

LETTER TO STAKEHOLDERS

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COURSE:

ECOSYSTEM MANAGEMENT

(ENVB 415)

SUMMARY

In groups of two or three, students draft letters to members of government to persuade them to adopt a policy. Students write from different stakeholder perspectives (e.g., economic, social, environmental).

GOALS

Develop students'

- appreciation for different stakeholder perspectives
- skills for engaging as responsible citizens in participatory democracy
- ability to write for non-academic audiences and adopt an appropriate tone and level of technical detail

"Students' critical thinking skills and ability to make connections 'skyrocketed'!"

- Kellina L. Higgins

STEPS

- 1 The instructor introduces an issue relevant to the course that has competing interests and diverse perspectives. Students then decide in small groups in class:
 - a. What stakeholder interest or perspective (e.g., economic, social, environmental) each student will represent
 - b. What policy change(s) would benefit the chosen stakeholders
 - c. What politician they should appeal to
- 2 Each student drafts a letter from their respective stakeholder perspective to persuade a politician to adopt their proposed change(s) to the policy.
- 3 A week before the assignment is due, students provide in-class feedback to peers on their letters to ensure that the message is conveyed clearly and the tone matches the chosen stakeholder's perspective.

Students have four weeks to complete the assignment. All letters are submitted at the same time via myCourses.

ASSESSMENT

The assignment is worth 15% of the final grade. It is recommended that students be made aware of the assessment criteria before they submit their letters.

Assessment criteria:

- Key points are stated concisely.
- Terminology takes into account the background of members of government.
- The perceived problem is well-explained from the perspective of the stakeholder and relevant data are provided to illustrate the issue.
- The proposed policy is presented concisely and explains from the stakeholder's perspective how it will lead to an improvement.
- The conclusion includes a persuasive take-home message that summarizes ideas and arguments.

The instructor types feedback comments directly into students' letters and returns them to students in myCourses.

READY TO TRY IT OUT?

HERE'S SOME ADVICE ...

- Express enthusiasm for participatory democracy. Students buy in when the instructor buys in.
- Have a class discussion to prime students on how the government structure of the particular jurisdiction works.
- Assign a word limit and be firm about it. Students tend to write long letters that lose focus.

BENEFITS

- Students learn to appreciate a broad range of perspectives.
- Students practice a genre of writing that they are generally not accustomed to.

CHALLENGES

- Students from non-democratic countries or cultures might struggle with the concept of participatory democracy.
- Students don't necessarily work efficiently in groups. If you ask students to work together, you may have to provide them with guidance about how to work efficiently as a team.

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