

## The Hong Kong University of Science and Technology (Guangzhou)

### Course Syllabus

#### UCUG 1053: Advanced Academic English for University Studies

**Credit: 3**

**Pre-requisites:** IELTS Band 7.0 or above overall; or HKDSE English Language Level 5\* or above; or equivalence qualifications.

**Exclusion:** UCUG 1052

#### Instructor

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**Name:** Dr Tiefu Zhang

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**Office hours:** Mondays, 14:00-16:30 and Fridays, 10:00-12:00

**Room:** R411 W1

#### Course Description

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This course puts a strong emphasis on developing university level academic literacy and communication competence in writing, speaking, and multimodal contexts. It is designed for students with a solid foundation in English who wish to improve their ability to function in a high level academic environment.

The course introduces students to research skills using university library resources for finding and evaluating sources, including lateral reading. Students are expected to be critical readers and writers, synthesising ideas when developing coherent academic arguments. In addition to traditional academic writing, the course includes forms of academic communication that go beyond the text level to include multimodal communication.

The course also aims to develop students' ability to communicate effectively within an academic community. It moves beyond standard presentations to focus on interaction, stance taking, and argumentation. Students will develop the ability to collaborate as members of a group and to assume responsibility as discussion facilitators in student-led seminars. Throughout the course, students are expected to transfer and adapt their knowledge, attitudes, and learning habits to support autonomous lifelong learning.

#### Intended Learning Outcomes (ILOs) and Core Areas for Learning (CAfLs)

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By the end of this course, students should be able to:

- ILO 1. (Rhetorical Awareness)  
Analyze language and rhetorical strategies appropriate for different audiences, contexts, purposes, and genres in spoken, written, and multimodal contexts.
- ILO 2. (Argumentation)  
Construct strong arguments and effectively integrate a range of rhetorical strategies in spoken, written, and multimodal communication.
- ILO 3. (Interaction & Collaboration)  
Demonstrate abilities to articulate and defend a stance, and apply strategies to negotiate meaning and collaborate effectively in individual and group contexts (specifically in student-led seminars).
- ILO 4. (Academic Literacy)  
Develop academic literacy skills through finding, evaluating, and using appropriate academic sources and citations; effectively synthesize ideas from multiple sources; and paraphrase and summarize sources effectively.
- ILO 5. (Lifelong Learning)  
With self-reflection in individual and group settings, apply learning strategies including goal setting and resource management to become an effective lifelong learner.

### **Core Competencies (Mapped to HKUST Common Core)**

- Communication (CM):
  - CM01 (Language accuracy and form)
  - CM02 (Language meaning)
  - CM03 (Language use)
  - CM04 (Mode of communication)
- Personal Development (PD):
  - PD02 (Lifelong learning)
  - PD03 (Self-awareness)
- Problem Solving (PS):
  - PS01 (Application of creative thinking)
  - PS02 (Application of critical thinking)
  - PS03 (Evaluation of information and sources)
- Social Responsibility (SR):
  - SR02 (Collaboration)
  - SR03 (Cultural awareness)

## Assessment and Grading

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This course will be assessed using criterion-referencing and grades will not be assigned using a curve. Final marks will be converted to letter grades using the approved grading scale. Summary rubrics for major assessed tasks are provided below. Detailed rubrics for each assignment are provided on Canvas.

### Assessments

Assessment Task	Proportion of Final Grade (%)	Due Date
<b>Student-led Seminar and Synthesis Paper</b> (Individual components within a group-led seminar)	25%	Weeks 8-10 **
<b>Annotated Bibliography</b> (Individual)	15%	Week 4** – draft Week 7** – revision
<b>Project: Multimodal E-Magazine</b> (Individual and group)	30%	Weeks 12-13 **
<b>Reflection</b> (Individual)	10%	Weeks 8 and 13**
<b>Blended Learning</b> (Individual)	20%	Ongoing (Weeks 1-11)

\* Marks for individual assessed tasks will be released within two weeks of the due date.

x Exact dates will be provided on Canvas for each course section separately.

