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Opening the Black Box. Configuring the Algorithm of a GPT-Based Professional Writing Coach

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Abstract*:*
This article investigates the pedagogical configuration of the Professional Writing Coach (PWC), a GPT-based chatbot developed to support university students in learning professional writing within an English-Medium Instruction (EMI) context. Unlike many studies that broadly assess the impact of generative AI, this paper focuses on its structured use within the classroom as an integrated component of instructional design. It opens the "black box" of chatbot creation, detailing the epistemic foundations, modular architecture, interaction rules, and embedded evaluation rubrics that inform the PWC's development. Drawing on Berlyne's theory of epistemic curiosity and Floridi's concept of semantic capital, the chatbot is framed as a cognitive and dialogic tutor that fosters rhetorical awareness, learner agency, and iterative self-revision. Crucially, the PWC is not designed to simply generate professional texts, but to teach students how to write them — through guided prompting, reflective questioning, and dialogic engagement. The article positions this approach as a rethinking of authorship, responsibility, and the instructor's role in AI-augmented writing education.

Keywords:
GenAI, Professional Writing, Chatbot Pedagogy, Learner Agency, AI Literacy.

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While generative AI in university writing instruction is often described as having moved beyond the experimental stage toward *structured design*, in practice its pedagogical application still remains far from fully integrated[1]. Certainly, many studies address the pedagogical implications of AI-assisted writing, but few provide transparent accounts of how such systems are actually configured. This article responds to that gap by publishing and commenting on the configuration of the *Professional Writing Coach*[2] (PWC), a GPT-based chatbot developed for students in a Professional Writing course within the degree in Corporate Communication taught through English-Medium Instruction (EMI) at IULM

[1] Although recent reviews and studies highlight a transition from experimentation to more systematic pedagogical frameworks (Bannister, Alcalde Peñalver, Santamaría, 2023; Hossain, Younus, 2025), research also stresses that the integration of generative AI into higher education writing instruction is still partial and uneven, requiring careful design, ethical oversight, and contextual adaptation (Julita, 2025; Floridi, 2018).
[2] Here is the link to the chatbot: https://chatgpt.com/g/g-67ea498f7fc0819182c94e1ca9033356-professional-writing-coach.

University, Milan. The project was conceived as an experiment with a new cognitive and pedagogical tool, composed of modules, interactive tools, rubrics, and clearly defined interaction policies. In this sense, the PWC represents a concrete step toward a structured design rooted in explicit methodological and theoretical choices. The design is informed by a broader conceptual framework: the notion of *epistemic curiosity*[3] (Berlyne, 1954, 180), as the intrinsic drive to explore knowledge gaps, and Floridi's idea of *semantic capital*[4] (Floridi, 2018, 181), which highlights the human capacity to construct and interpret meaning within complex ecosystems.

These perspectives frame AI not as a neutral add-on, but as a *catalyst for personalized learning* and as a *challenge to rethink student agency*, *dialogic engagement,* and *educational responsibility*. The aim of this article, therefore, is not merely to describe a tool, but to make explicit the design choices that shape it. By opening the "black box" of the configuration, we situate the bot as a pedagogical artefact — one that embodies theoretical assumptions about writing, learning, and agency, and which raises critical questions about how AI can be integrated into higher education responsibly.

1. *Traditional vs innovative pedagogical practice*

To date, my course in Professional Writing has been structured around interactive lectures and workshop activities aimed at developing pragmatic awareness of different corporate communication genres (correspondence, press releases, About Us, persuasive letters, oral speeches, and blogs). The pedagogical model emphasized:

- mastery of professional text types through analysis of authentic materials;
- practice in adapting style and register to purpose, audience, and context;
- reasoning and argumentation as the foundation of professional discourse;

[3] Daniel E. Berlyne defines *epistemic curiosity* as an intrinsic and enduring motivation to know and to understand, distinct from more immediate forms of perceptual or diversive curiosity. It arises from the need to reduce uncertainty and to resolve incongruities between what is known and what is perceived, thus fostering exploration, scientific inquiry, and cognitive learning. In this sense, it represents an autonomous drive to interrogate the world and to enrich one's knowledge structures.

[4] Luciano Floridi defines *semantic capital* as the stock of meaningful content — languages, traditions, ideas, and cultural practices — through which individuals and societies construct and interpret reality. In the digital age, this capital is both amplified and rendered fragile: while digital technologies accelerate the production and circulation of meaning, they also expose it to risks such as disinformation, commodification, and cultural amnesia. For this reason, Floridi calls for ethical frameworks capable of safeguarding semantic capital as a sustainable resource essential for identity formation and public discourse.

- exercises in problem-solving writing and media communication strategies;
- the use of generative AI primarily as an auxiliary tool for prompting and editing texts.

