus that included
the course objectives for COM-781 to see if anything was applicable to what I was trying to
accomplish with my own course. Since the course I am developing is a similar format, it was
extremely beneficial to see how it could potentially be structured, especially since they
typically have OJT during the semester.

First, I focused on her goals and objectives for the course along with the learning
outcomes. When determining the objectives and goals for the course I am developing, I
reviewed the objectives that were a part of the Written Communication in the Workplace
course that Renee Jedlicka had available in her syllabus (Jedlicka, 2018). Due to the lack of
agriculture focus in her syllabus, I decided to recreate objectives that would fit into the
course I am developing for fulfilling what I considered to be the needs that students had for
preparing them for their future in agriculture. Items that I am considering when developing
the objectives include: what goals do I have for information that the students need to learn
and understand, what questions are there that the course should address for the student, what
knowledge should they gain, and also what skills do I want the students to gain. I asked
myself, what are the end results that I want to achieve with the course? One of the main goals, since it is a writing course, would be to develop proper writing skills such as using grammar, sentence structure, and punctuation. In order for the student’s work to look professional, they have to be able to write and communicate in a professional manner. They should be able to recognize what written communication skills are effective and how to cater their writing to their audience. This course should prepare them for the workplace by teaching them how to create professional documents. I also want to teach the student how to think about others opinions and being open-minded to what they read and how they interpret things. Along with this, they should know how to research and find reliable resources to back up what they are writing. Once I established all of this, I was able to select objectives for the course that fulfilled all these questions and needs. I included this all within my backwards design plan and put the objectives into the syllabus for the course.

After selecting the objectives and goals, I moved on to stage two of my backwards design plan and began to determine the types of performance tasks and evaluations and assessments that could be used to prove that the students were understanding the material and learning. For performance tasks, I intend on creating assignments and activities to include throughout the semester to test their knowledge on the topic. Discussion will also be used to enhance participation and facilitate learning. With all of this, it will help with evaluating what the students are learning. I also intend to incorporate some sort of course evaluation that will be given at the beginning and end of the semester to help understand what the students wanted to get out of the course and to see what they thought of the course once they completed it. For the initial evaluation, I wanted to get the students’ thoughts on what their expectations were on the course and what they hoped to learn. Within the evaluation given at
the end of the course, I wanted there to be questions related to the instructor’s ability to teach the course and what they thought of the structure of the course as a hybrid.

For evaluating the students on their assignments, Students will be provided with rubrics and grading criteria and the results from these will help determine if the outcomes are being met. Based upon what I learned on the benefits of self-assessments from my previous research, I decided I wanted to incorporate at least three self-assessments for help the students to learn more about themselves and how they are improving throughout the semester. For each assignment, my goal would be for the instructor to provide the student with feedback as well. I previously knew that Canvas had the capabilities to assign students peer reviews once their assignments were submitted. Knowing that I could assign peer reviews and wanted to incorporate this type of assessment, I used these items to help me formulate appropriate assignments for the course. I wanted the students who were assessing and providing feedback to their classmates to get the experience of providing professional feedback and be able to properly critique their classmates. During class, students would also be expected to contribute to in-class activities that would also evaluate and assess how they were participating in the class. These in-class activities are going to be designed to go along with the topic we are discussing and to encourage teamwork and discussion. The feedback from all of these types of assessment will help with evaluating the course.

