

MANICALAND STATE UNIVERSITY OF APPLIED SCIENCES

FACULTY OF ENGINEERING

DEPARTMENTS OF MINING AND MINERAL PROCESSING, CHEMICAL AND
PROCESSING AND METALLURGY

BASIC COMMUNICATION

CODE: COSK 101

SESSIONAL EXAMINATIONS

MARCH 2021

DURATION: 3 HOURS

EXAMINER(S): DR P.R SVONGORO

INSTRUCTIONS

- 1. The question paper consists of three pages and two sections.*
- 2. Answer the question in Section A and any two from Section B.*
- 3. The number of marks for each question is indicated in brackets at the end.*

SECTION A:

Compulsory

[50 MARKS]

1. Study the text below and answer the questions which follow.

Professional engineers are required to be able to communicate effectively, including in written formats such as technical reports (Engineering Council, 2014). Universities aim to prepare students for the professional environment; however, many new engineering graduates still lack the level of writing skills expected by their employers (Moore & Morton, 2017), and 71% of surveyed engineering employers have faced problems because candidates have good technical knowledge but lack workplace skills (Institution of Engineering and Technology, 2017).

Writing is also recognised as an important method of learning, as it forces students to synthesise information; hence, poor writing skills may reduce a student's ability to learn effectively (Emig, 2007). Poor writing skills are not confined to engineering students; in fact, some reports suggest that writing skills are worsening across all students in all subject areas (Carter & Harper, 2013).

Beer and McMurrey (2009) also suggest that the problem of poor writing skills arises in part because students who choose engineering wish to focus on mathematical and practical work instead of on written work. This innate preference contributes to a lack of interest in developing writing skills. Students may also underrate the importance of writing skills (Lievens, 2012; Nguyen, 1998), which could further reduce motivation to learn these skills (Ramsden & Entwistle, 1981). Nevertheless, other studies have shown that undergraduates do recognise the importance of communication skills in their future careers, but to a lesser extent than technical skills (Direito, Pereira, & Duarte, 2012; Itani & Srour, 2016).

Source: Selwyn, R & Renaud-Assemet, I (2020) *Developing technical report writing skills in first and second year engineering students: a case study using self-reflection*. <https://doi.org/10.1080/23752696.2019.1710550>

- (a) The above text is a typical example of academic writing. Identify and explain any **four** features that make the text academic. [15 marks]
- (b) Identify any **four** transition words used in the text and briefly explain their functions in academic writing. [15 marks]
- (c) Explain what engineering students could do to ensure that their writing skills do not worsen. [20 marks]

SECTION B:

Optional

[50 MARKS]

Answer any **two** questions.

- 2. 'In academic writing, visual elements such as graphs, charts, tables, photographs, diagrams, and maps capture your readers' attention and help them to understand your ideas more fully.' Using clear examples, explain how you would use any **four** visuals to *clarify*, *illustrate*, and *augment* your written text. [25 marks]
- 3. With the aid of examples, write explanatory notes on the following concepts as they relate to academic writing:
 - (a) Numbering;
 - (b) Captioning;
 - (c) Originality and plagiarism;
 - (d) Academic ethics and integrity. [25 marks]
- 4. 'Editing and proofreading are very critical aspects of academic writing.' Discuss this point of view making reference to the different forms of editing and proofreading. [25 marks]

END OF EXAMINATION