

Bachelor of Science in

Technical Communication

**Department of Technical Communication and Interactive Design
Kennesaw State University**



Program Overview and Planning Guide

This student guide provides a comprehensive overview of the courses in the Technical Communication (TCOM) degree program. Use this guide to learn more about the classes you'll take in our program and your options for Related Studies and Free Electives.

All majors require formal advising every semester, so you'll always have opportunities to discuss your choices and learn the fastest route to graduation and to your career in the field of technical communication.

Revised Spring 2019



Goals for the BS in Technical Communication

Our focus is on the “tech” in technical communication, and we use humanities-based thinking to inform our work. This approach to tech comm merges technical knowledge and information design theory with an ultimate focus on understanding audiences.

Tech comm is a very broad field, and you can find TC pros working in almost every industry on earth. You’ll find them working for hospitals and medical-device companies; for game developers and productivity-tool programmers; for manufacturers of everything from origami paper to steel I-beams to pet supplies; for the government; for corporate consultants; for media companies; for independent bookstores. You name the field, a technical communicator can—and probably does—work in it.

What’s more, TC pros work with almost every communication technology that exists. They create paper documents; design, code, and test websites; produce video; and develop content for mobile devices. And as a matter of fact, the world’s first writing system—cuneiform, made by scratching symbols into clay tablets—was actually a form of technical writing. Technical communicators do it all.

Even across all these jobs and formats, TC pros all share the same fundamental goals: They aim to take specialized information, design and package the information for a particular audience, deliver the information in findable and accessible ways, and help end users accomplish their goals easily, quickly, and safely.

Toward that end, you’ll learn how to do these things as a Technical Communication major:

- Use audience and task analysis to inform the design of information products
- Build technological literacies and skills with a variety of software programs and tools
- Advocate for the end-user in our work through appropriate information design choices and through usability testing
- Create user-centered communication products that meet the needs of the audience
- Include ethical practices for information development and delivery in all of our work

Types of Classes

Classes in the TCOM degree program range from very hands-on courses that focus on tools to theory-based seminars that discuss the complex issues surrounding technology, ethics, and communication.



TCOM majors are in demand throughout the Atlanta area and beyond. The demand for Technical Communicators is projected to grow 11 percent from 2016 to 2026, faster than the average for all occupations.

Lower Division Major Requirements

➤ Take four required courses:

Course	What is this class and why am I taking it?
TCID 2002: Productivity Tools and Technologies	<p>What? Students learn the basics of the Microsoft productivity tools including Word, Excel, PowerPoint, and Outlook. Core tools of the Adobe Suite including Acrobat, InDesign, Photoshop, and Illustrator are also covered.</p> <p>Why? To be successful, you'll need to develop a basic understanding of and competencies with digital tools. This course prepares students for later classes and more complex projects.</p>
TCID 2170: Introduction to Digital Media and Culture	<p>What? Students learn about the profession and its relationship to information society, human-centered design, and design thinking.</p> <p>Why? This introductory classes situates Technical Communication and our other degree, Interactive Design, as being both unique and overlapping. Students engage with ideas and practices of digital cultures.</p>
TCOM 2010: Technical Writing	<p>What? Students learn the basics and practice developing multiple information products, delivering oral presentations, and working collaboratively.</p> <p>Why? This course introduces you to the fundamental techniques and genres of technical communication.</p>
TCOM 2030: Research in Technical Communication	<p>What? Students learn the basics of research methods, with a focus on workplace and user research.</p> <p>Why? Technical communicators conduct site-based studies with real users; they also use other methods such as surveys and observational research.</p>

➤ Choose one class about programming or computing technologies:

Course	What is this class and why am I taking it?
ICT 2101: Information and Communication Technology	<p>What? Students learn and explore more about what it means to be informed users of digital technologies.</p> <p>Why? This class enhances computational thinking and helps students understand digital/technical environments.</p>
CSE 1321 & CSE 1321L: Programming and Problem-Solving	<p>What? Students interested in a Computer Science or Game Design minor need to take this class. You should either take MATH1190 (Calculus) in Area D or CSE1000 (Intro to Computing Principles), which fit into Free Electives.</p> <p>Why? Learning programming can benefit students who may want to work as Technical Communicators on development teams. Gaining a basic understanding of what programmers do and how they work is critical.</p>

➤ Choose one class about other types of communication:

Course	What is this class and why am I taking it?
COM 2033: Visual Communication	<p>What? Students learn about visual awareness and processing as key elements in effective communication.</p> <p>Why? Many technical communicators develop visuals—from simple to complex—in their work.</p>
ORGC 2205: Introduction to Organizational Communication	<p>What? Students learn how to communicate within organizations, from small to complex, and what it means to be effective.</p> <p>Why? Technical communicators are often found working in large organizations; understanding how to communicate within those organizations is important for their work.</p>
TCOM 2050: Issues in Digital Accessibility	<p>What? Students gain an overview of the technological needs and the laws for accommodating persons with disabilities, including the assistive technologies available for persons with disabilities.</p> <p>Why? Because we are user advocates, accessibility or access for all is a critical part of technical communication.</p>

Major Requirements

➤ These six classes are required for all majors:

TCOM 3130: Technical Communication: Theory, Ethics, and Practice	<p>What? Students learn the background on how technical communication emerged as a discipline. It also discusses the future directions for the field and includes ethical practices relevant to our work.</p> <p>Why? Understanding the past and the future of the field helps students situate themselves within the profession.</p>
TCOM 3431: Information Design I	<p>What? Students learn the principles and best practices of effective information design for both print and electronic media.</p> <p>Why? Technical Communicators' primary goal is to produce content in a way that meets the needs of users.</p>
TCOM 4000: Technical Editing	<p>What? Students learn the methods and skills needed to edit various types of technical and scientific products (print and digital).</p> <p>Why? While most students know about literary (story) editing, technical editing focuses on the details of text, images, video, and more.</p>
TCID 3400: Front-End Development I	<p>What? Students create a website without relying on content management systems or templates.</p> <p>Why? Having a basic knowledge of HTML and CSS is vital for working in digital environments.</p>
ENGL 4240: Rhetorical Theory	<p>What? The elements of persuasion (rhetoric) inform how technical communicators make effective choices in design and content.</p>

	Why? Good rhetorical choices make our information products more readable/viewable.
TCOM 4800: Project Portfolio	What? This is a professional presentation and career preparation class with an end-of-semester showcase of student work. Why? Our graduates are in demand! We want every student ready for their first job.

Electives in Major

➤ We offer a variety of electives for students, grouped as follows:

Advanced Web Development

Courses	What are these classes and why would I take them?
TCID 3800: Front-End Development II TCID 4500: Front-End Development III	What? Both are advanced classes in web development. Students learn more advanced techniques and engage in programming and other higher-end competencies. Why? These are excellent choices for students interested in doing more with site development.

Information Design and Development

Courses	What are these classes and why would I take them?
TCOM 3011: Advanced Technical Writing TCOM 3020: Designing Effective Proposals TCOM 3046: Information Architecture TCOM 4431: Information Design II TCOM 3145: Designing Social Media Infrastructure	What? Several classes are advanced versions of earlier offerings: For example, TCOM 3011 (TCOM 2010) and TCOM 4431 (TCOM 3431). Others introduce students to specialized areas of information design and development. Why? If you've enjoyed earlier classes in information design and development, our other offerings may be excellent choices for addressing interests in this area.

Technical Training and Assistance

Courses	What are these classes and why would I take them?
TCOM 3030: Instructional Design TCOM 3070: User Assistance TCOM 4045: Multi-Media for Technical Communicators TCOM 4050: Instructional Video for Technical Communicators	<p>What? Students learn to develop materials that enable people to complete tasks from the complex to the everyday.</p> <p>Why? Instructional design and corporate training are areas with direct ties to technical communication. The basic principle of making complex ideas understandable underlies both instructional design and technical communication. Many technical communicators move into this area as part of their career focus.</p>

Applied Research/User Research

Courses	What are these classes and why would I take them?
TCOM 3245: SEO and Analytics for Technical Communicators TCOM 4120: Usability Testing	<p>What? Both are research classes, each with a specific focus. TCOM 3245 has students use their websites created in TCOM 3400 as sites for Search Engine Optimization (SEO) and analytics research. TCOM 4120 engages students in user experience (UX) and introduces them to testing methods.</p> <p>Why? Research practices are a large part of the field. UX research is growing by leaps and bounds, while SEO and analytics are driving digital business and are a growth area for technical communicators.</p>

High-Impact Practices

Courses	What are these classes and why would I take them?
TCOM 3398: Internship TCOM 4400: Directed Study TCOM 4490: Special Topics in Technical Communication	<p>What? Internships and Directed Studies classes provide students with unique learning experiences. Internships are for-credit work experience classes, while Directed Studies allow students to pursue individual topics of interest with a professor. Special Topics classes introduce students to cutting-edge content in a timely manner.</p> <p>Why? Relevant work experience can lead directly to jobs. For students considering graduate school, independent research or a project from a Special Topics class can make the difference in a grad school application.</p>

Related Studies and Free Electives

Please speak with our advisor about your Related Studies and Free Electives options. We recommend you consider a formal Minor in one of the many disciplinary areas at KSU. A Minor is a value-added credential on your transcript; it shows you've added a complementary area of study to your degree.

Minors you may wish to consider are listed below. Highlighted offerings pair well with the BS in Technical Communication.

College of Computing and Software Engineering

Computer Game Design & Development Minor
Computer Science Minor
Information Technology Minor
Software Engineering Minor

Michael J. Coles College of Business

Accounting Minor
Business Law Minor
Coles Scholars Minor
Economics Minor
Engagement Marketing Minor
Entrepreneurship Minor
Finance Minor
Information Security and Assurance Minor
Information Systems Minor
Management Minor
Marketing Minor
Operations and Purchasing Minor
Professional Sales Minor
Sports Marketing Minor

College of Humanities and Social Sciences

African and Diaspora Studies Minor
Anthropology Minor
Asian Studies Minor
Chinese Studies Minor
Comparative American Studies Minor
Criminal Justice Minor
Criminology Minor
Crisis Preparedness Minor
Environmental Studies Minor
European Studies Minor
Film Studies Minor
French and Francophone Studies Minor
Gender and Women's Studies Minor

Geography Minor
German Studies Minor
Gerontology Minor
History Minor
International Affairs Minor
Italian Studies Minor
Language and Literary Studies Minor
Latin American/Latino Studies Minor
Legal Studies Minor
Linguistics Minor
Lusophone Studies Minor
Medical Sociology Minor
Military Leadership Minor
Native-American Studies Minor
Peace Studies Minor
Philosophy Minor
Political Science Minor
Professional Writing Minor
Psychology Minor
Public Relations Minor
Religious Studies Minor
Slavic, East European, and Eurasian Studies Minor
Sociology Minor
Spanish Minor
Technical Communication Minor

College of Science and Mathematics

Applied Statistics and Data Analysis Minor
Biology Minor
Chemistry Minor
Environmental Science Minor