Assessment was based on a combination of written assignments and quizzes, with partial integration of AI skills (prompting). The course materials included established references in professional writing (MacRae, 2019; Strunk, White 2000) as well as recent explorations of AI-supported writing (Carbone, Pellicanò, 2023).

Starting in 2023, indeed, the emergence of generative AI led to the inclusion of dedicated lessons on prompt engineering for professional writing, in recognition of the fact that this technology would shape students' professional writing practices once they leave university. Prompting was framed not simply as a technical skill, but as a rhetorical practice aimed at contextualizing requests in relation to key concepts such as purpose, tone, and audience. In this sense, prompting was introduced as a form of *meta-writing* — a planning stage prior to actual drafting — which positioned generative AI as a tool for text production and revision within a broader pedagogical strategy. Although I am convinced that prompting is not just a technical trick but a fundamental competence, I now regard it as equally important to introduce an *artificial tutor that acts as a conversational partner, supporting each student in a customized way as they develop their rhetorical and stylistic competence*. This shift moves from an AI that writes the text on behalf of the student to an AI that teaches students how to write — or better, *how to think about* writing a professional text. In this sense, the tutor reframes writing as a reflective, dialogic, and iterative process.

2. *From book to genAI*

This new role becomes particularly evident when contrasting traditional resources with dialogic AI. With a (static) book, drawing on the rich and useful literature on professional writing, the student can read, analyze, and internalize models of professional texts. With the Professional Writing Coach, by contrast, the student can *talk to* the system, test hypotheses, receive tailored feedback, and rehearse rhetorical decisions interactively. Through this shift, the PWC opens up a space of dialogic learning, negotiation, and reflective practice. This dimension resonates with Berlyne's notion of epistemic curiosity, as it encourages learners to recognize and explore knowledge gaps through active

questioning, and with Floridi's idea of semantic capital, as it enables students to construct and refine meaning in a shared cognitive space. AI can spark such curiosity if — and only if — it is used dialogically.

The integration of the Professional Writing Coach into this pedagogical framework, however, implicitly challenges the traditional balance between teacher-led instruction and student practice. It raises questions about how AI can be reconciled with established methods of genre analysis, rhetorical training, and workshop-based learning. Rather than serving as an additional tool, the chatbot compels a rethinking of the pedagogical architecture itself, pressing instructors and students alike to renegotiate issues of authorship, agency, and responsibility in professional writing education. While the specific challenges of this integration will be explored in a separate paper, the present study focuses on the configuration algorithm of the chatbot, in order to make explicit the design logic that underpins its pedagogical role.

3. *Building a pedagogical chatbot with ChatGPT*

Designing an educational chatbot is less about coding than about *structuring a dialogue*. It begins with the *knowledge bas*e, the core of the system. Next, the bot is given a clear *identity* — a title and presentation that frame it as a supportive tutor rather than a mere text generator. Its logic is then organized into *modules* to start the conversations that reflect the progression of the course, guiding students step by step. Finally, the *configuration* stage defines the rules of interaction — tone, memory, and tool activation — ensuring that the chatbot functions not as a shortcut, but as a reliable partner in learning.

3.1 The Knowledge Base

At the core of the chatbot's configuration lies the knowledge base, the set of textual resources that inform its responses. In this project, it is composed of the same materials used in the classroom — lecture notes, textbooks, PDF handouts, examples, and writing exercises — uploaded in the form of 20 documents, the maximum number currently allowed by ChatGPT. This technical limitation, rather than being a constraint alone, functions as a form of pedagogical curation: it obliges the instructor to make deliberate choices about which materials are most representative of the discipline and most useful for students' practice. By embedding these resources into the system, the Professional Writing

Coach *operates on the same epistemic plane as the 'human' instructor*, ensuring continuity between classroom and chatbot interaction.

The construction of a knowledge base, however, is never a neutral act. Deciding which materials to include defines not only the corpus of reference but also the interpretive framework within which students engage with professional writing. The knowledge base thus acts as a curated lens on the discipline, privileging certain genres, discursive strategies, and rhetorical norms over others. In this sense, the chatbot becomes more than a repository of information: it provides a structured environment that channels students' epistemic curiosity while complementing the teacher's role, preparing the ground for a triangulated dialogue between student, instructor, and digital tutor.

A chatbot, as a matter of fact, is an adaptive system specialized in a given subject area, designed to interact with users through natural language in ways that simulate dialogue. Its responses are *probabilistic*, generated through statistical modelling of language; yet the deliberate curation of the knowledge base by the instructor introduces a form of *determinacy*. The PWC thus operates within a probabilistic framework that is nonetheless epistemically anchored, allowing it to adapt explanations, examples, and exercises to learners' needs. In this way, it functions less as a repository of stored information than as a personalized tutor capable of responsive guidance.

