

Mac Marr

Writing in Discipline: The Importance of Writing in Managerial Economics

Abstract

Managerial economics is a highly common major here at UC Davis, and writing courses play a part in the process of fulfilling graduation requirements. Although it may not seem to be an important aspect of a math, statistics, and human behavior based major, writing courses seem to be in most managerial economics students' schedules. The purpose of this paper is to identify the importance of writing courses for managerial economics students and their futures and highlight the key skills for successful business writing. Through the interviews of a UC Davis managerial economics graduate, two UC Davis business writing professors, and the analysis of secondary academic sources, this study will discover the significance of writing courses in managerial economics at UCD and business writing in the professional world post graduation. A section at the end of the paper will include writing resources provided through UC Davis.

Introduction

Fact: In the first year course load, managerial economics students at UC Davis take as many writing classes as math courses. Managerial economics is a broad title, but is the closest major to business that UC Davis has to offer. Therefore, students who plan to pursue careers in business or finance post graduation tend to be in this major. With economics in its title, taking data driven calculus courses makes total sense, as data analysis, the understanding of functions, and the math aspect of supply and demand all make sense to the major, while writing seems like a secondary skill; however, it is equally as intensive when it comes to time and effort. While the

importance of a skill, such as writing, within a certain discipline, like managerial economics, is subjective, there is truth to be told by individuals with experience and expertise. Business writing courses are constructed to develop essential problem solving, analytical, and persuasive skills for students' success.¹ "Business writing refers to professional communication including genres such as policy recommendations, advertisements, press releases, application letters, emails, and memos".² Through first hand interviews with UC Davis managerial economics graduate and two business writing professors, along with the analysis of secondary sources on business writing, I will get a grasp on the significance of writing in managerial economics at this school and its significance in a business profession. Along with the understanding of writing's purpose in business will be tips on how to produce strong business writing.

Research Question

What is the importance of writing courses in the managerial economics major at UC Davis? What is the importance of professional business writing?

Methods

In order to answer these questions, I needed primary and secondary sources. To conduct primary research, I chose to hold interviews with individuals who understand the managerial economics writing courses the best: business writing professors and a managerial economics graduate. I interviewed professors Andrea Ross and Beth Pearsall, UWP104A: Writing in the Professions: Business Writing, and Holden Neach, B.S. UC Davis '24. For the interviews with professors, I asked questions surrounding the importance of writing in the business world post graduation and advice

¹ Wei Zhu, "Writing in business courses: an analysis of assignment types, their characteristics, and required skills," *English for Specific Purposes* 23, no. 2 (2003): [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0889-4906\(02\)00046-7](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0889-4906(02)00046-7).

² The Writing Center, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, "Business Writing," *The Writing Center • University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill*, last modified January 11, 2020, accessed March 14, 2025, <https://writingcenter.unc.edu/tips-and-tools/business-letters/>.

for managerial economics students. For the interview with the man econ graduate, I asked questions about the skills learned through writing courses at UC Davis and how the courses helped in the process of landing a job.

As secondary research sources, I used business writing articles and academic journals at my display through the UC Davis Library. These consisted of works from renowned business schools such as University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Harvard Business School, and more. These secondary sources will provide solid information on what applied managerial economics writing looks like through the lens of a business path. I am focusing on business writing as a whole because managerial economics is a broad major, and most students who graduate with a degree in man econ pursue careers in business. With these sources, I will be able to understand, from an reviewed and edited perspective, the true importance of writing in a business profession.

Results

Through conducting interviews with Professor Ross and Professor Pearsall, I learned the true importance of the writing side of the business economics major and received responses that will stick with me throughout college and even my career. Business writing is much more than sending memos or faxing information. What I have learned is that business writing is all about forming relationships, as Professor Pearsall explained.³ The business world has become a fast moving and worldwide operation, and interpersonal communication through writing is a key aspect of its functioning.

During my interview with Professor Andrea Ross, I asked about the true importance that writing has in the real world of business and how UC Davis courses prepare students.⁴ The

³ Beth Pearsall, videoconference interview by the author, Zoom: UC Davis, Davis, CA, March 13, 2025.

⁴ Andrea Ross, videoconference interview by the author, Zoom: UC Davis, Davis, CA, March 6, 2025.

answers she gave enlightened me on the purpose of writing courses and the importance of good writing skills in business. When asked how writing functions as a tool for success in business, Professor Ross explained to me that writing is the most important skill to have for communication. Understanding how to relay thoughts and information through writing is absolutely vital in business, whether it be through a memo, a cover letter for a resume, or even a grant proposal. When asked about the purpose of UWP 104A, Ross described the overall goal of the course as “teaching students the difference between academic writing and business writing.” It is important that students in managerial economics learn the difference between these two, as all we are taught since elementary school is the carbon copy five paragraph essays. Moreover, when asked about the biggest flaws in students writing in her business writing course, Ross stated that students usually have a difficult time identifying the genre and writing to a specific audience. The responses from this interview not only give intel on the purpose of writing courses in managerial economics, but they explain the importance of developing writing skills for written communication in the business world.

My next interview with Professor Beth Pearsall gave me more perspective on the importance of writing in managerial economics and business.⁵ With prior experience in business working for Bank of America, Pearsall highlighted writing’s importance, stating “without writing, there’s no business.” While this is a bold statement, Pearsall proved why this is true, explaining how writing is the basis for communication in business, and if one cannot articulate their message properly through writing, business will not be possible. When asked how writing is used as a tool in business, Pearsall responded differently than Ross. Pearsall explained writing through the importance of building relationships. Business relies on interpersonal relationships,

⁵ Pearsall, videoconference interview by the author.

and writing provides a platform for building them. Pearsall, like Ross, put heavy emphasis on the distinction between business writing and academic writing, stating that it is a completely different skill. The biggest challenge is to break students' habit of relying on the five paragraph safety net that they are so accustomed to.