Before I began stage three, the process of developing the course and creating a learning plan, I first contacted the Distance Learning Operations Supervisor at Iowa Lakes, Laura Howard, to see if it would be possible to put the course together through our online education system called Canvas. She was able to create an empty shell and make it so I am able to share the course with anyone whom I wanted to observe it. Once the empty shell was
available on Canvas for me, I began designing and building my course, Applied Communications in Agriculture, by uploading materials and organizing it to flow together. I started by including an introduction home page and the syllabus within its tab (see Appendix B). I then proceeded to research and select different ideas to use for resources and creating assignments. The resources linked into the course are for assisting the students with the help they may need and to go along with topics for the students to review. My main goal when developing the assignments, activities, and discussions was to get the students involved while also picking items that students could relate to and see how they would be applicable in an agriculture career and achieve the objectives I set for the course. Some of the materials integrated into the course I built from scratch and others I researched and found online by searching for common writing practices used in agriculture. Depending on what the material was and how I would utilize it in the course, I reached out to the owner of the material to ask permission for implementing it into my course. Many of the resources I linked straight into the course so the students would be directed straight to the location for the source of information. This makes it easily accessible for the students, especially when they are working on the course during their online class time. For all assignments I intended on having in the curriculum, I created some sort of grading criteria or rubric to help guide the students and let them know what they would be assessed on. Some rubrics that I utilized were already pre-created from additional resources, such as the rubric for the resume and cover letter. For using these resources, I reached out to the original owner to ask permission to incorporate these documents into the course. The assignments would be designed to test the knowledge the students gained from the lesson and discussion held during class time.

There is a lot to consider when developing a curriculum because a variety of
materials can be developed to fit into the curriculum. For this particular course, the materials that go into the course should be communication skills that the students will potentially utilize in their future. Within these communication skills, there are a variety of written communication materials that can benefit them. Items that would help the student prepare for their professional career would include learning how to create a resume and cover letter for the job they want to go into. They should be able to write a variety of professional documents. A couple of professional documents that may be beneficial to the students would be writing a standard operating procedure and creating newsletters (Kastman & Booker, 1998). Within agriculture, there are many written documents that are utilized such as writing proposals, procedures, or even farm business plans. There are a variety of careers that utilize these documents, so having the skills to interpret and properly write them would benefit the student.

Along with teaching them how to write professionally and properly, I want to help develop their critical thinking and problem-solving skills because both are important in agriculture. A big part of written communication occurs between people within the field, but it also occurs with people who are not in agriculture. I think it is important to implement materials that will help prepare them to communicate with others outside agriculture by knowing how to effectively research and support what they are saying while also being able to put themselves in the other’s shoes. I think it also important that they know how to address various agricultural issues we face professionally. There are many issues we face in agriculture and it is because consumers are lacking agricultural literacy and a disconnection has occurred. Knowing how to communicate with them is important and essential. When I was working on putting the course together, I reflected back on my goals and objectives of
the course to select assignments and activities that would fulfill them. From there, I formulated lesson plans of how to cover each topic for how I envisioned the students would learn to provide to the instructor for flowing through the course.

**Conclusion**

By using backwards design as guidance, I am creating my course by establishing the purpose of the course followed by determining performance tasks, evaluation, and assessment that can be used to determine if the course is reaching its outcomes. My main goal that is going to be a part of this course is to improve their written communication skills along with other communication skills such as working as a team and giving constructive peer reviews to one another. Another goal for this course is to use methods and create materials that not only challenge the students to think critically but also can cause the students to understand how they may apply what they learn to their future career. For accomplishing this, I am putting together different methods, creating assignments, and developing assessments to be utilized in this course to achieve the goals and objectives and reach the end result I desire. These methods, assignments, and assessments will be shaped around the desired outcomes and learning objectives and provided online through Canvas.
CHAPTER IV
CREATIVE COMPONENT RESULTS

Through Canvas, you can see Applied Communications in Agriculture put together (see Appendix B). All materials that can be implemented and utilized in the course are found through Canvas. I started out by creating a home page that introduces the class and myself as the instructor. I made it clear on the home page on how to contact me and included that this is a hybrid course. I then included the syllabus within the syllabus tab to make it easier for the students to access and mentioned its location within the home page. I designed the course so the student would just have to go into the modules and follow along with the topics we are discussing based upon what week it is. I tried to make it easy for them to follow along since this course is a hybrid. At the beginning of each topic, I included a page on what the objectives and outcomes would be to help students to know what to expect and what would be due. This should also make it easy for anyone who would potentially teach the course to see how it can be set up.