From the perspective of C-K Theory[5] (Hatchuel, Weil, 2009, *passim*), the knowledge base of the Professional Writing Coach can be understood as the K-space, that is, the reservoir of validated *knowledge* on which students can rely. At the same time, student queries, drafts, and experiments constitute the C-space, the field of emerging *concepts* not yet tested against established criteria. The pedagogical value of the chatbot lies precisely in enabling the co-expansion of C and K: new writing attempts are evaluated against the structured knowledge base, while the knowledge itself is reactivated and reinterpreted through dialogic engagement. In this sense, grounding the chatbot in the classroom corpus transforms what could appear as a static storehouse of information into a generative environment where students rehearse, negotiate, and refine professional writing practices.

[5] The *C-K Theory* (Concept–Knowledge Theory) by Hatchuel and Weil (2003) models innovation as the dynamic interaction between the C-space (emerging concepts) and the K-space (validated knowledge). Creativity arises through their "double expansion," where new ideas are tested against knowledge and knowledge is reinterpreted through new concepts.

3.2 Description and modules

The role of the chatbot is clearly defined in the description provided on its homepage: «Professional Writing Coach – a chatbot designed to support university students in learning how to write professional and effective texts for corporate communication. It helps students reflect on purpose, audience, and tone; apply principles of Business and Plain English; practice common professional text types; and prepare for the final writing exam». Besides, the interactional tone is deliberately designed to be *motivational yet direct, interactive, and reflective*. This design rationale aims to lower students' anxiety and create a non-judgmental space for experimentation, encouraging them to test ideas, take risks, and gradually build confidence in their professional writing skills.

Moreover, within this description lies the pedagogical architecture of the tool, whose internal organization directly reflects specific teaching goals, thereby activating the co-expansion of C and K. The algorithm is articulated into four distinct agents, or functional modules, each designed to foster a particular dimension of professional writing competence. This modular configuration transforms the chatbot into a structured learning environment rather than a simple corrective device. Its components include:

- Professional Writing: Purpose, Audience, Style, and Tone of Voice
- Business/Plain English Zone, Synonym Bank, and Tone Builder
- Text Types Simulator
- Exam Simulation Mode

The four-stage modular structure mirrors both the progression of the course and the logic of scaffolded learning. Each module is framed by explicit entry and exit prompts — «Do you want to start here? Here's what you'll learn» at the beginning, and «You've completed [x] of 4 stages. Want to continue or practise more?» at the end — thus reinforcing the sense of continuity and learner autonomy[6].

[6] This modular structure reflects theoretical constructs embedded in the chatbot's pedagogical logic. Berlyne's theory of epistemic curiosity is operationalized through the system's use of guiding questions, interactive simulations, and open-ended exercises that prompt learners to identify and close knowledge gaps. Floridi's concept of semantic capital is addressed through vocabulary-building tools (e.g., Synonym Bank), genre-specific modules, and reflective prompts, all of which aim to develop meaningful, context-sensitive communication resources. These elements translate abstract theories into instructional design features that support exploratory and metacognitive engagement with professional writing.

The first module invites students to articulate the fundamentals of professional communication by focusing on purpose, audience, style, and tone. The chatbot provides both theoretical insights and practical examples, with optional support in document design (such as titles, layout, and visual organization). This stage grounds students in rhetorical awareness before moving to linguistic refinement.

The second module, Business/Plain English and Vocabulary, emphasizes clarity and accessibility. Here, students work through progressively challenging exercises, construct a personalized Synonym Bank, Rewriting and Checklist tools, and receive targeted feedback on their strengths and areas for improvement. The pedagogical aim is not only linguistic accuracy but also stylistic flexibility.

The third module, Text Types, functions as a simulator of professional genres, covering emails, press releases, About Us pages, persuasive letters, oral speeches, and blogs. Each format is taught through structured steps, mini tutorials, practical examples, and editable templates, complemented by optional checklists and maps. Interaction is dialogic: students can request examples, comparisons, or simulations, thereby rehearsing rhetorical decisions in context.

Finally, the fourth module immerses students in a highly realistic performance environment. They are required to complete professional writing tasks under exam-like conditions, drafting texts in the different genres, while also responding to quizzes that combine multiple-choice, true/false, and open-ended items. Progress is tracked through motivational badges, reinforcing engagement and self-monitoring. Central to this stage is the provision of formative feedback: the chatbot applies transparent evaluation rubrics that encourage reflective revision rather than mechanical correction. Preparation is further enhanced by access to all exam prompts used over the past four years, giving students a comprehensive and authentic basis for practice. Crucially, however, the final exam must be taken *without the use of AI*, making this simulation both realistic and decisive, since it directly tests whether classroom instruction and chatbot-supported practice have been effective. Taken together, these four modules illustrate how configuration decisions determine the pedagogical use of the chatbot: not as a static repository of knowledge, but as a sequenced environment that guides students from reflection, through practice, to performance and assessment.

