

DL 302 — Proposal Production & Compliance

The writing course — but writing as a production discipline. You will turn an ORBITAL into a proposal structure, manage it with a compliance matrix, learn the prose craft that turns a win theme into a persuasive page, and drive the package through the color-team gates: pink, red, gold, white-glove.

Course number: DL 302 · **Credit hours:** 3 · **Term:** 14 weeks, one 75-minute session per week (plus independent reading and assignments) · **Audience:** junior undergraduates · **Prerequisites:** DL 210 (may be co-requisite) · **Tier:** upper-division elective (Year 3) · **Texts:** this repository — the doctrine, the literacy maps, and real published solicitations · **Tools:** none required beyond a word processor or paper. Stack-agnostic by design (doctrine/08).

Doctrine spine

`doctrine/03` (the design and audit stages of the pipeline) and `doctrine/06` (the ORBITAL as the source of the proposal) are the spine, supported by `doctrine/02` (writing to the evaluation criteria). The course teaches the *discipline* of proposal production — the compliance matrix, the annotated outline, the page budget, the prose craft that turns a storyboard into a scored page, the color-team sequence, and the readiness gate — at concept altitude, the way a professional proposal organization encodes it.

Where this course sits in the program

This is the **production** elective: where the capture strategy from DL 210 becomes a review-ready proposal package. It pairs with DL 303 (Government Contracts & Subcontracting) for students heading into capture/proposal roles, and it is the closest the curriculum comes to the craft of writing — taught as a gated production process, not as a burst of inspiration.

Ladder: DL 210 (or co-req). Recommended pairing: DL 303. Directly feeds the capstone (DL 480), where students produce a review-ready package.

Learning outcomes

By the end of this course, a student can:

- Explain why a proposal is a document written to the evaluation criteria — and why the ORBITAL is its source.
- Build a compliance matrix at 100 percent coverage: every “shall,” every page limit, every certification, mapped to where the response satisfies it.
- Produce an annotated outline from the compliance matrix, with section assignments and page budgets.
- Draft the four volumes — technical, management, past performance, and pricing — from ORBITAL axes.
- Write a past-performance narrative that turns delivered work into evidence.

- Turn a win theme into persuasive, evidence-backed prose — a customer-focused claim, the proof points the storyboard committed, and an edit pass that cuts jargon and proves every assertion.
- Run the color-team sequence (pink → red → gold → white-glove) as quality gates with defined criteria and pass/fail.
- Explain the readiness and submission gates and what a package must clear to represent a firm.
- Produce a review-ready proposal package for a real solicitation — stack-free.

How the course works

The course is a 14-week production run on one real (published, closed) solicitation. Each student (or team) takes a solicitation, an ORBITAL (from DL 210 or built fresh), and produces the proposal package in stages: compliance matrix → annotated outline → volume drafts → color-team reviews → final assembly. Every week is a production milestone.

Weekly schedule

Week	Theme	In-session (75 min)	Reading (doctrine / literacy)	Assignment due next week
1	Proposals are written to the criteria	The evaluation criteria as the rubric. Structure mirrors the weights.	doctrine/02; doctrine/03	Choose your term solicitation (a real, closed RFP); a one-page Section M brief
2	The ORBITAL as the source	The seven axes feed the four volumes. Structure first, document second.	doctrine/06	A one-page “ORBITAL → volumes” map for your solicitation
3	The compliance matrix	Every “shall,” tracked. The backbone of the review gates.	literacy/how-to-read-an-rfp.md	Start your compliance matrix: every requirement, with its section and page

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4	The annotated outline	Matrix → outline: section assignments, volume structure, page budget.	literacy/how-to-read-an-rfp.md	Annotated outline for your proposal, with page budgets
5	Win themes, storyboards, and prose craft	The one story the proposal must tell. Themes assigned to sections; the storyboard's promise becomes persuasive, evidence-backed prose.	doctrine/03	A one-page storyboard with a prose-craft pass: one win theme mapped to a claim, with the before/after
6	The technical volume	The approach, the methodology, the risks, the innovation — from the ORBITAL's objective and activities.	doctrine/06	Draft the technical volume (or its outline + key sections)
7	Midterm	In class: present your compliance matrix + annotated outline for the term proposal. Panel checks coverage.	(review week)	Midterm submission

Week	Theme	In-session (75 min)	Reading (doctrine / literacy)	Assignment due next week
8	The management volume	The team, the staffing, the plan, the transition — from the ORBITAL's resources and logistics.	doctrine/06	Draft the management volume (or its outline + key sections)
9	Past performance narratives	Delivered work as evidence. The narrative that wins.	doctrine/03; doctrine/07	Draft one past-performance narrative with a quantified outcome
10	The pricing volume	The cost volume and its basis of estimate, from the ORBITAL's budget axis.	doctrine/05	A pricing-volume outline and one cost element with a source
11	The pink and red teams	Compliance review, then persuasion review against Section M.	doctrine/04	Run a pink-team pass on your package; produce a findings log
12	The gold and white-glove teams	Executive alignment and pricing; then the production check.	doctrine/04	Run a gold-team pass and a white-glove checklist on your package

Week	Theme	In-session (75 min)	Reading (doctrine / literacy)	Assignment due next week
13	The readiness and submission gates	What must be true before the package represents a firm. The human accountable click.	doctrine/04	A readiness-gate checklist for your package, honestly scored
14	Final: review-ready proposal package	Present the package — compliance matrix, volumes, color-team reports — and defend it.	(review week)	Final submission

Prose craft: from theme to page

A storyboard is a promise; the draft is the keeping of it. Week 5 teaches the step between them: turning a win theme — a customer benefit stated as the customer’s outcome — into prose an evaluator can score. The discipline has four parts.