As I was going through the modules and putting them together, I decided to organize them into weeks and what topics would be covered during that time (see Appendix B). In the very first module, I also included information on what a hybrid course is and I included other resources that they could access, such as tutoring and writing services to help introduce the course to the students and help make them aware of what resources were available to them. This was to help facilitate the learning process within the hybrid course. When I was working on putting the materials into the modules and organizing it, I had to decide how I wanted the information to appear, whether it be a file, page within Canvas, or a new assignment. A majority of what I put into canvas I set up as either a page for students to go
view information and resources or it was set up as an assignment to show the students what would be graded. If it was an assignment, I would also specify if they would be submitting it online or turning it in by a different method. I also included the grading criteria within the description of the assignments. Any resources that I used for students to view I would link directly into the page where the topic was being discussed so the link would take them straight to the resource. This enabled the students to know exactly where they can find the resources and also who was the owner of the information.

One component of this curriculum development was making sure the materials fit and flowed together. I organized them in a way that the assignments would build upon each other and gradually continue to challenge the students by enhancing their communication, writing, and critical thinking skills while also meeting the objectives of the course. Throughout the planning process, I incorporated activities that encompassed various communication methods, different activities that encourage participation, and opportunities to develop numerous skills. As I was developing the course, I created lesson plans to go along to help me determine what would be considered an online component and what would be done during face-to-face class time. I also continued to work and fill out each stage of my backwards design plan to make sure I wasn’t forgetting a step during curriculum development.

In the Applied Communications in Agriculture course through Canvas you will see all the materials, resources, and assignments that I developed and built into the course. I also included a folder that contains the suggested lesson plans for the course and my backwards design plan that I completed along the way.
Chapter V

Reflection

When reflecting on the project and my time as a graduate student, there are a few different things to look back on. Overall this project presented a new challenge to me because I created a course that didn’t pre-exist. I had to do research to make sure this was something that wasn’t already being implemented into programs. From the beginning, my creative component started out as a challenge because I went from planning to design a course to fulfill an oral communication need and switched it to written communication because there seemed to be more of a demand for a new written communication course to be implemented into the A.A.S. program’s curriculum. It caused me to stop and rethink how I wanted to shape what I was creating and also adjusted my original purpose for developing a curriculum for my creative component. However, I did still achieve my end result of creating an agriculture-focused communication course that can potentially help students who are in two-year A.A.S. Ag programs to see the role and purpose that communication plays in their career. Through the research I’ve done of looking up to see what employers look for in potential employees and how written communication (and communication in general) is utilized in agriculture, it became more obvious to me what an important role it plays.

The Agricultural Education and Studies courses that I took through my graduate program helped me gain a basis of what I needed to develop the curriculum for this course. There were a few specific courses that I referred back to when working through my creative component. AGEDS-524, Program Development and Evaluation in Agricultural and Extension Education, taught me skills for developing rubrics, assessment, and evaluations. I was able to take these skills that I developed and incorporate it into creating different
components in this course. AGEDS-510, Introduction to Research in Agricultural Education, was a course that helped me prepare to learn how to format, research, and give me an idea of how I would work through writing my creative component paper. I utilized the information I learned in AGEDS-520, Instructional Methods for Adult and Higher Education in Agriculture and Natural Resources, to help me learn more about teaching methods and assignments that I could incorporate into the curriculum. I referred back to assignments I created in this course to help spark ideas on creating assignments along with determining different instructional methods that could be implemented. Other ways that my graduate courses prepared me for doing my creative component was by teaching me more about myself and who I am as an educator. Prior to being in this graduate program, I did not know what my teaching philosophy was nor did I know much about the different types of learning styles that students have. Throughout this process of developing my creative component, I found myself reflecting back on my own philosophical beliefs while also thinking about the different learning styles I may encounter.

I also believe having my undergraduate and agricultural background assisted me through this process. Experiences and opportunities that I had as an undergraduate student included having courses where I wrote papers related to agricultural issues, created standard operating procedures, and through my experience of being a teaching assistant, peer tutor, and peer mentor I learned a little about what it means being an educator. Those experiences I gained and my passion for agriculture is what led me to pursue a Master of Science in Agricultural Education and gave me the inspiration to develop a curriculum related to a topic that I believe is a necessity to all agriculture students.