The Professional Writing Coach illustrates how a conversational AI can combine

several of the purposes usually attributed to GPTs. It functions in an *exploratory* way when students use it to analyze complex rhetorical situations, in an *explicative* way when it clarifies concepts such as tone or audience, in a *strategic* way when it supports decision-making about genre conventions, in a *creative* way when it generates alternative phrasings or stylistic options, and in an *interactive* way when it rehearses professional conversations through simulations.

In practice, the configuration foregrounds the student's role as an *active agent*. Learning is no longer conceived as the passive reception of information, but as a process of dialogic co-design, in which students negotiate their trajectory: they may accept the chatbot's guiding questions or, alternatively, assert their own priorities by specifying the tasks and skills they wish to rehearse. In both cases, agency is reconfigured, and the learner becomes a participant in shaping the pedagogical exchange rather than its object.

3.3 Evaluation rubrics as a critical component

One of the most delicate and pedagogically significant aspects of configuring the Professional Writing Coach concerns the design of its evaluation rubrics. From the outset, I sought to align the chatbot's criteria with those used by instructors, thereby maintaining coherence in the standards by which student work is judged. Such alignment does more than guarantee consistency: it reinforces the pedagogical contract binding teacher, learner, and digital tutor, ensuring that feedback is perceived not as contradictory but as convergent within a shared framework of academic expectations.

The rubric draws on established frameworks such as the IELTS criteria[7] — *Task Completion, Coherence and Cohesion,* and *Vocabulary and Grammar* — while also extending them to capture the specific conventions of professional genres (e.g., professional formatting, tone and register, personalization, completeness of information, call-to-action clarity, and so on). In this way, the chatbot does not merely correct surface-level errors in grammar or punctuation but also evaluates higher-order aspects such as rhetorical effectiveness, audience awareness, and adherence to genre conventions.

[7] Looking ahead, it is possible that the current IELTS-based evaluation model will be complemented by criteria drawn from the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) and the Cambridge English Scale. These frameworks offer action-oriented, communicative descriptors that align well with the formative aims of the *Professional Writing Coach*, as they emphasize what learners *can do* with language and support a more reflective, developmental, and genre-sensitive approach to professional writing.

To reinforce its formative purpose, the evaluation process is coupled with *reflective prompts* that invite students to assess their own choices: «Which tone did you find hardest to master?» «What would you improve in your structure or clarity?» «Did your vocabulary reflect the right level of professionalism?» These questions encourage *metacognitive engagement*, positioning evaluation not as a final judgment but as an opportunity for growth. Furthermore, the configuration includes post-simulation support, which activates targeted exercises or revisits specific modules when a student's performance falls below the expected level. This creates a feedback loop that is both diagnostic and prescriptive, helping learners to identify weaknesses and immediately act upon them.

The critical pedagogical value of this design lies in the fact that rubrics are not presented as static checklists but as dialogic tools. They mediate between correction and reflection, combining the precision of structured assessment with the openness of self-evaluation. In this sense, the chatbot does not simply "grade" a text but f*acilitates an iterative process of improvement*.

Another important advantage of this rubric-based configuration is its potential to reduce anxiety in students who may be reluctant to seek direct feedback from the 'human' instructor. For many learners — particularly the more reserved ones — the chatbot offers a *non-judgmental interlocutor* with whom they can engage freely, without the fear of being evaluated in front of peers or exposing perceived weaknesses. Within this environment, students can request *highly customized forms of support*: tailored explanations, step-by-step examples, collaborative exercises carried out with the AI, or independent writing tasks that can later be corrected by the chatbot as often as needed. The absence of social pressure allows them to experiment, repeat, and refine their writing in a safe space, thereby transforming evaluation into a process of continuous practice rather than a moment of final judgment.

One safeguard introduced to mitigate the risk of students engaging with rubrics in a purely mechanical way is the explicit exclusion of grades: the chatbot provides only qualitative feedback, never numerical marks. This choice is intended to preserve the formative and exploratory dimension of the tool, though it cannot by itself eliminate the tendency toward surface-level "box ticking." Research has long warned that rubrics, if used uncritically, may encourage compliance with criteria at the expense of developing deeper rhetorical awareness (Bloxham, Boyd, 2007, *passim*; Sadler, 2009, *passim*). Yet the dialogic nature of the chatbot has the potential to counteract this flattening effect: by

inviting students to ask questions, test alternatives, and reflect on feedback interactively, it can stimulate the development of *evaluative judgement*[8], enabling learners to make more informed decisions about the quality of their work. A second limitation lies in the issue of nuance: while the chatbot can apply criteria consistently, it struggles to capture the subtleties of cultural and rhetorical context (Tai et al., 2018, *passim*). Finally, there is the possibility of over-reliance: some learners may find the chatbot's non-judgmental space preferable to engaging with peers or instructors. This need not undermine collaborative learning, but it highlights the importance of positioning the chatbot within a balanced pedagogical ecology in which human mediation remains central.

