

The Hong Kong University of Science and Technology (Guangzhou)

UG Course Syllabus

Academic English Language for University Studies

UCUG 1052

3 credits

Pre-requisites: Intensive stream – UCUG 1050. Standard stream – UCUG 1051 with course grades D, C-, C, C+, B-, B, B+. Accelerated stream – IELTS 6.5 overall with all sub scores at 6.0 or above, or HKDSE English Level 5 overall with all sub scores at or above Level 4 on entry, or UCUG 1051 with course grades A-, A, A+.

Exclusion: UCUG 1053

Course coordinator: Jade Wei ZHANG (jadewzhang@hkust-gz.edu.cn)

If you have any questions, your first point of contact should be your section instructor. The instructor's name, email, and office hours are available in the "Instructor" item at the top of the Canvas course page.

Office Hours of Course Coordinator: Available by appointment only.

Course Description

This course emphasizes the development of academic literacy skills, in addition to developing students' language proficiency. Students will learn how to find and evaluate sources for academic tasks and will further develop their abilities to be critical in reading and writing, to synthesize ideas and to develop coherent arguments. The course also guides students to use AI efficiently and ethically as part of their academic practices. Collaboration and leadership skills will be emphasized to further cultivate the habits required for autonomous lifelong learning. The course incorporates three streams (intensive, standard, and accelerated) to facilitate meeting students' needs.

Intended Learning Outcomes (ILOs)

Upon completion of this course, students are expected to be able to do the following:

1. In spoken, written and multimodal academic contexts, identify and apply language appropriate for different audiences, contexts, and purposes;
2. In spoken, written and multimodal academic contexts, express complex ideas precisely with range and complexity in vocabulary and sentence structures;
3. In speaking, writing and multimodal communication, substantiate and organize logical ideas into strong arguments;
4. In speaking, writing and multimodal communication, consider multiple perspectives to inform, interest, and persuade an audience;
5. Demonstrate abilities and a range of strategies to communicate and contribute effectively **in individual and group contexts**;
6. Develop academic literacy skills through finding, evaluating and using appropriate academic sources and citations to support arguments; synthesize ideas from multiple sources to build an argument; and paraphrase and summarize sources effectively;
7. With self-reflection in **individual and group settings**, apply learning strategies including goal setting, learning strategies, and resources to become an effective learner; demonstrate the ability to transfer and adapt these skills to other contexts.

Weekly contents

Week	Topic	Brief outline what this topic will cover
1	<i>Course introduction and blended learning approach</i>	<i>These lessons will introduce students to the course, the blended learning approach, the main course learning materials.</i>
2	<i>Academic blog models & research questions</i>	<i>Exploration of academic blog exemplars; identifying and refining researchable questions for written tasks.</i>
3	<i>Critical reading & source evaluation</i>	<i>Strategies for evaluating sources, detecting bias, and forming claims and arguments for academic writing.</i>
4	<i>Summary and critique writing</i>	<i>Drafting the first academic blog entry; emphasis on responsible integration of sources.</i>
5	<i>Peer feedback for Academic Blog & citation practice</i>	<i>Guided peer review of first blog draft; Practice paraphrasing and APA citation format</i>
6	<i>Multimodal communication: Producing an academic video</i>	<i>Introduction to multimodality and planning the multimodal video project with attention to audience and purpose.</i>
7	<i>Responsible use of Generative AI & Group video presentation</i>	<i>Review of ethical AI use in academic context. Group presentations of multimodal project with peer and instructor feedback to refine content and design for the final individual video</i>
8	<i>Crafting arguments and coherence</i>	<i>Practice strategies for logical flow, evidence integration, and transitions; finalize second academic blog entry</i>
9	<i>Models for reflection on learning and supporting with evidence</i>	<i>introduce students to models for reflection and also how to support arguments by providing evidence.</i>
10	<i>Presenting and multimodal communication</i>	<i>Reflection and training on effective use of visuals, voice, and audience engagement in educational videos.</i>
11	<i>Practicing speaking/presentation skills</i>	<i>In this week, students will practice individual presentation skills for live and recorded speaking tasks. Students will also practice managing Q&A sessions for presentations.</i>
12	<i>Multimodal presentations</i>	<i>Students will present the final version of their multimodal project to the class. Presenters will also hold a Q&A session with their audience.</i>
13	<i>Final reflection & course wrap-up</i>	<i>In-class independent writing on learning experiences and responsible AI use</i>

* The teaching arrangements outlined above may be adjusted to respond to students' learning needs or other unforeseen circumstances. Any such adaptations will remain aligned with the course's intended learning outcomes and will not alter their scope or requirements.