Overall, the experience I gained from developing the curriculum and through the
courses I took for my graduate program gave me an eye-opener of what all goes into developing a curriculum. It’s more than just picking out materials to cover a topic. There is so much that goes into it, such as catering and engaging your audience while also meeting the objectives and learning outcomes of the course. A lot of time and thought has to go into it because you want the students to be able to take what they learn from the course and be able to apply it to their future. If they aren’t able to do that, then there wasn’t a point for them to take the course. This project presented various challenges to me along the way but pushed me to grow as a person and educator. What I appreciated the most about this experience was being able to test my creative thinking ability and to truly challenge myself. It also reinforced me wanting to have agricultural education as a part of my life and also me being a part of it.

**Recommendations**

I developed this course with the main focus in mind of it being utilized at Iowa Lakes Community College for their Ag Production Technology A.A.S. and Agribusiness Technology A.A.S. programs. Since this was the case, the materials I selected and created for the curriculum and the way the course is set up may not be ideal for all programs and it may not be ideal for all community colleges. The main purpose I had for designing this course was to cater it to the students’ needs as they enter the general agriculture workplace. With that being said, the materials and assignments used in the course may be adjusted depending on how a two-year program is trying to implement it. Materials and assignments should be adapted to suit different needs as long as the same objectives are being met.

It is also important to keep in mind that this course was also designed as a hybrid and it factors in for students who have On the Job Training (OJT) training during the semester as
well. Not every two-year agriculture program functions the same way as the two programs that I designed this course specifically for. Depending on other program curriculums, this course may need to be adjusted to either be taught the full semester or it may be adjusted to be either strictly a face-to-face or online course. This would all depend on how the course would fulfill the needs and fit into other programs best.

Another thing to keep in mind is the audience. I didn’t incorporate a lot of PowerPoints into this course curriculum because I did not feel like the typical student audience for the A.A.S. agriculture programs at Iowa Lakes would consider lecture to be a major part of their learning style preference. Many students within these programs expect a lot of hands-on activity. Although I am not using a lot of PowerPoints, lecture still is going to be used but the teaching approach I recommend using in this course for the programs I designed it for involves showing resources, going over examples, and incorporating questions with discussions to try keeping the students’ attention. These teaching strategies and methods may have to be adapted depending on how others would decide to use the course and what kind of audience they have. I suggest doing a survey at the beginning of the semester to learn more about the students’ backgrounds along with the different learning styles to help determine the best implementation of methods.

Overall, this course was designed to have the basics to teach general written communication skills along with other skills utilized in the agricultural workplace that students who are doing two-year A.A.S. programs may encounter. It is highly recommended that other instructors take the curriculum produced for this course and adjust it as they see fit for their individual programs, student learning styles, and their own personal teaching style. Like any new course, there will be trial and error. Doing an evaluation of the course will be
essential for adjusting it and improving it. It is also important to keep in mind that what may work well one semester may not work as well the next.

**Do anything different?**

One thing that I would have done differently would be to interact with the students that are currently in the two-year agriculture programs that I am designing this course by asking them to do surveys. Generally, students in this population plan to go back to the family farm, start their own farm or work in an agriculture-related field near their home. I would have liked to have done a survey with them to determine what percentage would fall where and to see how many of them come from an agriculture background. Likewise, many students decide to go into these programs because they want the hands-on experience part of it. I also would like to have done a survey to see what the students think would be ways they would use written communication in their future. The course I developed was made so it could be implemented into both the Agribusiness Technology or Ag Production Technology program. However, the career outlook could have looked different between both sets of students depending on what program they are in, so it would have been interesting to see if there would have been additional assignments that would have catered to one group more than another.

As far as my education, if I had time, I would have also taken a curriculum development course to help learn more about some of the background information that I needed before making this course such as accreditation. Creating objectives, selecting teaching strategies, and creating assignments were a few of the things that I felt like I had adequate background information on how to do from my previous graduate coursework. However, when I started learning about accreditation and core curriculum, I felt like there
was a lot of new information for me that I had to learn. There was information in those aspects that I had to research and decipher because I did not feel like I was familiar with it.