## Mapping of Course ILOs and CAfLs to Assessment Tasks

Assessed Task	Mapped ILOs and CAfLs	Explanation
<p><b>Student-led Seminar and Synthesis Paper</b></p>	<p><b>ILOs:</b> 1, 2, 3, 4  <b>Competencies:</b> CM01-04, PD02, SR02, PS01-03</p>	<p>This task assesses students' ability to present research and facilitate academic discussion. Seminars are organised and facilitated by a group of 4 to 5 seminar leaders, and all class members are expected to participate actively.</p> <p>Each seminar leader completes two <b>individual</b> assessed components: (1) a synthesis paper that draws on the three sources used in the Annotated Bibliography to introduce a clear main point and prepare classmates for the seminar, and (2) an individual short presentation that elaborates on the main point with appropriate support and clear acknowledgement of sources.</p> <p>As a <b>group</b>, seminar leaders co facilitate discussion using prepared questions, encourage participation, and summarise key outcomes to close the seminar. Although the seminar is group led, grading is primarily based on individual performance in the synthesis paper and the presentation.</p>
<p><b>Annotated Bibliography</b></p>	<p><b>ILOs:</b> 1, 2, 4  <b>Competencies:</b> CM01-03, PS03</p>	<p>This task assesses research and critical reading skills. Students locate and read at least three university level sources on a chosen topic. They write an annotated bibliography with a brief topic introduction and three entries. Each entry includes an APA reference, a concise summary of the authors' main idea, and the student's original commentary evaluating credibility, limitations, and usefulness for the research focus.</p>

<p><b>Multimodal E-Magazine</b></p>	<p><b>ILOs:</b> 1, 2, 3, 5 <b>Competencies:</b> CM04, PS01, PS02, SR02</p>	<p>In this project, students work in groups to create a multimodal e magazine based on a shared research theme. The e magazine should introduce the theme to a clearly specified audience and highlight why the theme matters for that audience, including its future significance and how it could be further explored. It should also have a clear broader communication purpose, for example making recommendations or proposing applications relevant to the audience. To support achievement of the communication purpose, students should use information from their annotated bibliographies and insights gained through seminars and group discussion. The e magazine should combine textual and visual elements to engage the audience and strengthen meaning. Each group member contributes an individual written section, and authorship should be indicated clearly with an appropriate byline. Assessment focuses on communication quality, synthesis of ideas and evidence, and the coherence and organisation of the overall publication. Students are not assessed on technical or graphic design skills.</p>
<p><b>Reflection</b></p>	<p><b>ILOs:</b> 5 <b>Competencies:</b> PD02, PD03</p>	<p>This reflection assesses how effectively students learn in this course, both individually and in groups. Students should identify their learning needs, set goals, and describe the learning plans and strategies used in and out of class. Students should explain how progress was monitored, what feedback was sought, and how decisions were made about which feedback to act on. Students should also show how learning plans or strategies were adjusted based on evidence from experience and feedback.</p>

<b>Blended Learning</b>	<b>ILOs: All Competencies:</b> PD02, PS03, CM02, CM03	Students complete online learning activities on Canvas, such as library research resources, lateral reading materials, language practice, and Canvas discussion tasks, to build background knowledge and develop ideas before and after class.
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## Lesson Topics and Outcomes

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The course comprises three units: Unit 1 Getting Started, Unit 2 Developing Ideas, and Unit 3 Presenting and Reflecting. A brief outline of the lessons and intended outcomes is provided below.

