

BUSI 0081 COURSE SYLLABUS
THE UNIVERSITY OF HONG KONG
FACULTY OF BUSINESS AND ECONOMICS

School of Business

Course Syllabus and Outline for Semester I of 2008/2009
For BUSI 0081 Advanced Business Communication Skills

I. Information on Instructor

Instructor: Dr. James Law (email: jameslaw@business.hku.hk)

Office: MW729 (1)

Office Telephone: 2859 1136

Office Hours: Mondays 2:00 – 5:00PM (By appointment)

II. Course Information

Prerequisite

ECEN 1907 Business Communication

Course description

Advanced Business Communication Skills builds on business communication techniques and strategies students have acquired in the first year course Business Communication. The course aims at reinforcing students' reading, writing, speaking, teamwork, and interpersonal communication skills within a business setting. You will study a set of communication practices and guidelines that have been developed from researches and experience. We will use a workshop format that relies heavily on in-class discussion and exercises. You will practice these skills and receive feedback on your work to help you strengthen your communication capabilities.

Required Textbooks

Munter, M., *Guide to Managerial Communication: Effective Business Writing and Speaking*, Tuck School of Business, Dartmouth College, Prentice Hall.

U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission, *A Plain English Handbook: How to create clear SEC disclosure documents*, Office of Investor Education and Assistance, Washington DC.

You need to purchase Munter's book. The US SEC book is available for you to download at <http://www.sec.gov/pdf/handbook.pdf>. Supplementary reading materials, class notes and presentation PowerPoint files will be distributed

electronically to your email box before each class.

Optional Reference

Boyle, J. and Boyle, L., *Common Spoken English Errors in Hong Kong*, The Chinese University of Hong Kong, Longman.

Strunk, W. Jr. and White, E.B., *The Elements of Style*, Longman.

You may need to refer to these books on specific and general questions, guidelines, procedures, techniques, and examples.

Course Learning Outcomes

Good communication is the key to a successful career in whatever field you choose, and many different skills contribute to a professional's capacity to communicate well. The course aims at helping you enhance your ability to:

1. Formulate an effective communication strategy for any message, medium, and situation. You will establish a framework to analyze your audience and their culture, design your message and medium, and deliver your ideas in appropriate format and style, to achieve your desired response.
2. Produce communication messages with "high skim value", with the help of Audience Memory Curve, Inverted Pyramid Style, and other techniques, to enhance audience comprehension and retention.
3. Write clearly, concisely, and convincingly with "Plain English". You will avoid common grammatical and usage mistakes, and use effective paragraphs and transitions to ensure clear and orderly presentation of complex business information.
4. Create impressive formal presentations and deliver with confidence and poise. You will apply phonetic skills such as enunciation, inflection and volume, tone and rhythm, and non-verbal skills such as facial expression, hand and arm gestures, body movements, and visual aids to increase rapport and persuasiveness.
5. Give and receive feedback effectively to improve communication with your peers and colleagues, superiors, customers, and clients. You will understand and negotiate the difference in communication between yourself and people with different standpoints and interests.
6. Understand and overcome the difficulties of oral and written grammar, vocabulary, and usage, of a Cantonese speaker using English as a tool of business communication.

Course Delivery:

1. One-hour mass lecture per week - All students are required to attend the

weekly lectures on communication principles, strategies, and practices.

2. Two-hour tutorial/workshop per week - You are required to participate in exercises, discussions, role plays and presentations. You are expected to attend class having completed your reading and assignment, and provide your peers with honest, sensible, and constructive feedback.

Measurement of Learning Outcomes

1. The baseline self-assessment memorandum will help you to understand your communication strengths and weaknesses, and the goals you would like to accomplish, at the beginning of the semester.
2. The final self-assessment memorandum will evaluate the progress you have achieved during the semester. It also helps you understand ways and means you can continue to improve your communication skills.
3. Drama and verse speaking workshop will enable you to practice the skills of playacting and story telling, both of which are prerequisites for business presentation.
4. Business proposal writing and presentation will enable you and your team members to practice reading, writing, speaking, listening, and interpersonal communication skills you have studied in the course. Your team will conceive, research, write, and present a business idea to a selected target audience under a simulated business situation.