At the end of this project, I feel like overall I gained a new perspective and appreciation for what all goes into being an educator, and I appreciate the opportunity that was given to me as a graduate student. It has helped me to continue to learn more about myself as an educator and what types of beliefs I have. It also helped me to learn to look at things from different viewpoints that I wouldn’t have considered beforehand. This creative component project challenged me and pushed me out of my comfort zone. Between my coursework that I completed for this graduate program and my creative component, I believe it has shaped me into a more rounded educator by understanding more about my personal teaching philosophy along with the different learning styles while also giving me more consider as I continue to pursue my future.
REFERENCES


APPENDIX A.

Iowa Lakes Community College
New Course Information
The following document was provided to me from the Director of Records and Registration at Iowa Lakes Community College.

The following information is required on any new course. Please complete the form, obtain signatures. Email the completed form, as a WORD document to the Deans office at least one month prior to Curriculum Committee meeting.

1. TERM/YEAR new course will start:

2. Prefix/title:

3. Indicate course type:  Arts and Science  Vocational  Developmental

4. BRIEF CATALOG DESCRIPTION—this is the description that must be used on the syllabus:

5. CREDIT HOUR/Contact hour: (EXAMPLE: 3/52.6)  Lecture cr/hr:  Lab cr/hr:  Clinical:  Preceptorship:

6. List any PREREQS or CO-REQ:

7. List any/all degree or program that will be affected by the change:

8. Does this course replace an existing course?  Yes ☐  No ☐
   If yes, give title and number of course to be replaced: Course prefix/number/title:

9. Please provide justification for the new or modified course:

10. INSTRUCTIONAL FORMAT:  Highlight ALL that apply to this request:
   If you are requesting online or hybrid, make sure that you also contact Distance Ed for training.
   Face to Face  Online  Hybrid  Compressed/fastrack
   Fast Track Hybrid  Independent Study  Other, explain

11. Optional: Request for P/Q grading (please provide rationale):

This request must also include an updated, or new syllabus
   • If applicable, attach a copy of AS28 (current and proposed) and show how this change will affect
     the program curriculum.

AA/AS course must provide ARTICULATION information from 3 college/university
   Provide names of transfer colleges: (work with Registrar’s office to obtain) and list below:
PROPOSED COURSE FEE (Information Only) Course fees must be discussed with Dean and approved by Board before they will be attached to a course.

Records office: update catalog year:

SIGNATURES

GEN ED COURSES: Signatures must be obtained from a simple majority of the discipline + DEAN

PROGRAM COURSES: Signatures for program specific courses must be signed by program coordinator, and other faculty within the program and/or related program faculty + DEAN

ONLINE COURSES: must have signature of Distance Ed Director + DEAN

Signature indicates approval of the request. Deans will sign after faculty and faculty supporter signatures have been obtained.

_____________________________________________________________     _____________________
FACULTY SUPPORTER - Discipline Approval (Simple Majority)

_____________________________________________________________    _____________________
FACULTY SUPPORTER – Discipline Approval (Simple Majority)

______________________________________________________________    _____________________
DIRECTOR DISTANCE ED (online courses only)

______________________________________________________________    _____________________
EXECUTIVE DEAN

Revised: 07/28/17

FOR RECORDS OFFICE USE ONLY
Catalog_________________
Webpage_________________
Create Course in Datatel________
Degree Audit_________________
AS28_________________
Admissions Bulletin_____________
CCN Grid_________________
Program & Catalog List__________
APPENDIX B

This appendix includes screenshots of course and materials within the online Canvas course. The following screenshot is the home screen for the Applied Communications in Agriculture course.

Applied Communications in Agriculture - Stacey Geerdes

Students -
Welcome to Applied Communications in Agriculture! I am looking forward to a rewarding semester with all of you!

This course is considered a Hybrid course where you will be spending approximately 50% of your time in the classroom and expected to do the last 50% of your work online.

Please read the syllabus carefully (I suggest you print it out) and refer back to it throughout the course for what is expected of you in class. We will go over the syllabus during the first day of class too. The syllabus is located on the left side under the “Syllabus” tab. If any changes are made to assignments, I will post the changes made in the announcements so be sure to check announcements every time you enter the course.

