

## Teaching Writing in a Flexible Learning Environment

Presented by Peggy Garza, Associate BILC Secretary and Andrea Gjorevski

This presentation explained the development of a fully online writing course developed for NATO staff officers, called NATO Writing Strategies Course. The course includes more extensive practice on some of the NATO English Language Training Enhancement Course 2 (ELTEC2) micro-lessons. In addition, it provides opportunities for course participants to develop writing skills with a writing expert who facilitates the course content, which includes synchronous and asynchronous work, and individualized feedback through one-on-one conferencing sessions. During the individual conferences, participants receive tailored, targeted feedback on their writing, they self-identify writing goals and areas of development, and finally build rapport with the course facilitators. A portfolio assessment is used to provide formative feedback to participants as they develop drafts and final products. Additionally, participants are given the opportunity to learn and practice self-editing and peer editing.

Following the NATO Analysis, Design, Development, Implementation and Evaluation (ADDIE) model for course design, Partner Language Training Center Europe (PLTCE) developers started with a BILC Feasibility Study Working Group and conducted a Training Needs Analysis to identify the target audience, course aim and performance objectives. The overall course aim is to develop the participants' work-related writing skills and to familiarize them with strategies for producing written documents and correspondence IAW NATO conventions. The performance objectives are listed below:

- Produce clear, concise and well-organized writing
- Demonstrate STANAG 6001 Level 3 (professional) writing proficiency
- Implement standard NATO conventions in written documents and correspondence
- Apply the principles of the writing process
- Develop editing skills (self-editing and peer-editing)

The course synchronous components are delivered utilizing the BigBlueButton videoconferencing platform, and all course content is stored in the learning management system (LMS) ILIAS contained in GlobalNET. Participants meet twice a week for collaborative synchronous syndicate sessions and continue asynchronously throughout the week with micro lectures on a variety of writing topics such as *The Writing Process*, *What Is Good NATO Writing?*, and *Tactical Vs. Strategic Writing*. Each week, participants also produce written texts on a specific writing genre, listed below:

- Week 1: Formal Email
- Week 2: Point Paper
- Week 3: Executive Summary
- Week 4: Level 3 Summary and Opinion Analysis

The course was piloted 24 May – 18 June 2021 with 8 participants from 7 different nations. Overall feedback was that the course met the participants' learning objectives and the content was relevant to their needs. Participants felt the activities were engaging, comprehensive, and that an online writing course was effective. However, some drawbacks to the course were that participants were not always able to commit the time needed to fully participate in online synchronous work due to their work

demands. Additionally, there were limitations with access to the technology which impacted participants' abilities to fully engage with all of the course activities and content.

At the conclusion of the presentation, Peggy asked the audience for input regarding the course target audience. Because of the time demands required for participants (approximately 35 hours), it is not known if NATO staff officers can be released from their duties to devote that much time to a writing course. Another possible target audience could be BILC language teachers, who would not take the course as is, but would get familiarized with the course content and learning strategies for teaching writing for staff work.