Assessment and Grading

This course will be assessed using criterion-referencing and grades will not be assigned using a curve. Detailed rubrics for each assignment are provided below, outlining the criteria used for evaluation. Complete task instructions and specific submission dates are provided on individual Canvas course pages for each section.

Assessments

Assessment Task	Description of Task	Mapped Course ILOs	Proportion of Final Grade (%)	Due Dates
Academic Blog	After researching a topic, students will choose suitable sources for their academic blogs. W1: Students will write a summary and a short critique W2: Students will combine ideas from the sources and present their own arguments clearly and logically.	1~6	30	W1: Week 4* W2: Week 8
Multimodal Project	Students will complete a two-part video project to strengthen multimodal communication, collaboration, and presentation skills. V1 (Group Video): Teams of 3 to 5 students produce and present a 1 to 2-minute educational video in class, demonstrating collaborative planning, creativity, and delivery.	1~5	30	V1: Week 6* V2: Week 11

	V2 (Individual Final Video): Each student creates an independent 5-minute educational video, integrating visuals, audio, and academic content to showcase individual communication skills.			
Self-Directed Portfolio (SDL + Electives)	Students finish self-directed tasks and electives on Canvas to build a personalized learning portfolio that documents their learning.	1~5, 7	20	SDLs: Week 4, 9, 10, 11* Electives: the last teaching day of the semester
Engagement & Collaboration	This component evaluates peer review, in-class participation through a rubric emphasizing consistency and responsibility.	6, 7	10	Ongoing (Weeks 1–13)
Final In-Class Reflection (on GenAI Use + Learning Growth)	Supervised written reflection on learning progress and ethical AI usage. Ensures authenticity of students' ability in independent writing.	6, 7	10	In the last class of the semester*

*Scheduled to coincide with related lessons and/or observed student progress in different course sections separately.

Final Grade Descriptors

Grades	Short Description	Elaboration on subject grading description
A	Excellent	An excellent performance in this course would involve demonstrating exceptional clarity and fluency in speech and writing, engaging actively in discussions, and producing high-quality video presentations. Students will consistently demonstrate a strong command of language, including appropriate vocabulary and grammatical structures, and express complex ideas with precision and sophistication. They will present and write coherent and engaging arguments with depth of analysis and critical thinking, considering multiple perspectives and supporting their claims with strong evidence from a variety of sources. Students will effectively apply learning strategies and demonstrate a high level of engagement and independent learning throughout the course.
B	Good	A good performance would involve effectively communicating ideas with clarity and a strong command of language, actively participating in discussions with relevant contributions and critical thinking skills. Students will deliver clear and structured presentations and write well-structured pieces with solid analytical skills and appropriate evidence. They will demonstrate a good level of language proficiency and the capacity to construct coherent arguments across all tasks, showing effort and interest in the subject matter.
C	Satisfactory	A satisfactory performance would involve communicating with adequate clarity, contributing to discussions with some critical thinking abilities, and delivering adequately structured presentations and writing pieces that meet basic requirements with some analytical thinking. Students will demonstrate moderate confidence in their communication, but may lack depth or originality in their arguments, both in speaking and writing tasks. Their language use will be generally appropriate but may show some inaccuracies.
D	Marginal Pass	A marginal pass performance would involve delivering presentations and writing pieces with basic ideas and minimal coherence, struggling with language accuracy and structure. Students would demonstrate limited critical thinking and analytical skills, weak arguments, and minimal evidence, along with low confidence and struggling to engage with the audience. Overall, the performance would barely meet the task requirements, showing little understanding or engagement with the subject matter across all tasks.
F	Fail	A failing grade would involve struggling significantly to express ideas clearly and engage in discussions, contributing little to group conversations, and showing minimal critical thinking abilities or ability to construct basic arguments. Students would fail to deliver coherent presentations and produce coherent written pieces with significant language inaccuracies and lack of structure, failing to meet task requirements or show any effort or understanding of the subject matter. Overall,

		the performance throughout the course would lack engagement, clarity, coherence, and critical thinking across all tasks.
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Student participation

As a responsible student at university, you are expected to develop habits of a self-directed learner. As a self-directed learner, you are expected to:

- adopt regular study habits/practices in your own time to advance your skills
- complete assigned work on Canvas before each f2f (face to face) class to prepare for it
- be proactive in identifying your needs and interests
- reflect on your work and feedback and take action to develop in relevant areas
- apply your learning points in your assignments and wider studies and life
- ask questions and seek advice
- be proactive in seeking support if you have a problem

Assessment and grading

Some assignments in this course are assessed based on how well you fulfil the requirements, while others are assessed on completion and are marked only as complete or incomplete. For details of assessment components, weightings, and grading criteria, please refer to the Assessment section on Canvas.

