

## UEP Policy and Planning Competency Grid

**Course Name/Number: UEP 0161 A**  
**WRITING AND PUBLIC COMMUNICATION**

**Instructor: L. Dunlap**

**Semester: Summer 09**

<b>a) Knowledge Competencies</b>	<b>Specific sub-competencies or examples as developed in this course</b>
1. History, structure, function of urban and metropolitan settlements	na
2. Economic influences on policy and planning (e.g. 'market' and 'polis' relationships)	na
3. Environmental, social and cultural influences on policy and planning	na
4. Understanding different roles in policy and planning	<p>Since all these roles involve communication, there is a connection with my course here. For instance, in determining who the audience is for a piece of advocacy writing and what one's agenda is (or an NGO's agenda if this is a staff-generated document), we are coming to understand an aspect of one role in policy-making. Writing always takes place in a context, policy-writing in a decision-making context with actors and power dynamics.</p>
i) Levels of government	
ii) Governance structures	
iii) Citizens and residents	
iv) NGOs	
5. History, theory and processes of policymaking	na
6. History, theory and process of planning	na

7. Implementation of policy and planning	Once in a while, someone in the writing course will be working on a document that is part of implementation—so this means we will all be considering its effectiveness in this regard..
8. Evaluation of policy and planning	Same with evaluation
9. Administrative and legal aspects of policy	na
10. Administrative and legal aspects of planning	na
11. Politics of policy and planning	na

<b>b) Skills Competencies</b>	<b>Specific sub-competencies or examples as developed in this course</b>
<b>1. Critical thinking</b>	
i) Defining problem	With critical thinking, I see items i-iv as part of what one does in planning and organizing a piece of writing. Critical thinking is parallel to or intertwined with the writing process—and absolutely essential to it.
ii) Documenting the extent of a problem	
iii) Documenting the political and social context	
iv) Documenting the environmental and spatial context	
v) Identifying possible analysis strategies and their implications	“Analysis strategies with implications” is very close to what we do in the writing course when we practice the “audience analysis” tool. This is a matrix for analyzing who you want to reach with your writing and how they will react to various strategies of presentation.
vi) Identifying criteria for proposing solutions	
vii) Identifying criteria for selecting solutions	

viii) Evaluating the development and results of policies and plans	
<i>ix) Exploring the connection between the thinking and action or change in the world (suggested new category)</i>	I think this is one of the more important aspects of “critical thinking.” It is what Paulo Freire called “criticity.” We don’t always have a chance to see the changes that result from our ideas within the confines of the writing course, but they are on our minds.
<b>2. Research skills</b>	Again, categories i-iv are parallel activities to what we do in figuring out how to write about something convincingly.
i) Understanding research design	
ii) Collecting relevant literature	
iii) Analyzing relevant literature	
iv) Identifying and assessing data sources and limitations	
v) Developing data collection instruments and tools	
<b>3. Data Analysis skills</b>	Again, I would say that 1-iv, particularly, have a parallel in the writing process, but ii & iii are especially important. A lot of what we consider in whether a piece of writing is effective is the relationship between the specific and the general—or more accurately, the concrete and the abstract: does the detail given support the claim made and does the claim explain the detail?
i) Interpreting and synthesizing data	
ii) Drawing inferences from specific observations to make	(see above)
iii) More generalizable findings	(see above)
iv) Comparative analysis	
v) Longitudinal analysis	
vi) Recognizing and accounting for limitations to findings	
<b>4. Qualitative Analysis skills</b>	Very much part of what makes effective writing, and what a writing teacher can urge more of.
i) Direct observation	

ii) Analysis of primary qualitative data	
iii) Analysis of secondary qualitative data	
<b>5. Quantitative Analysis skills</b>	
i) Descriptive statistics	In the past, I used to work with the statistics for planners course at MIT on ways to express numbers effectively in words (a huge problem for many people and deeply entwined with the process of making sense of the numbers). I don't do anything explicit with this theme in my current course (only if the issue arises in someone's work.)
ii) Inferential statistics	
iii) Basic forecasting	
iv) Use of spreadsheets and statistical software	
<b>6. Spatial Analysis skills</b>	
i) Understand how to identify spatial problems and frame spatial questions for analysis and research	
ii) Use Geographic Information System for basic spatial analysis and mapping	
<b>7. Communication skills</b>	
i) Writing skills	Obviously this competency is the heart of the writing course, but the category makes me chuckle because of course these very "writing skills" break down into some very specific and complex sub-categories, as do those for planning/policy more generally. In many ways they are similar or parallel: making decisions about audience and information (understanding planning/policy context) and how information supports the message (research skills, critical thinking).
ii) Speaking skills	We get at this indirectly through offering many opportunities for informal speaking in class, including capsule presentation of ideas for writing. Speaking, one-on-one and to a group, is viewed as one means of preparation to write, just as writing can be one form of preparation for speaking. There is a reciprocal relationship between the two—which we often discuss.
<i>Listening skills</i>	This one is very important to include in our thinking about curriculum as planners have told me it is much neglected in their education yet very crucial in practice. (It's also crucial in qualitative research.) The tool for giving feedback to others' writing that I use in my course is specifically designed to enhance listening skills: each person in the feedback circle must paraphrase the writer's argument before giving any further kind of feedback. I've often been told this practice was invaluable.

<i>Understanding intended audience and figuring out how to pitch message accordingly. (i.e. strategizing)</i>	This is one of the two or three major emphases of my course. The audience analysis assignment is key: in it a writer analyzes the attitudes, values, beliefs, knowledge level and “needs” of the reader he/she is aiming for in the piece—and adjusts strategy accordingly.
iii) Graphic presentation skills	
iv) Presentation strategies and methods	

<b>c) Policy and Planning in Practice Competencies</b>	<b>Specific sub-competencies or examples as developed in this course</b>
<b>1. Collaboration skills</b> i) Negotiation	
ii) Group project management	
iii) Group problem solving	The group process for feedback in my course consciously draws on several models for problem solving. Many have told me it helped them develop a more deeply collaborative approach.
iv) Perspective-taking	
v) Adaptability, flexibility	
vi) Networking	
<i>vii) Facilitating the thinking and contributions of others</i>	This also happens in the feedback groups, as people become interested in how others are solving their problems in creating a text, and do all they can to contribute to making it happen. A caring spirit develops so that everyone in the circle wants everyone else to succeed.
<b>2. Organizational management skills</b> i) Decision making	
ii) Strategic problem solving and adapting to change	
iii) Human resource development	
iv) Financial management and resource development	
<b>3. Political and economic power mapping skills</b> i) Understanding political and economic power structures and dynamics	In the audience analysis we consider factors of political power in assessing how to present ideas to an audience that may have lots more, the same, or much less power than the writer does. Power also has a direct correlation to whether inexperienced writers feel they need to use the passive voice (to remain indefinite and indirect rather than to speak assertively.) Some of our readings touch on this issue.
ii) Modes of influencing their use	

**4. Ethical and professional behavior skills**

i) Understanding and upholding the role of ethics and accountability in professional policy and planning processes, practices, and behavior