

**University of Northern Colorado
School of Special Education
Office of Extended Studies**

**EDSE 508: Fundamentals of Professional Writing in Special
Education for Graduate Students (2 Credits)**

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Student Advisement Hours:

By scheduled telephone appointment and through online exchanges

Class Meeting:

Online Course: Blackboard Platform

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This elective, online course prepares graduate students to write more professionally, including mastery of compositional and grammar skills and American Psychological Association style through a multiple draft paper on a Special Education topic.

COURSE RATIONALE AND PURPOSE

This course provides students with the opportunity to write with an accomplished and published author. The School of Special Education at UNC is supportive of providing graduate students and teacher education candidates with a course in the fundamentals of professional writing. This course can help graduate students to be more effective and successful in their degree programs. Learning more about the English language through improving writing skills enables students to be more effective writers and fosters better study skills. It is also vitally important, as future educators, that preservice teacher candidates present themselves in a competent and professional manner through written communication, who will then pass this skill on to their students, thus creating a more literate society.

COURSE GOALS

Graduate Special Education majors will demonstrate competency in effective and efficient professional writing thus helping to prepare them to teach their future students to write more effectively and to influence others through the power of effective written expression.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

1. Demonstrate mastery of basic elements of grammar, basic structures of composition, and basic genres of writing.

2. Demonstrate the ability to use electronic word processing and publishing, utilizing the stages of writing in the compositional process taught through the Author's Workshop format.
3. Appreciate the diversity of groups and the uniqueness of individuals in writing activities.
4. Utilize writing skills in a variety of types of professional writing on topics in special education.
5. Develop writing skills that promote life-long learning.
6. Utilize higher-order thinking and problem-solving skills in developing writing skills.
7. Demonstrate formative assessment/feedback to improve personal and peer writing skills.
8. Demonstrate effective written and professional communication skills for use in personal, peer, professional, and collaborative relationships.

COURSE TOPICS

1. Mastery of Basic Elements of Writing
 - Parts of Speech
 - Commonly Confused Words, Plurals, & Possessives
2. Mastery of Basic Sentence Structures of Writing and Reading
 - Sentence Structures, Grammar, & Usage
3. Mastery of Basic Paragraph Structures of Writing and Reading
 - Paragraph Structures and Organization of Ideas
 - Composition Structures & Organization of Information
4. Mastery of Compositional Writing within a Special Education paper
 - Writing an Abstract
 - Writing an Introduction
 - Writing a Brief Literature Review on a Special Education topic
 - Writing a Compare and Contrast Analysis
 - Reporting Results
 - Writing a Discussion of Findings
 - Distinguishing between Summaries and Conclusions
 - Writing in the Style of the American Psychological Association

REQUIRED READING MATERIALS

Students are expected to keep up with the readings and online exercises assigned for each class. Purchase required materials before the first class date. We use them all the time! Please refer to the class schedule for the material to be covered each session; read and track progress each week of the course.

American Psychological Association (2009). *Publication manual of the American Psychological Association (6th Ed.)*. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

Buscemi, S. V., Nicolai, A. H., & Strugala, R. (2004). *The basics: A rhetoric and handbook* (4th Ed.). Boston: McGraw Hill.

Required Supplies

- Access to computers, the Blackboard platform, the Internet and Microsoft word processing
- Thesaurus of choice (not more than 5 years old)
- Dictionary of choice (not more than 5 years old)
- A 3-ring notebook with dividers for storing class materials
- Floppy diskettes or CD's or USB flash drives for backing up writing assignments

LEARNING ACTIVITIES

1. Students learn to write professionally through writing assignments in this online Writer's Workshop where multiple drafts of assignments are written.
2. Through online threaded discussions, the entire class and small groups discuss writing techniques, conduct peer reviews of writing assignments and interact with classmates and the professor.
3. Students experience a variety of writing strategies in whole class and small group interactions and discussions.
4. Students learn the various skill components of the mechanics of writing via editorial feedback from the professor, the readings, and through a series of online study practices and mastery tests.
5. The professor serves as editor and mentor providing electronic feedback and commentary on student papers including both guidance for the mechanics of writing and the art of composition.

COURSE POLICIES

Professionalism

All University of Northern Colorado students are expected to exhibit and to maintain a professional manner at all times, as they interact with other students in the class and with the professor.

Class Participation

Student preparation and class participation are essential for each class session. We will work collaboratively to learn from one another, to discuss, and to problem solve. All students are expected to have read the assigned readings PRIOR to class sessions and to participate actively and professionally in the online class discussions and activities, demonstrating their knowledge of the contents of the readings. Points will be deducted from the total number of class points if the expected level of class participation is not demonstrated. Assignments turned in late result in a loss of points, except in unusual circumstances.