Unit/Lesson	Topics	What the lesson will cover	Outcomes
U1L1	Course introduction and academic identity	Course structure, blended learning format, expectations, and introduction to academic identity in university contexts	Understand course requirements and begin constructing a professional academic identity
U1L2	Introductions and multimodality	Multimodal self and peer introductions, learning needs analysis, reflection on learning experiences, and goal setting	Analyse individual learning needs and set clear semester goals
U1L3	Academic communication and RPW	Genre awareness, communicative situations in writing and speaking, applying the Rhetorical Planning Wheel to analyse texts and tasks	Recognise genre features and apply RPW to plan academic communication
U1L4	Summaries and synthesis	Identifying main ideas, summarising sources, and beginning synthesis across texts	Produce accurate summaries and begin synthesising ideas from multiple sources
U2L1	Topic selection and research skills	Seminar group formation, topic selection, library workshop, advanced search	Locate credible sources and articulate a clear research focus

		strategies, starting topic research	
U2L2	Lateral reading and source evaluation	Evaluating credibility, identifying bias, verifying information across multiple sources	Evaluate source credibility using lateral reading strategies
U2L3	Argumentation	Claim warrant data structure, recognising rhetorical strategies, building oral and written arguments	Construct logical arguments with appropriate support
U2L4	Text analysis	Analysing language, genre, and rhetorical devices, transforming analysis into clear spoken summaries	Analyse rhetorical devices and deliver structured verbal summaries
U2L5	Citing and referencing	APA citation basics, integral and non-integral citations, paraphrasing and synthesis, and using citation management tools to support referencing	Integrate citations effectively and with clear rhetorical purpose
U2L6	Audience awareness	Adjusting explanations for different audiences, audience focused language and structure, RPW audience component	Communicate effectively with different audiences in speech and writing
U2L7	Discussion roles	Seminar discussion roles, chairing strategies, turn taking, managing interaction	Apply discussion roles and interaction strategies in academic seminars
U2L8	Seminar practice	Rehearsal of student-led seminars, facilitating discussion, managing participation and synthesis	Facilitate seminar discussions and participate effectively in academic interaction
U2L9	Multimodal communication	Multimodality in academic contexts, information design principles, linking modes to meaning	Use textual and visual elements effectively to improve clarity and audience understanding

U3	Seminar sessions	Student-led seminar delivery, discussion facilitation, application of research, argumentation, audience awareness, and interaction strategies developed in Units 1 and 2	Demonstrate the ability to lead and participate in academic seminars, synthesise sources orally, and manage discussion effectively
Workshop 1	Library Research Workshop	Library search strategies, source finding, keyword use, and preliminary source evaluation	Find relevant academic sources and evaluate their suitability for research topics
Workshop 2	From topic to research question	Topic narrowing, research problem identification, question formation, scope and feasibility checking	Refine a broad topic into a focused and researchable question, and increase academic awareness
Consultation	Consultation	Individual or small group meetings focused on feedback, clarification of assessment requirements, progress checking, and targeted support for speaking, research, or writing tasks	Clarify learning goals, address individual learning needs, and improve assessed work through guided feedback

## Grading Rubrics

Scale	Student-led Seminar and Synthesis Paper(25%)	Multimodal E-Magazine (30%)	Annotated Bibliography (15%)
<b>Excellent</b>	Facilitates seminar discussion confidently and purposefully. Uses research critically to develop and synthesise ideas during the seminar and in the synthesis paper.	Individual contributions communicate ideas clearly and effectively to the intended audience using textual and visual elements. The e-magazine functions as a coherent publication with a clear shared purpose.	Sources are evaluated critically and comparatively. Commentary demonstrates clear synthesis and insight. Academic conventions are used accurately and consistently.
<b>Good</b>	Facilitates discussion effectively and supports interaction. Uses research appropriately with some critical engagement. The synthesis paper shows clear focus and integration.	Individual contributions are clear and relevant. Textual and visual elements support communication. Overall organisation of the e-magazine is logical and mostly coherent.	Sources are evaluated appropriately. Synthesis of main ideas is clear, though not fully developed. Academic conventions are mostly accurate.
<b>Satisfactory</b>	Facilitates discussion adequately but with limited depth. Research use is mainly descriptive. The synthesis paper shows	Individual contributions meet task requirements. Textual and visual elements are relevant but not always well	Summaries are accurate but evaluation is limited. Synthesis is weak. Basic academic

