



VANCOUVER ISLAND  
UNIVERSITY

**Course Outline:** Help Authoring Tools

**Course Code:** PDHA 001

**Course Hours:** 18 hours

### **Course Description**

An overview of current help authoring software tools available to technical communicators. Students develop basic skills in: industry-standard authoring tools; information and visual design for help systems; effective writing for help systems; indexing methods; and contextual help methodologies.

### **Major Course Objectives**

On completion of this course, participants will be able to:

- Work with users to plan and design a basic web help application;
- Create a basic web help application using one of the industry-standard help-authoring software packages;
- Create a style sheet for a basic web help application;
- Incorporate context-sensitive help into a basic web help application;
- Organize a basic web help application by adding an appropriate index, keywords, and a table of contents.
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### **Detailed Outline**

#### **Online Help Systems: Introduction**

- What are online help systems
- Who develops and uses online help systems
- What do I need to know about this software
- Planning an online help system

#### **Online Help Design Issues**

- Table of contents issues;
- Help system 'look and feel';
- Determining keywords and links;
- Index considerations;
- Context-sensitive help.

### **Basic Functionality (RoboHelp, DoctoHelp, Madcap Flare)**

- Getting started;
- Windows and tabs;
- Navigation;
- Links;
- Images;
- Topics;
- Multimedia.

### **Look and Feel (RoboHelp, DoctoHelp, Madcap Flare)**

- Style sheets & tags;
- Organizing topics;
- Table of contents;
- DHTML hotspots;

### **Fine-Tuning**

- Keywords/keyword links;
- Index;
- Context-sensitive help.

### **Wrap Up**

- Interface with other programs;
- What's best;
- Continuous improvement.

### **Prerequisites**

Admission to the program; successful completion of PDTO 001.

### **Student Requirements for Completion of the Course**

To successfully complete this course, students will be required to successfully complete all assignments and final project/exam, with a minimum overall grade of 65%. Participation in the online classroom is also required and is factored into the overall grade.

### **Evaluation**

Student learning in the course will be evaluated based on the following:

- Participation in the online discussion forums;
- Quizzes;
- Assignments;
- Final project/exam.

## Grade Scale

Letter Grade	Percentage	Letter Grade	Percentage	Letter Grade	Percentage	Letter Grade	Percentage
A+	97-100	B+	87-89	C+	77-79	D	65-69
A	93-96	B	83-86	C	73-76	P	Pass
A-	90-92	B-	80-82	C-	70-72	F	Fail (below 65%)

## Rules Concerning Student Absence and Lateness

Students should participate in class discussion by posting their comments or questions and by responding to at least one other classmate each week. The instructor expects each student to contribute at least two thoughtful, quality postings per week (including the response to a classmate). Just logging on and reading other people's postings is not considered participation, nor is mere agreement with others' postings.

Quality of postings is more important than their sheer frequency, length or grammatical form. Quality includes, but is not limited to:

- a) commentary on the lecture for the current topic;
- b) detailed sharing of a student's experience or research relative to the week's topic;
- c) opinions on the topic that are backed with compelling facts and reasoning;
- d) raising questions that help the class better understand the topic, particularly by proposing; and explaining implications that might have been overlooked in the lecture, or in previous discussion.

Quality participation also means conveying your experience, research, opinions, questions or commentary in a professional manner. Disagreements among discussion participants are expected and often valuable, but they should be expressed tactfully, not in a confrontational tone.

## Rules Concerning Missing an Exam

Students are required to write tests and exams as scheduled. In exceptional circumstances, students may apply in writing to make up a missed exam. Such requests will be considered if there was a documented serious emergency that prevented attendance.

Requests must be made in writing, addressed to the Program Coordinator, who will assess the request and determine whether an alternate exam can be arranged. Such arrangements are dependent upon instructor availability.

A fee will be assessed to cover costs, and the exam will be written at a time determined by the Centre for Continuing Studies, normally within one month. A medical certificate may be required.

## What If I Fail An Assignment, Exam?

Resubmission of assignments or rewriting of exams is at the discretion of the instructor. Speak to your instructor promptly. If you have achieved satisfactory standing/marks on other course assignments and participation in classes, you **may** be allowed to repeat an assignment or exam. An additional fee may be charged. The instructor will explain his/her policy at the beginning of the course.

**Text book(s)**

No textbook is required. Reading materials for this class will be provided through online lectures and related links.

**Software**

Software required for this course is available through freely-downloadable trial versions of the help authoring software. There are system and hardware requirements which should be reviewed by students prior to registering for the course. Details are available from <http://www.pr.viu.ca/techcomm/software.asp>