The format of the class is based on weekly modules. These modules can be found on the left side within the tab “Modules”. We will discuss different writing formats and what types of documents you will be learning in class. Expectations that you have to do on your own, other than the assignments, include: peer-reviews, others work, posting in the discussion board, and doing a self-assessment. Most assignments that are due will be submitted online. We will go over this in class.

For personal correspondence, you may either email me privately at sgeerdes@iwu.edu or send me a message through Canvas. All email and phone messages will be answered within 48 hours. If you have any concerns, be sure to put your first and last name and the class you are in. Your email address alone is not enough identification. Remember to add the required subject line, “Applied Communications in Agriculture - Full Name”, and sign your full name to the end of every email. If you do not receive a timely response, it means one of two things: 1) either I did not receive your message, or 2) you did not reply. If you do not receive a timely response from me on the second attempt, please pick up the phone and call me. You may also stop in during my regular office hours.

When you send me an email, I expect it to be written PROFESSIONALLY especially since this is a written communication course. If you do not write to me professionally, I will respond back asking you to do so.

As soon as you get into the course:

• Print the syllabus and read through it. Ask any questions you have about the syllabus. Remember in order to print the syllabus or any page in the course, right-click on the page you wish to print and choose print from the pop-up menu that appears.
• If you are new to hybrid courses and navigating Canvas please go through the online tutorial and watch the videos on what it means to be in a hybrid course.
• We will go over the syllabus during the first day of class, so I recommend you bring a copy with you. Expectations will be covered along with the objectives and assignments that will be taught throughout the semester.

I look forward to meeting you all!

Stacey Geerdes
Below includes the syllabus provided on Canvas

Course Syllabus

Course Syllabus

IOWA LAKES COMMUNITY COLLEGE

COURSE NUMBER: AGC 781

COURSE TITLE: Applied Communications in Agriculture

Fall Term 2019

INSTRUCTOR: Stacey Geordes, speendes@iowelakess.edu

Office: Rm 240, Emmetsburg Campus, 3200 College Drive, Emmetsburg, IA 50526

Telephone: 712-852-5264

Office Hours: TBD

Class Times: Hybrid, Tuesday and Thursday 2:00-3:25 PM

Course Description: This course is developed to prepare students who are going into an agriculture-related field. The course focuses on written composition and the creation and editing of agricultural documents. Instruction includes formatting, information gathering, document drafting, editing, and written employment and documentation strategies.

Credits: 3

Required Texts:

There are no required texts for this class.

Methods of Instruction: Writing in class and assigned writing. Online assignments, discussion, cooperative learning, and group projects.

Course Objectives/competencies: On the completion of this course, the student should be able to:

1. Recognize the relationship of effective written communication skills utilized in various agriculture workplace settings.
2. Create professional resumes, cover letters, and written documents.
3. Write and communicate in a professional manner.
4. Develop and demonstrate critical thinking and problem-solving skills.
5. Develop effective research skills.
6. Evaluate peer and individual work.
Grading Policies:

| Scale | At least 75% of the points awarded for the semester will be based on assignments given throughout the semester.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A+</td>
<td>90% or better</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>89% to 89%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>80% to 89%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>79% to 79%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>70% to 79%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B-</td>
<td>60% to 69%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>below 60% percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The rest of the points awarded will be made up of in-class activities, discussions, and extra credit.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Class Assignments: Class assignments are a major part of the student's grade and are essential in the learning process. Students are expected to turn in the assignments the day they are due. Each student is allowed ONE time to turn in a late/missed assignment for credit. Otherwise, NO CREDIT will be given for an assignment that is turned in late. Almost all of the assignments will be available online within the modules and expected to be submitted online through Canvas. We will go over the expectations, due dates, and submission of each assignment. This is a hybrid course which means the students is RESPONSIBLE for completing part of the course during their own time.

Extra Credit: The instructor reserves the right to randomly award extra credit whether it is for in-class activities or made available online.