3.3 The Toolbox and Learner Agency

A distinctive feature of the Professional Writing Coach is the Toolbox, a set of five activatable tools — Business/Plain English Rewriter, Tone Tuner, Synonym Bank, Checklist Generator, and Sentence Highlighter. The design rationale is to promote learner agency: tools are not imposed automatically but activated at the student's request or suggested diagnostically when a specific weakness is detected (e.g., synonyms for repetitive vocabulary, checklists for structured genres, subject–verb highlighting for complex syntax). In this way, the chatbot encourages learners to take responsibility for their own progress, deciding when and how to seek assistance.

This approach offers clear advantages. It empowers students to manage their learning process and fosters meta-cognitive awareness when additional support is required. It also prevents over-correction, ensuring that feedback remains targeted and proportional. At the same time, certain risks must be acknowledged. The availability of such tools may lead some students to rely excessively on automated rewriting or vocabulary suggestions, thereby reducing the effort invested in independent drafting. Moreover, learners with lower confidence may be tempted to activate every tool indiscriminately, diluting the formative impact of strategic choice.

[8] The concept of *evaluative judgement* refers to learners' ability to assess the quality of their own work and that of others, using explicit criteria and informed reasoning. It is regarded as a core competence in higher education, empowering students to move beyond dependence on external evaluation and to develop autonomy in making quality-related decisions (Tai et al., 2018).

3.4 Gamification and Motivation

To sustain engagement, the chatbot incorporates a light form of gamification through progress tracking and motivational badges. After each module, students receive feedback on their progression ("You've completed [x] of 4 steps. Want to continue?"), while badges such as Tone Master, Checklist Commander, and Business/Plain English Pro reward achievement. These devices create a sense of accomplishment and encourage persistence. Yet gamification can, in some cases, shift attention away from intrinsic motivation and rhetorical reflection toward the pursuit of external rewards. In the Professional Writing Coach, however, these elements are deliberately minimal, functioning more as gentle prompts for engagement than as ends in themselves, which makes the risk of distraction limited while preserving the focus on intrinsic motivation and rhetorical reflection.

4. Research Design and Evaluation Outlook

While this paper has primarily focused on the design rationale and pedagogical configuration of the Professional Writing Coach (PWC), its empirical validation remains an essential next step. In the current implementation phase (2025–26), the PWC has been introduced as an optional support tool within the Professional Writing Workshop. Students were encouraged to use the chatbot to revise texts, receive feedback, deepen their understanding of English for professional writing, and reflect on stylistic choices. While the tool is technically accessible without a subscription, its free usage is limited by a cap on the number of daily interactions. For this reason, students were advised — though not required — to subscribe to ChatGPT Plus to access the full functionality of the Professional Writing Coach, which in turn limited systematic adoption across the cohort.

In this exploratory context, a full empirical study has not yet been conducted. However, a qualitative research design is being developed to evaluate the perceived impact of the tool on students' writing processes and AI literacy. The primary method will consist of an anonymous survey administered at the end of the workshop, complemented by optional interviews or focus groups with volunteers. The survey includes Likert-scale items and open-ended questions aimed at assessing usability, learning perception, genre awareness, and motivational aspects (see sample questions below).

The findings will not aim to provide generalizable conclusions but rather to offer

preliminary insights into student engagement, barriers to adoption, and perceived benefits. These results will help refine the tool, guide future course integration strategies, and lay the foundation for a more structured study in subsequent iterations. The present contribution should thus be read as a design-based case study that precedes formal impact measurement, opening a space for further inquiry into the pedagogical role of generative AI in professional writing education.

Conclusion

This study has presented the Professional Writing Coach as a pedagogical prototype: not a technical novelty but a structured learning digital environment whose configuration makes visible the values and assumptions embedded in its design. By "opening the black box" of the algorithm, I have sought to show how choices about modules, rubrics, and interaction policies embody a conception of writing as dialogic, iterative, and agency-driven. The PWC is thus not merely an auxiliary tool but a pedagogical artefact — one that channels epistemic curiosity, fosters semantic capital, and invites reflection on how AI can be responsibly integrated into higher education.

Since the project is still in its early stage, the reflections presented here should be read as preliminary, subject to revision as practice unfolds. Nonetheless, the design itself already demonstrates how AI can be pedagogically configured to provide students with a safe, judgment-free rehearsal space while supporting rhetorical and stylistic flexibility beyond what static resources, such as books, can offer. By transforming feedback into a reflective, iterative process, the PWC cultivates both writing competence and AI literacy, preparing learners for communicative ecosystems increasingly shaped by artificial intelligence.

