



Classification of Technical Writers in the ANZSCO standard

The Technical Communicators Association of New Zealand (TechCommNZ) formally requests Statistics New Zealand to:

- Change the classification of technical writers in the ANZSCO standard, and
- Change the occupation name from technical writers to technical communicators.

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Issue 1: Change the current ANZSCO classification

Technical writer (ANZSCO code 212415) is currently classified under Sub-Major Group 21 Arts and Media Professionals >> Minor Group 212 Media Professionals >> Unit Group 2124 Journalists and Other Writers >> 212415 Technical Writer.

TechCommNZ requests a change in classification, moving technical communication to Minor Group 224 and creating a new unit group as follows:

Sub-Major Group 22 Business, Human Resource and Marketing Professionals >> Minor Group 224 Information and Organisation Professionals >> **Unit Group (new) Technical Communicators**. This would be the coding category for anyone identifying themselves using terms such as technical writer, technical communicator, technical author, content developer, documentation manager, documentation specialist.

Our expertise is not only in writing. We have significant experience in many industries, including defence, aviation (military and civilian), engineering (technology and general infrastructure type), mining (and the mining support industry), health, ICT, manufacturing, retail, and others.

Our members write policies and procedures, process and procedure documentation underpinning change in organisation and methods, and user and system documentation for technology. We use sophisticated content strategies to write,



publish, and maintain complex information products through long life-cycles. We are not just writers, and we have little in common with professionals working in the Arts and Media.

Issue 2: Change the ANZSCO occupation name

TechCommNZ requests a change of the occupation name "technical writer" to "technical communicator". There is no one term for the occupation, but the most common choices in New Zealand are:

- Technical communicator
- Technical writer
- Technical author

Practitioners across the globe have struggled for a long time to produce an agreed name for the occupation. In recent years "technical communicator" has superseded the traditional name of "technical writer" – largely to recognise that technical communicators produce more than just written deliverables. The wide international acceptance of "technical communication" is evidenced in the naming of our professional bodies:

- Society for Technical Communication (US) – <http://www.stc.org>
- Institute of Scientific and Technical Communicators (UK) – <http://www.istc.org.uk>
- Australian Society for Technical Communication (Aus) – <http://www.astc.org.au>
- Tekom (Europe) – <http://www.technical-communication.org>
- TechCommNZ - Technical Communicators Association of New Zealand – <http://techcomm.nz>

Please refer to TechCommNZ Salary and Hourly Rate Survey, December 2015, page 8, question 4 for more details of titles used by TechCommNZ members.

Why TechCommNZ seeks change

The two main reasons we need these issues addressed are that New Zealand needs more:

- Technical communicators to support economic growth
- Visibility of technical communication – as a career and as a service available to businesses in the knowledge economy.



New Zealand needs more technical communicators

According to the US Bureau of Labor Statistics, employment of technical communicators in the US is projected to grow 10 percent from 2014 to 2024, faster than the average for all occupations¹.

We are seeing similar growth in the New Zealand ICT sector, with the Ministry of Business, Innovation, and Employment claiming growth in the IT software and services exports of 14% per annum in the last 6 years².

In Australia in 2013-14, there was an increase of 5% in the number of ICT professionals, with the sector contributing \$79 billion to the national economy. Trade in ICT services totals around \$5 billion per annum. Employment in ICT alone is projected to grow 2.5% per annum over the next 6 years³.

More technical communicators are needed to support growth in ICT, but our visibility is poor. The ANZSCO standard classifies technical communication with journalism – a profession in which, according to the Careers New Zealand website⁴, the "chances of getting a job...are poor due to high competition for a limited number of vacancies".

In recent times, the profession of journalism has been in decline, so we need to take steps to ensure that technical communication – a growing and vital area of work – is no longer associated with journalism, which has entirely different skills and goals.

New Zealand needs more visibility of technical communication

TechCommNZ wants to promote the use of a consistent occupation title to improve statistical accuracy at Census time. The actual choice of term is not without controversy, but we recommend adopting the same term which our colleagues use world-wide – technical communicator.