After speaking with 2024 graduate Holden Neach about his experiences with writing during his time here at UC Davis in man econ, it became extremely clear that writing plays an intricate role in almost every aspect of the major and future of the student.⁶ Through an interview, Neach, a graduate with B.S. in managerial economics, revealed to me that the writing courses that he took here were essential to his success in other classes and in landing a job that will set up his career. Through UWP 1 and UWP 104A, he learned to articulate what he was learning in his other classes. From economics to data math, he was able to explain concepts efficiently through writing. During the hiring process for his job as Construction Engineer for Swinnerton, he was only able to have face to face interactions with the company for 30 minutes at a time, so he had to write emails, and would not have been able to communicate through writing had it not been for his learnings from the UWP courses at UC Davis. This information proves that writing courses are essential in managerial economics. The university has courses that are specifically designed for majors and professional success post graduation. Neach highlighted the importance of the ability to use writing to translate knowledge and current topics, explaining that it is the most valuable skill that he learned in college. UWP courses are integral parts of the man econ major, and they provide students with valuable skills and experience in reading, writing, and research applications.

⁶ 1. Holden Neach, videoconference interview by the author, Zoom: UC Davis, Davis, CA, February 20, 2025.

Through my research of academic journals and university posts on business writing, I found that the importance of writing in business and managerial economics related professions is more than just writing skills, it is understanding how to put words together in an efficient manner that will be clear and understandable. Writing ability determines the future of a person's career in business. Using the secondary sources, I have gathered information and produced the following section, which gives tips on how to produce strong business writing.

What the Experts Have to Say

Here are some essential skills for successful business writing, as stated by renowned sources.

Conciseness:

- From the Writing Center at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill: "Business writers tend to prioritize clear and concise communication."⁷
- From Wei Zhu, Assistant Professor in the Linguistics Program at the University of South Florida: "Students' ability to communicate in a style that emphasizes effectiveness and efficiency through concise expression and deployment of visual devices is essential."⁸
- From Bindu Ranaut, General Education Instructor at West Coast University, Irvine: "Communication in today's business environment is clearly a challenge, but one can face this challenge by learning conciseness."⁹

⁷ The Writing Center, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, "Business Writing," *The Writing Center • University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill*.

⁸ Zhu, "Writing in business," [Page 129].

⁹ Bindu Ranaut, "Importance of Good Business Writing Skills," *International Journal of Language and Linguistics* 5, no. 2 (2018): [Page 35], <https://doi.org/10.30845/ijll.v5n2p3>.

- From Bill Birchard in the Harvard Business Review: “Short sentences, familiar words, and clean syntax ensure that the reader doesn’t have to exert too much brainpower to understand your meaning.”¹⁰
- What this means: writing in business is a completely separate skill than academic writing. Understanding the importance of keeping writing straightforward is key. What all of these sources, and many more, are saying is that business writing prioritizes one’s ability to deliver a message in an effective and efficient manner.

Understanding the Audience:

- The Writing Center at UNC: “Once you understand your purpose and your audience, you can begin to consider more specific elements, like organization and style.”¹¹
- Wei Zhu: “Students need to have a strong sense of the business audience and an understanding of the strategies for achieving effective business communication.”¹²
- Professor Ross explained in the interview that business writing is heavily reliant on knowing the audience that one is writing to.
- Professor Pearsall: “you have to be cognizant of different layers of audiences.” Writing in business has many purposes and all different types of audiences, and misunderstanding the audience is detrimental.

Understanding the Genre

- UNC: “Business writing refers to professional communication including genres such as policy recommendations, advertisements, press releases, application letters, emails, and

¹⁰ Bill Birchard, "Business communication | The Science of Strong Business Writing," *Harvard Business Review*, July/August 2021, [Page #], accessed March 14, 2025, <https://hbr.org/2021/07/the-science-of-strong-business-writing>.

¹¹ The Writing Center, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, "Business Writing," *The Writing Center • University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill*.

¹² Zhu, "Writing in business," [Page 129].

memos.” Writing in business does not have a simple formula to follow, instead there are many different genres, and it is crucial to understand the goal, structure, and style of writing for each of them.

- Wei Zhu performed studies about different writing genres and came to the conclusion that “business genres aimed at preparing students for real-world tasks, they provided opportunities for students to assume corresponding social roles, namely roles as business professionals.”¹³
- Professor Ross: “One of the main goals of UWP 104A is to teach students the importance of analyzing and understanding genres so that they are prepared to write in many types of genres in the business world.”¹⁴
- Professor Pearsall: “That's a big thing for me: knowing what genre to write and knowing that almost none of the genres look like essays.”¹⁵

Writing Resources Offered through UCD

For students in managerial economics and business, these resources are extremely useful for writing help and instruction.

For general help:

- The Writing Center at UC Davis: <https://writingcenter.ucdavis.edu/>
 - Offers help to students in writing at any level. Provides individual, one on one help for those who work best with one person. Also provides group support,

¹³ Zhu, "Writing in business," [Page 124].

¹⁴ Ross, videoconference interview by the author.

¹⁵ Pearsall, videoconference interview by the author.

where you, along with other students, review papers and get your papers reviewed.

- General resources <https://writing.ucdavis.edu/writing-resources>
 - Provides all sorts of links to websites for grammar help, language assistance, citation tools, and even mentoring.

Understanding requirements:

- Man Econ undergrad requirements: <https://managerialeconomics.ucdavis.edu/>
 - Use this website to form your schedule, understand the expected writing courses, etc.

For specialized help:

- Tutoring appointments through <https://writingcenter.ucdavis.edu/>
 - Find all the writing at entry or upper division level help you need here.

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