The introduction of such a system also reshapes the pedagogical landscape. Far from diminishing the teacher's role, the chatbot emphasizes it: AI cannot replicate empathy, judgment, or relational guidance. In an AI-augmented pedagogy, the teacher remains central as designer of learning environments, mediator of meaning, and facilitator of critical dialogue. At the same time, students are repositioned as rhetorical agents: no longer passive recipients of correction, they actively test alternatives, pose questions, and rehearse decisions in a non-judgmental digital space. The challenge ahead lies in fostering the *desire* to engage with the chatbot in ways that reveal knowledge gaps and stimulate the

curiosity to overcome them — an aspect that directly connects with Berlyne's notion of epistemic curiosity. In this sense, guiding learners to ask productive questions becomes one of the new tasks of the teacher, who curates not only resources but also possible pathways of inquiry.

As in any process of communication, the value of the Professional Writing Coach lies less in its outputs than in the process itself: the feedback loop between human and machine, where interaction shapes understanding. This processual dimension is typical of digital communication: for example, prompting means writing in order to be understood by an AI; writing a blog with SEO involves addressing both a human audience and a search engine; configuring a chatbot entails composing, in natural language, a dialogic process of interaction between AI and human subject. Indeed, without the learner's curiosity, the chatbot remains an empty shell, or at best a well-intentioned tool. With it, however, the system can support a less prescriptive, more exploratory pedagogy in which students are encouraged to take ownership of their learning.

Ultimately, the Professional Writing Coach should be seen as a co-tutor in the classroom — one that augments teaching while prompting a rethinking of authorship, agency, and responsibility in writing education. It does not replace teaching. It redesigns it.

Configuration – Professional Writing Coach for University Students

ROLE: Professional Writing Coach for university students.
GOAL: Help them develop professional texts that are clear, effective, and aligned with business writing standards and Plain English.
Use a motivational but direct tone. Be interactive and thought-provoking.

MEMORY
- Always offer to remember preferences (tone, audience, format)
- If memory is active:
- Inform the student
- Offer targeted storage (e.g., projects)
- Delete on request

START OF INTERACTION POLICY
When starting a conversation:
Do not use placeholder greetings like [Good morning, evening, afternoon].

Begin with a clear, personalized educational prompt based on the student's goals or prior interaction.

Examples of valid openings:
- “Welcome back! Are you ready to draft the main body of your persuasive letter?”
- “Let’s begin with a quick tone reflection exercise before we structure your email.”

MODULES (4-Stage Structure)
Each module:
- Starts with: “Do you want to start here? Here’s what you’ll learn.”
- Ends with: “You’ve completed [x] of 4 stages. Want to continue or practise more?”

Module 1: Reflection & Document Design
- Guiding questions: “What’s your purpose? Who’s your audience? What tone is needed?”
- Provide both theoretical and practical examples
- Activate document design support on request (titles, fonts, lists, layout)
- Implicit sources: *Plain English Handbook*, *Rules for Writers*, *Open Technical Communication*

Module 2: Business/Plain English & Vocabulary
- Intro: “Want to write more clearly and directly? I’ll guide you step by step.”
- Exercises with increasing difficulty
- Build a personalized **Synonym Bank**
- Analyze strengths and suggest improvements

Module 3: Text Types
- Covered formats: Email, About Us, Press Release, Speech, Persuasive Letter, Blog Post
- Each type includes:
  - Structured steps
  - Mini tutorials
  - Practical examples
  - Editable templates
  - Optional checklist/table/map
- Active prompt: “Would you like an example? A comparison? A simulation?”

Module 4: Exam Simulation & Feedback
Do you want to test your writing skills in a real-world context?
Here’s what you’ll do in this final stage of the journey:
- Complete a professional writing task (e.g. email, press release, persuasive letter) based on realistic prompts
- Take a guided quiz: 5 multiple-choice, 3 true/false, and 2 open-ended questions
- Track your progress, unlock motivational badges, and review your improvement history
- Receive detailed formative feedback using clear evaluation rubrics

Opening Prompt
“Welcome to the final module! Ready to show what you’ve learned?
Would you like to start with a quiz or a full writing task?”

EVALUATION RUBRICS (based on IELTS criteria)
Your work will be reviewed using these three criteria:
1. **Task Completion** – Is your response complete, relevant and appropriate for the context?
2. **Coherence and Cohesion** – Is your writing logically structured and easy to follow?
3. **Vocabulary and Grammar** – Do you use varied, precise language and correct syntax?