III. Process for Evaluation

Continuous Assessments: 100%.

Individual Work:

Class participation	20%
Baseline self-assessment memorandum	5%
Final self-assessment memorandum	5%
Drama and verse speaking presentation	20%

Team Work

Business proposal writing	20%
Business proposal presentation with Q&A	30%

Individual Work

1. Class Participation (20%)

Much of the class will be “hands-on”. Peer feedback, on top of the instructor’s, is important to improving your reading, speaking, writing, listening, and interpersonal skills. You have to plan on attending every class because a good part of your work and assessment will occur in class. Your participation will be factored into your grades.

2. Baseline self-assessment memorandum (5%)

The baseline self-assessment memorandum helps you to evaluate your strengths and weaknesses as a communicator, and to set goals for yourself in terms of reading, writing, speaking, listening, and interpersonal communication skills. You have to support your answers with sufficient examples and specific details, and consider feedbacks from your audience (professors, employers, and peers).

3. Final self-assessment memorandum (5%)

The final self-assessment memorandum helps you evaluate the progress you have made in your reading, writing, presentation, and teamwork skills during the semester. You have to review your baseline self-assessment, and your other written and presentation assignments. You should provide a balanced and concrete evaluation that includes your improvements over the semester, your current strengths and weaknesses; and ways and means in which you can continue to improve your business communication skills. You have to support your observations with specific details and examples.

4. Drama and Verse Speaking Workshop (20%)

You will practice the skills of playacting and story telling – both prerequisites for business presentation. You will choose a video script and imitate the way a professional actor/actress reads, speaks and performs in a selected film. You may ask your peers to act in the supporting role. Your supporting actor/actress will not be assessed. A member of the class will be assigned to give you useful feedback and advice for an effective storyteller. You will in turn be advising another member in his/her presentation. You will be assessed on both your presentation and your feedback to your peer.

Team Work

You will practice active listening, and other team building skills in your preparation and delivery of a business proposal. You will also learn the techniques and process of team writing and team presentation.

Please form a team of 4-6 members and elect a project manager. Submit to me the names of your team members before the end of the first tutorial. If for any reason you do not have a team to join, please let me know quickly so that I can assign you to a team.

1. **Business Proposal Writing (20%)**

For this assignment your team will be writing an unsolicited business proposal with a cover letter or memorandum on an original business idea. You need to show a need for the proposed idea and what impact it might bring, and anticipate and deal with any questions or objections your audience might have. The cover letter or memorandum should be no more than two pages or about 400 words. It should be a synopsis of your proposal and a request for a meeting or financial support. The business proposal means what it says – you are putting forward a business idea and a preliminary plan. This should be eight to 10 pages (excluding accessory pages), with appropriate headings and subheadings, and should be around 3,000 words.

2. **Business Proposal Presentation (30%)**

Your team will produce a 30-minute oral presentation of business proposal with Q&A. You will present your business proposal to the target audience and answer their questions during tutorials sessions on 12-28 November, 2008. You will receive comments from your instructor and peers to finalize your proposal portfolio.

Your final business proposal portfolio, due on 6 December 2008, shall include at least the following materials:

1. The business proposal in written format.
2. Scripts and supporting materials (slides, PowerPoint, handouts, etc.) used in the business proposal presentation
3. Team meeting minutes and notes, correspondence, and any accessory materials you wish to include for assessment of your team performance.

All assignments are due as indicated on the assignment sheets. You should use standard business formats for all assignments. You should proofread all your submissions as spelling, grammar, and pronunciation will be accounted for in your final grades, in addition to contents, style, and other verbal and nonverbal skills used in your written and oral presentations. All papers must be handed in on time. Late submissions may be accepted with the instructor's prior approval. Late submissions without prior approval may be penalized. To guard against losses or recording errors, you should keep copies of your submitted papers and retain all graded assignments throughout the semester.

