

EXAM INFORMATION

This exam was designed to evaluate whether candidates possess the knowledge and understanding that would be gained by taking a lower-level college course in technical writing which includes the following content: theory and practice of technical writing; purpose, content, and organizational patterns of common types of technical documents; information design; and technical editing.

The exam contains 100 questions to be answered in 2 hours.

Form Codes: SQ820, SR820, SY820, SZ820

CREDIT RECOMMENDATIONS

The American Council on Education's College Credit Recommendation Service (ACE CREDIT) has evaluated the DSST test development process and content of this exam. It has made the following recommendations:

Area or Course Equivalent: Technical Writing

Level: Lower-level baccalaureate

Amount of Credit: 3 Semester Hours

Minimum Score: 400

Source: www.acenet.edu

EXAM CONTENT OUTLINE

The following is an outline of the content areas covered in the examination. The approximate percentage of the examination devoted to each content area is also noted.

- I. **Theory and Practice of Technical Writing – 14%**
 - a. Understanding contexts, purpose(s), and importance
 - b. Audience analysis
 - c. Ensuring the validity and reliability of data and sources
 - d. Establishing the appropriate style
- II. **Purpose of Technical Documents – 23%**
 - a. Informing
 - i. Progress/inspection reports
 - ii. Feasibility reports
 - iii. Research/laboratory reports
 - iv. Instructions, procedures and process descriptions
 - b. Persuading and Making Recommendations
 - i. Proposals
 - ii. White papers
 - iii. Grants
- III. **Technical Writing Process – 14%**
 - a. Individual and/or collaborative writing
 - b. Choice of medium
 - c. Drafting and organizing content
 - d. Research (primary and secondary)
- IV. **Document design – 18%**
 - a. Elements of document design
 - i. Page formatting
 - ii. Textual formatting
 - iii. Illustration formatting

- b. Strategies of document design
 - i. Readability
 - ii. Usability
 - iii. Accessibility
 - V. Revising, Editing and Final Sections – 31%**
 - a. Revising for
 - i. Completeness
 - ii. Concision
 - iii. Accessibility
 - iv. Organization
 - b. Editing for
 - i. Concision
 - ii. Grammatical accuracy
 - iii. Technical accuracy
 - c. Final sections
 - i. Cover letters
 - ii. Executive summaries
 - iii. Abstracts
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REFERENCES

Below is a list of reference publications that were either used as a reference to create the exam, or were used as textbooks in college courses of the same or similar title at the time the test was developed. You may reference either the current edition of these titles or textbooks currently used at a local college or university for the same class title. It is recommended that you reference more than one textbook on the topics outlined in this fact sheet.

You should begin by checking textbook content against the content outline provided before selecting textbooks that cover the test content from which to study.

Sources for study material are suggested but not limited to the following:

1. Alfred, Gerald J; Brusaw, Charles T; Oliu, Walter E. *Handbook of Technical Writing*, 11th Edition.
 2. Markel, Mike. *Technical Communication*, 11th Edition. Bedford / St. Martin's.
 3. Gerson/Gerson. (2014). *Technical Communication: Process and Product*, 8th Edition. Pearson
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SAMPLE QUESTIONS

All test questions are in a multiple-choice format, with one correct answer and three incorrect options. The following are samples of the types of questions that may appear on the exam.

1. It is customary to place definitions of terms in all of the following parts of a technical document EXCEPT the
 - a. abstract
 - b. introduction
 - c. footnotes
 - d. glossary
2. Which of the following organizational patterns would be appropriate to use when describing a mechanism?
 - I. Order of assembly
 - II. Spatial order

- III. Operating order
 - a. II only
 - b. III only
 - c. I and III only
 - d. I, II, and III

- 3. Which of the following graphics is best for displaying continuous change over time?
 - a. Bar chart
 - b. Line graph
 - c. Schematic diagram
 - d. Table
- 4. The major difference between proposals and many other technical documents is that proposals are
 - a. long and formal
 - b. written by committees
 - c. overtly persuasive
 - d. presented orally as well as in writing
- 5. Laboratory reports customarily contain all of the following sections EXCEPT
 - a. materials and methods
 - b. results
 - c. discussions
 - d. recommendations

Questions 6-7 refer to the following group of numbered sentences:

- 1) The rabbits did not build up as much fat in the walls of their arteries as expected.
- 2) One group was left unattended except at feeding time, while the other received some old-fashioned tender loving care (TLC) every day for at least one hour.
- 3) Researchers at Ohio State University made an unexpected finding while feeding a group of rabbit's high-cholesterol diets in preparation for an experiment.
- 4) The TLC rabbits developed only one-third as many fatty deposits as the others.
- 5) Investigating further, the team fed high doses of cholesterol to two new groups of rabbits.
- 6) One researcher mentioned that she had given these rabbits special treatment, greeting and cuddling each four to five times a day.

- 6. If the sentences are arranged into a coherent paragraph, which sentence will come third in the sequence?
 - a. 1
 - b. 2
 - c. 5
 - d. 6
- 7. If the sentences now numbered 1 and 6 were combined into one sentence, the new sentence would begin with which of the following?
 - a. When
 - b. Although
 - c. Because
 - d. Thus
- 8. One significant difference between technical language and lay language is that technical language tends to be more

- a. subjective
- b. sophisticated
- c. abstract
- d. exact

9. Which of the following is a major flaw in a classification?
- a. overlap in the categories
 - b. use of the same criterion throughout
 - c. division into more than ten groups and subgroups
 - d. categories with different numbers of subdivisions
10. Which of the following does NOT need revision to correct an error in parallel structure?
- a. We found it impossible either to replicate their results or even approximate them.
 - b. The ideal environment for colonizing plants like ragweed is bare, windswept, and, of course, contains little groundwater.
 - c. The platypus is an animal with mammalian, reptilian, and avian aspects and which illustrates the difficulty of exact biological classification.
 - d. The proposed pertussis vaccine not only is as effective as the vaccine currently in use but also poses little or no health risk to children under two years of age.

In each of the following sentences, some part of the sentence or the entire sentence is underlined. Beneath each sentence you will find four ways of phrasing the underlined part. The first choice (a) repeats the original; the other three are different. If you think the original is better than any of the alternatives, choose answer (a). Otherwise, choose one of the others. In choosing answers, pay attention to grammatical correctness, appropriate word choice, and smoothness and effectiveness of sentence construction.

11. Ibuprofen is a powerful pain reliever and it has only recently been made available to the public in nonprescription doses.
- a. Ibuprofen is a powerful pain reliever and it has only recently
 - b. Ibuprofen, a powerful pain reliever, has only recently
 - c. Ibuprofen is a powerful analgesic that only has recently
 - d. Only the potent analgesic ibuprofen has recently
12. After heating for twelve minutes, the sample was dried.
- a. After heating for twelve minutes, the sample
 - b. After heating the sample for twelve minutes, it
 - c. After it had been heated for twelve minutes, the sample
 - d. After twelve minutes of heating the sample, it

Answers to sample questions:

1-A; 2-D; 3-B; 4-C; 5-D; 6- D; 7-A; 8-D, 9-A, 10-D, 11-B, 12-C