Reflective Prompts (post-task)
- "Which tone did you find hardest to master?"
- "What would you improve in your structure or clarity?"
- "Did your vocabulary reflect the right level of professionalism?"

POST-SIMULATION SUPPORT
If your score is below target, I'll offer:
- Targeted improvement exercises
- Activation of tools like Business/Plain English Rewriter or Checklist Generator
- The option to revisit specific modules or retry the simulation

For each text:
• Correct grammar, spelling, punctuation, clarity, register, cohesion, structure.
• Preserve original formatting and genre conventions (e.g., greetings, paragraphing).

Always use the following markup:
• [wrong → right]
• {optional explanation}

✅ Expected Output
- Corrected version with visual markup
- Formative feedback with strengths, weaknesses, suggestions

EVALUATION RUBRICS – TEXT TYPES

EMAIL
1. Professional Formatting
2. Tone and Register
3. Clarity of Purpose
4. Flow and Cohesion
5. Grammar and Syntax
6. Spelling and Punctuation
7. Professional Vocabulary
8. Personalization
9. Proposed Solutions
10. Polite Closing
11. Completeness of Information

12. Style and Originality

PRESS RELEASE – Common Issues
- Missing structure (LOGO, PRESS RELEASE, EMBARGO)
- No boilerplate
- Generic contact info
- Grammar mistakes
- Weak lead
- Punctuation issues
- Missing quotation
- Misuse/omission of factual data

PERSUASIVE LETTER

Dimension	Criterion
Content Development	Clear message with examples or reasoning
Structure & Organization	Intro, body, refutation, conclusion
Argumentation & Refutation	Anticipates and counters objections
Grammar & Syntax	Correct, fluent, varied
Register & Tone	Formal, persuasive, audience-aware
Genre Conventions	Follows persuasive letter format and tone

ABOUT US
- Professional Formatting
- Tone and Register
- Clarity of Purpose
- Flow and Cohesion
- Grammar and Syntax
- Spelling and Punctuation
- Professional Vocabulary
- Personalization
- Completeness of Information
- Style and Originality
- Audience Awareness
- Call to Action Clarity

ADDITIONAL INSTRUCTIONS
- You may request revision comparisons.
- You may focus feedback on selected aspects (e.g., only tone or grammar).
- Output should be ready for Word “Track Changes” mode or directly usable as feedback for students.

TOOLBOX – Activatable Tools
“Would you like to activate one of these tools?”
1. Business/Plain English Rewriter
2. Tone Tuner
3. Synonym Bank
4. Checklist Generator
5. Sentence Highlighter

Tools can also be suggested diagnostically:
- Synonyms for weak vocabulary
- Checklists for structured text types
- Subject-verb highlighting for complex sentences

Ensure each tool activation is based on a learner’s need or request.
Always maintain tone and clarity consistency when offering rewrites or vocabulary alternatives.

FEEDBACK ON DRAFTS
IELTS-inspired criteria:
1. **Task Completion** – relevance and completeness
2. **Coherence and Cohesion** – logical structure
3. **Vocabulary and Grammar** – variety and accuracy

Includes:
- Rewording suggestions
- Highlighting weak points
- Optional improvement exercises
- Reference to recurring issues (if present)

Prompts:
- “Would you like this to sound more formal, informal, internal or external?”
- “Prefer a tone from a manager, consultant, or applicant?”

TRACKING & BADGES
After each task or module:
? “You’ve completed [x] of 4 steps. Want to continue?”

Motivational badges:
- ? **Tone Master**
- ? **Checklist Commander**
- ? **Business/Plain English Pro**

SUMMARY (Optional)
At the end of each session, ask:
- “Would you like a summary of your strengths and areas to improve?”
- “Would you like to save this session as a PDF?”

OVERALL STYLE
- Conversational, motivational, yet professional
- Adaptable to the student’s style
- Encourages awareness and reflection
- Avoids information overload
- Proactive and goal-oriented
- Maintain a professional and adaptive tone throughout the session.
- Avoid generic or automatic email-style greetings (e.g. "Good morning, evening, afternoon").
- Start every session with a context-based opening related to the module or writing task (e.g. "Ready to practice persuasive emails?" or "Let’s work on tone and structure for your press release.").

SAMPLE QUESTIONS TO ASK THE PROFESSIONAL WRITING COACH

4.1 1. To Start Practising

- “Give me an exercise on text clarity.”
- “Give me a text to analyse for tone and audience.”
- “Ask me to write a formal email, then correct it.”
- “Write an ambiguous sentence and ask me to rewrite it more clearly.”
- “Give me an exercise on communicative purpose.”

4.2 2. For Simulations and Roleplay

- “Pretend to be a manager and give me feedback on my text.”
- “Write as if you were a dissatisfied customer.”
- “Respond to this cover letter as a recruiter.”
- “Write a message as if you were a friendly colleague.”
- “Simulate a formal email conversation between two professionals.”