Students with Disabilities

Any student requesting disability accommodation for this class must inform the instructor giving appropriate notice. Students are encouraged to contact Disability Support Services at (970) 351-2289 to certify documentation of disability and to ensure appropriate accommodations are implemented in a timely manner.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Assignments	Points
Online Class Participation	150 pts.
Online Skills Tests	200 pts.
Forum Exchange: Peer Reviewers	100 pts.
Professional Paper in Special Education	240 pts.
Writing in APA Style	60 pts.
Total Points	750

1. Online Class Participation **150 Points**

Students participate in threaded class discussions and activities in a professional and positive manner, sharing ideas and receiving and responding to the ideas of others. The assigned readings are to be read PRIOR to the threaded discussion for which they are designated. A detailed scoring rubric will be provided to guide online class participation [10 points for each of 16 weeks].

2. Online Skills Tests **200 Points**

Skills Tests cover the mechanics of writing as presented in the required textbook (Buscemi, Nicolai & Strugala, 2004). Students take electronic pre-tests prior to the topic being explored in threaded discussion, using an on-line testing system (www.mhhe.com/basics) as a means of self-assessment and being prepared to come to class with appropriate questions. If the pre-test on a topic is mastered at 90% or higher, then further study or post-testing is not required. For pre-test scores under 90%, students complete online practice sessions. Students then take electronic Skills Tests for each of the assigned topics. Each student must score 90% or better on each Skills Test. Students will continue to be tested on a given area until 90% or better is scored. An average of all attempts to master each Skills Test will be the one recorded in the grade book. Skills Tests will be given on the days indicated in the Course Schedule.

3. Forum Exchange: Peer Reviewers **100 Points**

In a Group Forum online format students are assigned to editorial teams where they will provide feedback to one another on writing assignments prior to submitting papers for grading.

4. Special Education Paper **240 points**

Graduate students will learn to a formal, professional paper on a special education topic written in APA style. This paper may be used for a related assignment in another Special Education course in which the student is currently enrolled with instructor permission from both courses. A detailed scoring rubric will be provided to guide the writing. For each paper, students will participate in the writing process via Author's Workshop and create revised drafts of the paper. This assignment will be typed with word processing in APA format. A detailed scoring rubric will be provided to guide the writing. The components of the paper include:

- Writing an Abstract (10 pts.)
- Writing an Introduction (15 pts.)
- Writing a Literature Review on a Special Education topic (100 pts.)
- Writing a Compare and Contrast Analysis (25 pts.)
- Reporting Results (25 pts.)
- Writing a Discussion of Findings (40 pts.)
- Distinguishing between Summaries and Conclusions (25 pts.)

5. Writing in American Psychological Association (APA) Style: 60 Points

Students will use the required Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association as a guide in learning to write in APA style. Guidance will be provided through the threaded discussions, as well as by professor and peer reviewer feedback.

COURSE GRADING

Final grades will be assigned according to the following grading scale:

90%-100%	=	A	675 - 750 points (exceed expectations)
80%-92%	=	B	600 - 674 points (meets expectations)
70%-85%	=	C	525 - 599 points (below expectations)
60%-77%	=	D	450 - 524 points (unsatisfactory)
59% or below	=	F	449 or below (very unsatisfactory)

Note: *ALL completed assignments must be turned in on time and meet the standards specified in the scoring procedures to receive full credit. Remember to focus on accumulated points rather than on letter grades or percentages for individual assignments. The accumulated total number of points determines the final grade, not the percentages.*

OTHER EVALUATION ISSUES – Guidelines for Written Work:

1. **TYPED.** All written work submitted for grading must be typed, double spaced, with a minimum of 1" margins, using APA (American Psychological Association) format and guidelines.
2. **PROOFREAD** your final drafts very carefully. Use Spell Check and Grammar Check.
3. **PEER REVIEWS.** Regardless of the assignment, it is always good practice to have a peer from the class critique your work and provide you with some helpful feedback so you can improve your assignment **BEFORE** you hand it in. Peer reviews serve as a "gate keeper" to make sure your paper is of high quality **BEFORE** instructor evaluation. On each assignment, identify your peer reviewer and make certain you have obtained that person's permission to be your peer reviewer. You will be assigned different peer reviewers on different assignments.
4. **AVOID PLAGIARISM.** Read your sources. Think about what you have read. Discuss what you read with your colleagues. Present the ideas in your own words much as you discussed the ideas with your colleagues. Appropriately cite in APA format all direct quotes and unique ideas. Plagiarism is a form of academic dishonesty and could be a reason for dismissal from the University of Northern Colorado.
5. **KEEP A COPY OF EVERY** written assignment you submit, in case an assignment is accidentally lost. Keep one hard copy and two electronic copies. This is the student's responsibility.
6. **PLAN AHEAD** by referring to the scoring rubrics, the Course Syllabus, and class instructions to be recorded in your Class Notebook/Binder **BEFORE** completing assignments.

