THE TUTORIAL DEVELOPMENT PROJECT:

The Communications Culture and Information Technology program (CCIT) at the University of Toronto at Mississauga offers an internship course, where select fourth-year students earn academic credit in an experiential work placement during the thirteen-week academic term. The students complete a minimum of 100 unpaid work hours, attend class meetings, and complete four assignments. Students may elect to take either one or two sections of the internship course over two terms. One of the primary objectives of the internship program is for students to examine the translation of classroom-based theory to practical applications in the work world, while gaining hands-on industry experience. Students discuss these experiences in a written journal, an oral presentation, and a final research report during the first term of their internship placement.

After reviewing the first two years of the CCIT internship program, I found that students taking a second half-credit course (CCT411) needed to explore the translation of theory to practice beyond the standard report completed in the first section. They needed a vehicle to articulate and test their knowledge that was more challenging than the traditional research paper. In response, I designed the Tutorial Development Project as an opportunity for students to create a multimodal text for teaching a skill or key concept related to practices learned through their internship experiences. The project challenges students to conceptualize core competencies they develop in CCIT, and design concrete applications based on their experiences in industry. I ask students to take ownership of their learning and, as Gelmon, Holland, Driscoll, Spring and Kerrigan (2006:23) suggest, recognize how they are "part of a learning community" both inside and outside the academy.

The Tutorial Project requires students to design a tutorial comprised of PowerPoint slides or web screen-shots, to be used as a professional development resource for another student or work colleague. Students are asked to identify an important skill or concept that is employed within their particular industry, and develop a stand-alone tutorial targeted at a new employee or intern. The tutorial should go beyond teaching skills or concepts to include understanding industry standards, how new knowledge has an impact on an individual's workflow, how learning these skills or concepts contribute to the organization, and the potential for further professional development.

All tutorials must cite references—to be included as a reading list for the tutorial participant—within the tutorial content, and include learning objectives, a content review, and a final quiz that requires the learner to apply the tutorial content to a real life context. Students test each others' prototype tutorials in class and evaluate them on content, usability, and presentation. Each student provides feedback to two of their peers, by using an evaluation template provided by the course instructor. Students have an opportunity to revise the tutorial in response to the feedback, and submit a revision report with the final presentation. The students are asked to reflect on the entire process in the report by addressing the following questions:

1) The development process: How did they research, organize, and develop the content and format?
2) The two sets of feedback received: What did they learn about their product?
3) Revisions made: Why did they accept some suggestions and not others?
4) Their experience of the whole process, including their roles as evaluators: What did they learn, both about themselves and the learning process?

PEDAGOGICAL IMPLICATIONS:

Students commented that Tutorial Project was a more difficult task than they had predicted. They had to look at content from different perspectives, as well as consider the role of information management, the need for analysis to occur when creating new knowledge, and all the possible learning styles of the end users. They also had to consider the design and flow of information and how it would affect the learning experience. Students described the difficulties in selecting, editing, and organizing information when their audience may have little-to-no knowledge of the topic or experience in the industry. They began to question their ability to communicate a clear message through a limited amount of text in a context unlike their traditional academic papers. Other questions addressed issues of voice: students wanted to create a conversational tone so that the tutorial would feel like peer-to-peer interaction, yet maintain a sense of educational authenticity. Other students recognized the learning potential within the act of teaching; they commented that they understood the material better after organizing it as a teaching tool. Furthermore,
they looked at industry issues from perspectives they had not considered before, and reconsidered what it meant to be both good communicators and critical thinkers.

The testing phase was another learning opportunity. While students were provided with the evaluation criteria, they had to articulate problem areas and suggest how to resolve these issues. They also learned to provide constructive and practical feedback for their peers. One student described how the process prompted him to be a more active reader—it made him look critically at the content of his presentation. Finally, the reports that accompanied the revised presentation enabled students to reflect on the entire process, and to understand how they could transfer their learning from this experience to other, non-academic situations. Through their experiences, the students became aware of how they learned to communicate across different contexts.

Works Cited


CCT411 Tutorial Presentation, Feedback & Revision Criteria Report Handout

Project (40%)  

Design a tutorial of approximately 16-20 PowerPoint slides or web screen shots to be used as a learning tool for another student or work colleague. It should include four references to be cited within the tutorial content and included as a reading list for the tutorial participant, learning objectives, content review and a final quiz of 5-8 questions that require the learner to apply the tutorial content to a real life context. The tutorial should address:

Learning a new skill set (concept, theory or industry practice) to be used within a particular industry. This tutorial should go beyond learning the skill and include understanding industry standards, how the new knowledge has an impact on the individual's workflow, how the learning of these skills contributes to the organization, and potential for further professional development.

Areas for evaluations and feedback

Introduction

How well does the tutorial introduce the topic?
Are the learning outcomes stated clearly, are they practical?

Content

Is there enough information to learn about the topic?
Are there any gaps in the information provided?
Is the information well organized?
Is the information provided useful?
Is the language clear and does the tutorial assume prior knowledge of the subject matter?
Are the section headings appropriate and interesting?
Is there a flow between sections?
Is there a sufficient review of the material covered at the end of the tutorial?

Presentation
Was the tutorial visually interesting?
Was each page or section easy to read?
Were the sections easy to navigate?
Were there any errors or typos?

Revision Report

The tutorial will be peer tested in class and will be evaluated on content, usability, and presentation. You will have an opportunity to revise the tutorial in response to the test feedback and submit a revision report (5-7 pages) with the final presentation.

1. The revision report should address the following: The development process—how did you research, organize, and develop the content and format?
2. The feedback you received—what did you learn about your product?
3. Revisions made—why did you accept some suggestions and not others
4. Your experience of the whole process including your role as an evaluator of others' work—what did you learn about yourself, and about the learning process?