

Context for Other Educators
Professional Letter Assignment
Suzanne Tapp

This assignment is designed for HUSC 1100. The purpose of this one-hour credit course is to introduce students to the College of Human Sciences (CoHS) and to gain familiarity with departments, majors, and opportunities within the CoHS. We focus heavily on strategies to help students study and learn, important characteristics of a successful graduate of the CoHS, and ways in which they can communicate effectively with other students and faculty.

In this assignment, students are asked to write a professional letter that makes a request of someone else. In thinking about adding a ChatGPT component, I considered the following:

What is my objective?

I want students to be able to write a professional letter that represents them well and acknowledges the intended audience respectfully (and if appropriately, persuasively). This skill will benefit them for a lifetime, whether they are writing to a faculty member or to a future employer.

What is the value of incorporating ChatGPT in this assignment? These students are most often new to TTU and the likelihood of them using ChatGPT is high. This assignment is low stakes and gives me an opportunity to begin a conversation about the potential of this tool and the ethical implications. Using ChatGPT as a starting place for a business letter seems like a reasonable use.

Important notes: Students can use ChatGPT as an option but they can also choose another option and complete the assignment without it. It will not be forced on any student. I plan to devote a class period to ChatGPT and show students the potential uses and problems for educators and students. In the past, I have focused on evidence-based practices as a part of our conversation about the responsibilities of a graduate of the CoHS. I *think* that I can weave these together.

The following assignment was written with a [TILT](#) format.

HUSC 1100

Professional Letter

Purpose

Writing a persuasive, professional letter is a skill that will benefit any student or graduate from the College of Human Sciences. You will need to communicate well or ask for help from others at some point, for example, to request an interview, to ask for a recommendation letter, or to ask for consideration in the case of a grade discrepancy. Your ability to write a thoughtful, well-formatted letter could make a difference in the response that you receive.

Tasks

Choose the purpose of your letter and your intended audience. Possible options include a letter to a faculty member requesting a higher grade on an assignment on in the course, a letter to a potential employer requesting a job interview, or a letter to a professor requesting a recommendation to professional program or graduate school. You can also think of other situations that would require you to use persuasion in a professional context (such as seeking reimbursement or handling a discrepancy with a landlord) and submit an alternative that gives you a more relevant opportunity to practice your letter writing skills.

1. Using [the business format](#) discussed in class, write your letter. Make sure that you include a salutation (greeting) and an appropriate closing, state your purpose, and make your request.

Option one – ChatGPT Version:

- a. Use ChatGPT to generate the first version of your letter. To use ChatGPT, you will need to [create an account](#). Please be aware that this requires you to use your email address. If you have privacy concerns, you might consider using a burner email or choosing the second option.
- b. Use ChatGPT to generate your letter and paste the text into a Word document. [Turn on track changes](#).
- c. Add content and revisions to improve and personalize your letter. What did ChatGPT miss? Are there weaknesses that you need to correct? Can you add text to make the letter sound more like you than auto-generated text?

[Using the comment feature](#), explain each change you make. Did you change the wording? Use a comment to explain why. Did you add some information? Use a comment to describe what was missing.

- d. Because using ChatGPT productively in the classroom is still a new idea, citation guides have not quite caught up yet. For now, please add a footer to the letter stating that you used ChatGPT to generate your document. An example footer might say, *“This assignment was initially generated using ChatGPT on <insert date>.*
- e. Submit your final document with track changes and comments.

Option Two – Traditional Format:

- a. Write your letter independently without the use of an editor or technology-enabled language generator.
 - b. Submit your final document.
2. Review your letter for grammatical mistakes.
 3. Check the tone of your letter. Was your flattery over the top? Were you polite? Were you respectful (of your audience and yourself)?
 4. Submit this Word document or a pdf version to Blackboard. **Assignments submitted in Pages will not be graded.** Your letter should be approximately one page. Letters that are overly short (i.e., one short paragraph) or overly long (more than two pages) will be penalized.

Criteria

If you learn to successfully write a professional letter, you will be able to transfer and use this skill many times in the future. Students who choose to use ChatGPT and learn to identify weaknesses and personalize text to reflect their voices will benefit as this resource changes and potentially becomes a part of our everyday lives.

There are 10 total points possible in this assignment. Assignments will be graded as follows:

Did the student identify themselves and the purpose of the letter	2 points
Did the student use an appropriate tone (not too much flattery but rather a balance of politeness and gratitude)?	1 point
Did the student format the letter professionally as described in class? If this student chose to use ChatGPT to generate the initial text, did the student submit the final version using track changes and comments?	2 points
Was the letter written persuasively? Did it achieve its goal and purpose?	4 points
Did the student submit this assignment correctly and was it submitted in the appropriate file format (Word or a .pdf file) with acceptable grammar and writing demonstrated? 2 points	1 point

Resources

If you are not familiar with ChatGPT, there are many resources to teach you how to get started. A few examples from Youtube are [here](#) or [here](#). It is currently free to use ChatGPT. Remember that you are NOT required to use ChatGPT for our class, and we will be discussing ethical implications and strategies for thoughtfully using ChatGPT as a starting place.