III. **Academic Dishonesty**

The University Regulations on academic dishonesty will be strictly enforced. Please check the University Statement on plagiarism on the web: <http://www.hku.hk/plagiarism/>

Academic dishonesty is behavior in which a deliberately fraudulent misrepresentation is employed in an attempt to gain undeserved intellectual

credit, either for oneself or for another. It includes, but is not necessarily limited to, the following types of cases:

1. Plagiarism - The representation of someone else's ideas as if they are one's own. Where the arguments, data, designs, etc., of someone else are being used in a paper, report, oral presentation, or similar academic project, this fact must be made explicitly clear by citing the appropriate references. The references must fully indicate the extent to which any parts of the project are not one's own work. Paraphrasing of someone else's ideas is still using someone else's ideas, and must be acknowledged.
2. Unauthorized Collaboration on Out-of-Class Projects - The representation of work as solely one's own when in fact it is the result of a joint effort.
3. Cheating on In-Class Exams - The covert gathering of information from other students, the use of unauthorized notes, unauthorized aids, etc.
4. Unauthorized Advance Access to an Examination - The representation of materials prepared at leisure, as a result of unauthorized advance access (however obtained), as if it were prepared under the rigors of the exam setting. This misrepresentation is dishonest in itself even if there are not compounding factors, such as unauthorized uses of books or notes.

Where a candidate for a degree or other award uses the work of another person or persons without due acknowledgement:

1. The relevant Board of Examiners may impose a penalty in relation to the seriousness of the offence;
2. The relevant Board of Examiners may report the candidate to the Senate, where there is *prima facie* evidence of an intention to deceive and where sanctions beyond those in (1) might be invoked.

BUSI 0081B Advanced Business Communication Skills

Course Outline* (Semester II 2007/2008) **(1 September 2008)**

Dr. James Law

*Any revision of this course outline will be announced in class and posted on the Business School Notice Board.

Dates	Lecture	Tutorial	Required Reading
1-5 September.	Communication strategy	CEO World Tour.	Munter, Chapter 1. <i>Communication strategy checklist.</i>
8-12 September.	Writing in plain English I	Business Grammar refresher	Munter, Chapter 4.
15-19 September.	No Class on 15 September 2008 (Mid-Autumn Festival)	Baseline self-assessment memorandum due on 12 September 2008.	USSEC, Chapter 7. <i>Common errors in business writing.</i>
22-26 September.	Writing in plain English II	Employment communication workshop	<i>Cover letter model. Management resumes.</i>
29 September – 3 October.	Employment communication	No class on 1 October 2008 (National Day) and 7 October 2008 (Chung Yeung Festival)	
6-10 October	Team Communication I	Listening to Movies	<i>Listening – with your heart as well as your ears.</i> <i>Listening to Movies.</i>
13-17 October	No class (Reading week)		

20-24 October	Team Communication 2	Drama and verse speaking presentation due on 29-31 October and 5-7 November tutorial sessions	<i>Memo writing.</i> <i>Email etiquette</i> <i>Taking minutes.</i>
27-31 October	Pronunciation and phonetics		<i>IPA vowels and consonants.</i>
3-7 November			<i>Impromptu business presentation.</i>
10-14 November	Public speaking and presentation	Team presentation of business proposal with Q&A due on 12-14 November, 19-21 November, and 26-28 November tutorial sessions. Written business proposal and individual final self-assessment memorandum due on 6 December 2008.	<i>Munter, Chapter 5, 6, and 7.</i> <i>Audience analysis.</i> <i>Presentation objectives.</i> <i>Managing stagefreight</i>
17-21 November			<i>Ten steps to a powerful proposal</i> <i>Planning sheet for writing a business proposal</i> <i>Report draft checklist.</i>
24-28 November			Writing Business Proposals