Attendance

You are expected to:

- attend all lessons because each lesson helps develop and apply the skills needed for your assessments
- be proactive to catch up on any work you miss if you are absent due to illness or other valid reasons
- be professional by sending a quick message to your instructor to let them know if you cannot attend
- notify the instructor and provide relevant documentation if you have a problem or exceptional circumstance which will impact your studies and attendance)

Plagiarism

Assignments with evidence of plagiarism will score zero and be followed up with your department's Dean. To demonstrate academic integrity and avoid plagiarism, you are expected to:

- paraphrase, summarize, reference and synthesize ideas from sources using skills taught through the course
- avoid copying expressions directly from any source (e.g. from another student, or from a video, or from an article, etc.)
- avoid overusing a source in a way that does not show any of your own analysis of the point
- avoid using a source/example as a template without showing any of your own organization or critical thinking

Use of AI tools

Course AI Policy

Approach to GenAI in this course:

The PLE at HKUST(GZ) embraces innovation and technology in teaching. Consistent with the broader approach of HKUST, the PLE recognizes GenAI as the direction of the future. Therefore, responsible use of GenAI is strongly encouraged to help students optimize their learning potential.

The PLE adopts pedagogical principles suitable for high-quality university education at HKUST(GZ) and upholds a commitment to ethics and academic integrity. Ethical principles are manifested through honesty,

clarity, and transparency. Given that we are all in the process of learning how to utilize this new tool, it is imperative that everyone, including students and teachers, approach the use of GenAI with complete openness.

When employing GenAI as a novel learning tool and resource, students are expected to adhere to the standards outlined in the HKUST(GZ) Undergraduate Student Handbook and the PLE Handbook to ensure academic integrity. The following uses are permitted only if declared in writing and within task-approved boundaries:

- Brainstorming ideas – Using AI to generate potential topics or arguments for inspiration; final content must be student's own.
- Practising conversation – Using AI chatbots to rehearse dialogues or simulate roleplay; AI responses may not be copied verbatim into assessed work.
- Grammar and spell checks (declared) – Using tools to correct surface-level language errors; substantive rewriting without attribution is not permitted.
- Short-phrase translations – Translating words or short phrases; translating large sections or entire works requires approval.
- Any other AI use must be checked with the course instructor. Unapproved or undeclared use may be considered misconduct.

In order to foster transparency and accountability in the use of AI, it is strongly encouraged that students engage in critical thinking and openly communicate about their usage of GenAI tools. Students who use GenAI tools to complete their assignments should declare their usage and provide a clear explanation of how they employed the tool when completing and submitting their assignments. This includes formal declarations of GenAI use/non-use designated for specific tasks within this course: Writing 1, Writing 2, Video 1, Video 2 and the SDL/Elective Tasks. For students who have used GenAI in the tasks, they should provide a folder containing both the final text and screenshots of GenAI use that include the original draft of any required text (bullet points or brief notes for the Speaking Tasks and blog post for the Writing Task) and the prompts they used. For students who have not used GenAI, they should include the following declaration below their text: "I declare that no content generated or revised by AI has been used in this task. I understand that AI can be used as a tool and is not a substitute for doing my own work. I accept that any violation of academic integrity policies may entail academic consequences, including lowering my grade for this assessment."

Late assignment submissions

For assignments where late submission is permitted, a standard late penalty of 5% of the total possible marks per calendar day will be deducted for up to 7 days after the deadline. After this period, a mark of zero will be recorded.

If you encounter any issues or circumstances that may affect your ability to submit your work on time, it is your responsibility to communicate with your instructor in advance:

If you experience technical issues that affect your ability to submit your assignment on time, you must provide screenshot proof verified by University technical support. Only upon verification will late penalties be waived.

Extension application

If you need to apply for an extension of up to 3 days, you must submit a written request with supporting evidence to your instructor at least 3 calendar days before the due date. For extensions longer than 3 days, approval from the Pillar Assessment Coordinator (PAC) is required. In exceptional circumstances, you may be directed to the University's formal procedures.

Under/over length assignments

It is acceptable to submit assignments with the allowed buffer of the time/word limit. Outside the buffer, shorter assignments will be marked down and those with an overlength will be assessed up to the allowed buffer only. See each assignment page for further details.

Communication and Feedback

Assessment marks for individual assessed tasks will be communicated via Canvas within two weeks of submission. Feedback on assignments will include strengths such as organization and delivery, room for improvements on use of language and style, coherence, argument depth with evidence use, and actionable solutions, with the specific form and content of the feedback at the instructor's discretion. Students who have further questions about the feedback including marks should consult the instructor within five working days after the feedback is received.