The win-theme-to-prose mapping. A win theme is not a sentence to be dropped into a section; it is a claim waiting for a shape. The professional shape is the same everywhere: **opening claim, evidence, proof points, close.** The opening claim states the customer outcome the theme promises (“Your analysts will have processed intelligence within 24 hours of collection”). The evidence is the ORBITAL fact that makes the claim credible. The proof points are the specifics — the numbers, the names, the past performance — that let the evaluator verify the claim. The close restates the benefit and hands the evaluator the thread to the next section. A discriminator becomes persuasive exactly when this chain is unbroken: claim → evidence → proof.

Sentence and paragraph craft. Proposal prose is written to be *scored under time pressure*. Every sentence should survive a skim: the customer or the mission as the subject, the active voice, one claim per sentence, the specific before the general. A paragraph states its claim in the first line and spends the rest proving it. The amateur tell is writing about your company (“Ravonics provides...”) when the evaluator is scoring the *customer’s* outcome (“You will be able to...”).

Customer-focused does not mean flattery; it means the sentence is built around what the work does for the mission.

The edit pass. Drafting is the first pass, editing is the second, and they are different skills. The edit pass has three moves: **cut the jargon** (every word that would not survive a reader who does not know the industry), **prove the claims** (every assertion that is not backed by a proof point becomes either a proof point or a cut), and **tighten** (the section’s budget is a page count, and every word pays rent). The rule of thumb: if a sentence could be written by any competitor about any customer, it is a baseline, not a discriminator — cut it or sharpen it (doctrine/09).

A before/after (illustrative). The before is the boilerplate every evaluator has read a hundred times:

“Ravonics delivers cutting-edge, best-of-breed, end-to-end solutions leveraging synergistic partnerships and innovative, paradigm-shifting methodologies to drive maximum stakeholder value.”

The after is the same theme stated as a claim an evaluator can score:

“Your intelligence analysts need processed data within 24 hours of collection. Ravonics will meet that deadline with a fusion pipeline we already run at production scale for a federal logistics agency — 400,000 records a day, 99.2 percent on-time, for two consecutive years. Section 3.2 shows how we staff it; Appendix A names the lead.”

The rewrite does three things the original could not: it names the customer’s outcome, it asserts a specific, committed proof point, and it points the evaluator to where the claim is substantiated. *Note the integrity rule:* the “after” is an illustration. In this course you never assert evidence your own ORBITAL does not support — the storyboard commits the evidence first, and the prose may only assert what the storyboard committed.

Assessment summary

- **Weekly production milestones** — 30% (matrix, outline, volume drafts, review passes).
- **Midterm** — 25% (compliance matrix + annotated outline, presented and defended).
- **Final proposal package** — 30% (review-ready package, presented and defended).
- **Participation and peer review** — 15%.

Rubric per course/assessments-and-rubric.md, with the additional standard that **compliance coverage is binary**: the matrix either tracks every requirement or it does not. A “mostly complete” matrix is the same as an incomplete one to an evaluator.

The midterm

In class, present the compliance matrix and annotated outline for your term proposal. The panel's job: *"Find the requirement you missed. Where is the page budget over? Why is this section under-assigned?"* The compliance matrix is graded like an evaluator grades a proposal — on what is missing, not on what is present.

The final

The review-ready proposal package for your term solicitation: compliance matrix at full coverage, annotated outline, the four volumes (drafted to review depth), and the color-team reports that got it there. Presented in 15 minutes and defended against a panel that includes a "pink team" role whose only job is to find the unmet "shall."

Policies worth stating plainly

- **The doctrine is the course.** Every assignment tests the concept, never a tool. If an assignment ever seems to require knowledge of a specific product or system, that is a bug in the assignment — flag it.
- **Real documents, safe exercises.** We write to real, published, *closed* solicitations. You never submit anything live in this course.
- **Late work.** The pipeline has deadlines; so does the course. The one professional grace: an honest early warning beats a silent late submission.
- **Academic integrity.** Do not fabricate past performance or invent evidence. A proposal built on invented claims is the one failure this course cannot forgive — the market treats it the same way.

The course in one sentence

By Week 14 you will have taken a real solicitation and produced a review-ready proposal package — compliance matrix, volumes, color-team reports, all of it — and you will have learned that a winning proposal is not a burst of writing but a gated production run.