4.3 3. For Theoretical Insights

- “Explain the difference between tone and register.”
- “When should I use a formal style? And when is it better to be more direct?”
- “What are the most common mistakes in an executive summary?”
- “What does it mean to ‘adapt a text to its audience’?”
- “How can you identify the communicative purpose in a professional text?”

4.4 4. For Revision and Rewriting

- “Evaluate and correct the following text: […] Use mark-up corrections.”
- “Evaluate this text in terms of clarity.”

- "Help me improve my spelling skills."
- "Create a personalized 7-day spelling challenge for me (with daily exercises)."
- "Suggest an improved rewrite of this paragraph."
- "Give me feedback on this message to a superior."
- "Adjust the tone of this text to make it more professional."
- "Make this text more concise without losing its meaning."

4.5 5. Vocabulary and Style Enhancement

- "Suggest synonyms to make this sentence more formal/informal."
- "Highlight weak vocabulary in my text and propose stronger alternatives."
- "Build me a personalized synonym bank for professional writing."
- "Point out repeated words in my text and suggest variations."
- "Give me alternatives to make this text sound more persuasive."

4.6 6. Structure and Document Design

- "Check if my headings and subheadings are effective."
- "Turn this draft into a bullet-point executive summary."
- "Suggest improvements in layout and spacing for readability."
- "Show me how to format this as a professional email/press release."
- "Create a template for a persuasive letter/blog post/speech."

4.7 7. Genre-Specific Checklists

- "Generate a checklist for writing a press release."
- "Compare my About Us page with industry best practices."
- "Provide me with the structure of a persuasive letter."
- "List the typical mistakes students make in email or persuasive letter."

4.8 8. Interactive Practice & Quizzes

- "Quiz me with 5 true/false questions about email etiquette."
- "Give me a short exercise on Plain English: rewrite these 3 sentences."
- "Simulate an exam task (persuasive letter, blog post, or speech)."
- "Ask me to identify errors in this short professional text."
- "Challenge me with a timed writing exercise (10 minutes)."

4.9 9. General Suggestions

- "Give me a random prompt to practise with."
- "Ask me an open-ended question about professional writing."
- "Help me prepare a mini-lesson for my classmates on clarity and audience."
- "Suggest a reflective question I can answer about my writing habits."

Student Survey – Reflection on the Use of the Professional Writing Coach (PWC)

Section A – General Perception of the Tool
Instructions: For each statement, indicate how much you agree on a scale from 1

(Strongly disagree) to 5 (Strongly agree). If you did not use the tool, select "Not applicable".

1. The Professional Writing Coach contributed to my understanding of professional writing principles.
2. The chatbot's explanations were clear and easy to follow.
3. The feedback received was helpful for improving my texts.
4. The chatbot supported my learning process without replacing the teacher's role.
5. I would consider recommending the chatbot in future academic writing courses.

Response scale:

- 1 – Strongly disagree
- 2 – Disagree
- 3 – Neutral
- 4 – Agree
- 5 – Strongly agree
- N/A – Not applicable / Did not use

Section B – Writing Awareness and Self-Reflection

6. The chatbot prompted me to think about purpose, tone, and audience while writing.
7. I became more aware of my writing style and choices through interaction with the tool.
8. The exercises or mini-lessons were helpful in organizing and revising my texts.
9. The chatbot contributed to my confidence in writing professional documents.
10. I reflected more on genre conventions (e.g., email vs. press release) thanks to the chatbot.

Same response scale as above.

Section C – AI Literacy and Engagement

12. I learned to formulate better prompts to obtain useful outputs.
13. I activated at least one of the optional tools (e.g., Tone Tuner, Checklist Generator).
14. When I used the chatbot, I felt it created a safe, non-judgmental space to practice.
15. The tool encouraged me to take responsibility for revising and improving my writing.

16. I gained some insights into how AI can be used responsibly in academic and professional settings.

Same response scale as above.

Section D – Usage Habits (Short Questions)

17. How many times did you use the Professional Writing Coach during the course?

- Never
- Once or twice
- Occasionally (3–5 times)
- Frequently (6+ times)

18. If you did not use it or used it very little, what were the main reasons? *(Select all that apply)*

- I didn't know how to access it
- I didn't want to pay for ChatGPT Plus
- I preferred working without AI
- I didn't have time
- I wasn't sure how it could help
- Other: _____

Section E – Open-ended Questions

19. What was the most useful feature of the Professional Writing Coach for you?
20. What would you improve or change in the chatbot's design or interaction style?
21. Can you describe a moment when the chatbot changed how you viewed or revised your writing?
22. Do you feel more or less motivated to write after using the tool? Why?
23. Any additional comments or suggestions?

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