	basic organisation and integration.	integrated. Overall coherence is uneven.	conventions are followed.
<b>Marginal Pass</b>	Has difficulty managing discussion or sustaining interaction. Research use is weak or poorly integrated. The synthesis paper lacks clarity or focus.	Individual contributions are underdeveloped. Links between text and visuals are weak. The e-magazine lacks clear organisation.	Sources are described rather than evaluated. Writing lacks coherence or contains frequent referencing errors.
<b>Fail</b>	Does not facilitate discussion meaningfully. Research is absent or misused. The synthesis paper does not meet task requirements.	Does not produce a coherent contribution or the e-magazine fails to function as a unified publication.	Does not meet task requirements. Serious problems with source use or academic integrity.

*Note.* Detailed assessment rubrics for each assignment are provided on Canvas.

**Final Grade Descriptors**

<b>Grades</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Elaboration on subject grading description</b>
A	Excellent	An excellent performance demonstrates consistently strong achievement across major assessed tasks. Students communicate clearly in spoken and written academic contexts, use sources critically, and synthesise ideas to develop coherent arguments for specific purposes and audiences. They participate actively in

		seminars and can lead or sustain discussion effectively. They work responsibly in group tasks and contribute to a coherent final product. They monitor their learning, use feedback purposefully, and adapt strategies across the term.
B	Good	A good performance demonstrates solid achievement across assessed tasks. Students communicate clearly and participate productively in seminars. They use sources appropriately and show some critical evaluation and synthesis when developing arguments. Written and spoken work is generally well organised and meets task requirements. They contribute reliably to group work and show evidence of using feedback to improve.
C	Satisfactory	A satisfactory performance meets basic task requirements. Students communicate meaning adequately in speaking and writing, and participate in seminars at a basic level. Work tends to be more descriptive than analytical, with limited synthesis across sources. Organisation and focus are uneven but generally sufficient to complete tasks. Engagement and use of feedback are present but limited.
D	Marginal Pass	A marginal pass shows minimal achievement of course requirements. Students' contributions in speaking and writing are often unclear or weakly organised. Use of sources is limited, and evaluation and synthesis are minimal. Seminar participation is inconsistent, and group contributions may be uneven. Progress monitoring and use of feedback are weak. Overall performance barely meets assessment expectations.
F	Fail	A failing performance does not meet task requirements in one or more major components or shows persistent inability to communicate meaning in required academic contexts. Work lacks coherent organisation or appropriate use of sources, with little or no evidence of evaluation or synthesis. Seminar participation is absent or ineffective. There is insufficient

		engagement with learning tasks, or serious issues with academic integrity.
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## Course AI Policy

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### Approach to GenAI in this course:

Consistent with HKUST's broader approach, the PLE recognises the growing role of GenAI in higher education. Therefore, responsible and transparent use of GenAI is encouraged where it supports learning and remains within task-approved boundaries.

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 *Pillar of Language Education Academic Integrity 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 the 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.

To promote transparency and accountability in the use of AI, it is strongly encouraged that students engage in critical thinking and openly communicate about their use 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: **Student-led Seminar, Annotated Bibliography, Multimodal E-Magazine, and Reflection**. 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 (e.g., **seminar outlines, bibliography entries, e-magazine drafts**) 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 no 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."*

### **Communication and Feedback**

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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, areas for improvement on use of language and style, coherence, argument depth with evidence use, and actionable solutions. Students who have further questions about the feedback including marks should consult the instructor within five working days after the feedback is received.

### **Resubmission Policy**

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Once the assignment has been marked, no resubmission is permitted.

### **Required Texts and Materials**

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Required texts and other materials are provided through the Canvas course page.

### **Academic Integrity**

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Students are expected to adhere to the university's academic integrity policy, including upholding HKUST(GZ)'s Academic Honor Code and maintaining the highest standards of academic integrity. The University has zero tolerance for academic misconduct. Please refer to Regulations for Academic Integrity and Student Conduct for the University's definition of plagiarism and ways to avoid cheating and plagiarism.