Library Services for Distance Education and Off-Campus Students: Obtaining Materials from UNC Libraries

Off-campus students residing within 50 miles of the UNC campus are required to come to the library and borrow materials in person. Students residing more than 50 miles from campus may request that materials be delivered to them. All requests must include complete citations. We will supply materials from the UNC Libraries, as well as materials from other libraries obtained via Interlibrary Loan. Articles will be delivered via email. Books will be mailed first class. Delivery time by U.S. postal service is approximately 1 week. It is the responsibility of the student to return books by the date due. UNC does not pay return postage on books. For information on document delivery, call (970) 351-1446.

Requests for materials may be made through the following methods:

Online: <http://www.unco.edu/library/forms/distancerequest.htm>

By email: library.ocp@unco.edu

By fax: (970) 351-2540

Honor Code

All members of the University of Northern Colorado community are entrusted with the responsibility to uphold and promote five fundamental values: *Honesty, Trust, Respect, Fairness, and Responsibility*. These core elements foster an atmosphere, inside and outside of the classroom, which serves as a foundation and guides the UNC community's academic, professional, and personal growth. Endorsement of these core elements by students, faculty, staff, administration, and trustees strengthens the integrity and value of our academic climate.

UNC's Policies

UNC's policies and recommendations for academic misconduct will be followed. For additional information, please see the Dean of Student's website, Student Handbook link <http://www.unco.edu/dos/handbook/index.html>

Notice

The Office of Extended Studies reserves the right to cancel or reschedule courses based upon enrollment. Enrolled students will be contacted with information of any change.

Student Satisfaction Evaluation

Participants will be asked to evaluate the workshop for instructors' knowledge, interest and enthusiasm as well as providing additional information on classes or topics which you would like to see developed as a future offering from UNC.

Course Withdrawal Information

In accordance with University and Colorado Department of Higher Education policy, if you drop this class after the course starts you will be assessed a drop fee. The drop fee is pro-rated up to the half-way point in the class. You are legally responsible for payment of full tuition once 50% of this course has been concluded. In order to be eligible to receive any refund of tuition, you must contact the Office of Extended Studies (1-800-232-1749) to formally withdraw from your class. Your refund, if applicable, will be based on the date of contact with our office. Withdrawals received via telephone during non-business hours will be processed and dated on the next working day. Failure to notify us will result in UNC tuition being owed even though you do not attend or complete the coursework.

**SCHOOL OF SPECIAL EDUCATION
POLICY ON PLAGIARISM
NOVEMBER 25, 2008**

Plagiarism is the act of appropriating the written, artistic, or musical composition of another, or portions thereof; or the ideas, language, or symbols of same and passing them off as the product of one's own mind. Plagiarism includes not only the exact duplication of another's work but also the lifting of a substantial or essential portion thereof (This is the UNC definition). In the preparation of written work, statements that paraphrase or summarize the work of another, along with other information that is not considered common knowledge, must be properly cited in the text of a document and cited in the reference list at the end of the document. If a direct quotation, the citation in the text must include the exact page numbers from the original source. The original source must also be listed at the end of work. Quotation marks or a proper form of indentation shall be used to indicate all direct quotes. All referencing is done, of course, according to APA Style. Regarding class projects, you are not to use *as the bulk of your presentation* the completed works of faculty members, imported documents from other authors, or works from websites, or any other body of work in which you are not the author. With proper referencing, students may import portions of such works and Web sites to enhance and illustrate presentations, and provide references to these other works for students who have an interest in pursuing a topic further (Examples of what constitutes unacceptable behavior in the realm of plagiarism are posted on the School's website.).

At the discretion of the course instructor, students who have engaged in the act of plagiarism will be assigned in an "F" in that course. The guiding philosophy of this policy is intended to provide opportunities for all students to learn about what constitutes plagiarism versus appropriate referencing of others' work. Each episode of plagiarism must be referred to the School's Review and Retention Committee. The decision of the Committee with regard to plagiarism includes the possibility that the student be dismissed from his or her respective program and from UNC. All incidences of plagiarism in the School of Special Education will be reported to the CEBS Dean's Office to be recorded in the college-wide database, as well as the Dean of Students Office to be recorded in the university-wide database.