By encouraging our members to use this term in the Census, we can start to be accurately counted, helping us to gain visibility as professionals. Technical communication as a profession in New Zealand is plagued by its lack of recognition, even by people working in the field. The negative effects of this are:

¹ <http://www.bls.gov/ooh/media-and-communication/technical-writers.htm#tab-6>

² <http://www.mbie.govt.nz/info-services/business/business-growth-agenda/sectors-reports-series/information-and-communications-technology-report>

³ Deloitte Access Economics 2015, Australia's Digital Pulse. Australian Computer Society

⁴ <http://www.careers.govt.nz/jobs-database/arts-and-media/writing-and-publishing/journalist/>



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- Suitable candidates for the profession don't know it exists as a well-paid and interesting career
- Businesses and industry continue to have a "do it yourself" approach to technical communication, instead of engaging qualified and experienced professionals.
- Advertised roles include technical writing as an add-on skill, resulting in lower standards.



Appendix 1: What technical communicators do

The following role description is taken from the US Bureau of Labor Statistics, *What Technical Writers Do*⁵:

Technical writers typically do the following:

- Determine the needs of users of technical documentation
- Study product samples and talk with product designers and developers
- Work with technical staff to make products easier to use and thus require fewer instructions
- Organize and write supporting content for products
- Use photographs, drawings, diagrams, animation, and charts that increase users' understanding
- Select appropriate medium for message or audience, such as manuals or online videos
- Standardize content across platforms and media
- Gather user feedback to update and improve content
- Revise content as new issues arise

Technical writers create paper-based and digital operating instructions, how-to manuals, assembly instructions, and "frequently asked questions" pages to help technical support staff, consumers, and other users within a company or an industry. After a product is released, technical writers also may work with product liability specialists and customer-service managers to improve the end-user experience through product design changes.

Technical writers often work with computer hardware engineers, scientists, computer support specialists, and software developers to manage the flow of information among project workgroups during development and testing. Therefore, technical writers must be able to understand complex information and communicate the information to people with diverse professional backgrounds.

Applying their knowledge of the user of the product, technical writers may serve as part of a team conducting usability studies to help improve the design of a product that is in the prototype stage. Technical writers may conduct research on their topics through personal observation, library and Internet research, and discussions with technical specialists.

⁵ <http://www.bls.gov/ooh/media-and-communication/technical-writers.htm#tab-2>



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Technical writers are also responsible for managing the consistency of technical content and its use across business departments including product development, manufacturing, marketing, and customer relations.

Some technical writers help write grant proposals for research scientists and institutions.

Increasingly, technical information is being delivered online and through social media. Technical writers are using the interactive technologies of the Web and social media to blend text, graphics, multidimensional images, sound, and video.

There is significant professional overlap with information architects, user experience designers, policy and business analysts, and procedure writers.

See also:

- https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Technical_communication
- TechCommNZ Salary and Hourly Rate Survey, December 2015, page 13-14, question 12.

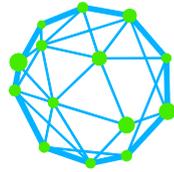
Appendix 2: Technical communication bodies of knowledge

There are several technical communication bodies of knowledge, such as the Society for Technical Communication's <http://www.tcbok.org/>. TechCommNZ has collaborated with Australian Society for Technical Communication (ASTC) to produce a local version of the TCBoK: <http://tcbok.info/>. These resources list the super-set of knowledge, skills, and attributes that technical communication professionals apply in their daily work.

Appendix 3: Technical communication qualifications in New Zealand

In New Zealand, the Graduate Diploma in Information Design (Ara Institute, formerly CPIT) is the only Level 7 qualification for technical communicators, and it is currently on hold and under review, for relaunch in early 2017. There are smaller courses available with other providers⁶.

⁶ For a full list of related courses offered in New Zealand, see the TechCommNZ website: http://www.techcomm.nz/Category?Action=View&Category_id=202



Appendix 4: About TechCommNZ

The Technical Communicators Association of New Zealand:

- Provides ongoing support and professional development for technical communicators in New Zealand
- Maintains and extends a collegial network for members
- Seeks to gain wider recognition of the role of technical communication in New Zealand organisations
- Fosters strong relationships with tertiary training providers of technical communication in New Zealand.

We represent professionals in New Zealand who are typically involved in producing online or paper-based documentation, instructional videos, screencasts, interactive training resources, and other information design products.

TechCommNZ Membership

Member numbers are growing, and we think there is potential to increase them a lot more as awareness of the profession grows.

	Companies	Corporate Members ¹	Individual Members	Student Members	Total Individuals ²
01/09/2013	27	166	72	12	250
15/09/2015	31	318	99	31	448
25/05/2016	28	342	87	26	455

Notes:

1. Corporate Members are technical communicators working for Member Companies.
2. The Total does not include the number of Companies.