Attendance: Students are required to attend class as the activities and discussions are critical to understanding the objectives of the course. We will be doing in-class assignments and activities. Students are also expected to participate in class in order to receive full credit. It is critical students attend class each day for the entire time allotment, or they risk losing many points for in-class activities.

In-Class Activities: Some in-class activities have been pre-assigned. The instructor reserves the right to incorporate in-class activities the day of. In-class activities can include short writing assignments and group discussion.

CLASSROOM BEHAVIOR: During the first class meeting we will discuss a list of appropriate classroom behavior and expectations for effective learning in this classroom. The instructor reserves the right to ask a student to leave the course or take it in a different delivery method if he/she is not able to demonstrate appropriate behavior in a college classroom. Students are expected to participate in class discussion.

Plagiarism:

1. Plagiarism is the use of another person's words without giving credit to the author or source.
2. Plagiarism is the use of another person's ideas or information without giving credit to the author or source.

Any incidence of plagiarism will result in a zero for the assignment and may result in failure of the course.

Americans with Disabilities Act - Policy of Non-discrimination

It is Iowa Lakes Community College policy to not discriminate against qualified individuals with disabilities and to provide reasonable accommodation(s), as required by law, to otherwise qualified applicants for admission or to students with disabilities in all education programs, activities, services and practices, including application procedures, admissions, course selection, the awarding of degrees, discipline and dismissal, educational opportunities will not be denied to an otherwise qualified applicant or student because of the need to make reasonable accommodation(s) or modification(s) for the physical and mental impairment(s) of any such individual. Iowa Lakes Community College students needing reasonable accommodation(s) and/or modification(s) should contact Judy Condon by phone at (712) 852-5219 or via email at jcondon@iowalakes.edu To assure that accommodation(s) will be ready when classes start, students must make the request as soon as possible, before a semester begins.

It is the policy of Iowa Lakes Community College not to discriminate on the basis of sex, race, national origin, creed, age, marital status, genetic information, or disability in its education programs, activities, or employment policies, as required by Title VI and VII of the 1964 Civil Rights Act, Title IX of the 1972 Educational Amendments, Section 504 of the Federal Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990.

Inquiries regarding compliance with Title IX, Title VI, Title VII, or Section 504 may be directed to Kathy Muller, Human Resources, Iowa Lakes Community College, 19 S. Seventh Street, Estherville, IA 51334, telephone (712) 852-0403; to the Director of the Iowa Civil Rights Commission, Des Moines; or to the Director of the Region VII Office of Civil Rights, Department of Education, Kansas City, Missouri. A formal discrimination complaint process is published in the Student Handbook.
Below are screenshots of the Modules for the course.

Module for Week 1:
## Modules for Week 2, 3, and 4

### Week 2 and Week 3: Professionalism and Preparing for the Job Market

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Learning Objectives/Outcomes: Week 2 &amp; 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Resources for Week 2 and 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Building a Resume: Rough Draft</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 mins</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creating a Cover Letter: Rough Draft</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 mins</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resume and Cover Letter: FINAL SUBMISSION</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 mins</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing a Reference Letter</td>
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<tr>
<td>20 mins</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

### Week 4: Practicing How to Research and Summarize Information

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Learning Objectives/Outcomes: Week 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Article Summary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 mins</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing a Newsletter</td>
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<tr>
<td>20 mins</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

### Week 5 and 6: (OJT begins after this Topic) Marketing: Addressing Ag Issues and Promoting Ag

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Learning Objectives/Outcomes: Week 5 &amp; 6</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
## Modules for Week 5 and 6

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Points</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Learning Objectives/Outcomes: Week 5 &amp; 6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree, Disagree, or Uncertain/Neutral?</td>
<td>20 pts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In-Class Activity: Free-writing</td>
<td>5 pts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Addressing Ag Issues</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Addressing Ag Issues - Writing an Article</td>
<td>25 pts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Addressing Ag Issues on Social Media Part 1</td>
<td>10 pts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Addressing Issues on Social Media Part 2</td>
<td>25 pts</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Module for Week 7, 8, Final, and additional work