**The Hong Kong Polytechnic University**

**Subject Description Form**

*Please read the notes at the end of the table carefully before completing the form.*

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| **Subject Code** | ENGL2A10 |
| **Subject Title** | Communicating effectively in the workplace |
| **Credit Value** | 3 |
| **Level** | 2 |
| **Pre-requisite / Co-requisite/ Exclusion** | Nil<br><br>[Remarks: ENGL students may take this subject.] |
| **Objectives** | This subject combines psychological theory, communication theory and practical communication skills and goes beyond subjects already in the Department of English Curricula. The subject seeks to help students develop and mature through an understanding of the power of language which permeates all aspects of our lives. For this reason, students from the Department of English would benefit from enrolling in this subject.<br><br>This subject aims to use language and communication as a cornerstone to investigate how individuals make sense of the world in which they live and work; how they acquire knowledge, the biases they bring to this knowledge, and the role of each person's unique sociohistorical contexts that shape their understanding of reality. The subject highlights communication theory, and social psychology to unpack issues around intercultural diversity, media history, stereotyping and bias. Importantly, it explicitly explores how individuals communicate and negotiate relationships in their workplace and in their personal lives. It has relevance for all students entering the professional workforce and, irrespective of their chosen professions (engineering, accountancy or nursing) provides them with skills to negotiate and manage work and personal relationships.<br><br>Students will be introduced to a framework that explains the theory behind effective interpersonal communication skills and how social identity influences interpersonal communication.<br><br>They will actively engage in effective verbal and non-verbal skills in relation to the expression, listening, monitoring and evaluating components of interpersonal communication as it occurs in the workplace and in their personal lives.<br><br>Students will learn to work more effectively in diverse group settings.<br><br>Students will use role-play to apply the theory learned in lectures, and the skills developed in tutorials, to everyday scenarios and experiences.<br><br>Students will gain insights into the effective use of communication skills in |

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| | aspects of interpersonal conflict both in the workplace and in other contexts.<br><br>Given the diverse and multicultural world in which we live in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, students will reflect on the complexities of inter-cultural communication in organizational and personal relationships.<br><br>To consolidate learnings, they will examine theory and research in specific organizational settings such as, but not limited to, health communication. |
| **Intended Learning Outcomes**<br><br>*(Note 1)* | Upon completion of the subject, students will be able to:<br>a) Develop awareness of the motivations and cognitions that influence human behaviour,<br>b) Have the ability to critically appraise communication and social psychology theory that explains aspects of human behaviour,<br>c) Critically assess the different influences of the media in its various roles today, as well as an understanding of appropriate media forms for different workplace and relationship contexts,<br>d) Effectively evaluate workplace and other situations where highly developed communication skills are essential for successful outcomes,<br>e) Manage diverse group and team situations to achieve required key performance indicators,<br>f) Attain improved communication skills for use in difficult workplace situations as well as day-to-day living,<br>g) An understanding of the psychological mechanisms that explain how the 'self' seeks to impress on others and how the 'self' perceives others,<br>h) Acquire a good understanding of communication with diverse populations (intercultural, cross cultural and minority groups)<br>i) Fulfill the CAR reading and writing requirements in English. |
| **Subject Synopsis/ Indicative Syllabus**<br><br>*(Note 2)* | 1. **Introduction to communication theory**<br>   a) Defining what communication is,<br>   b) How communication theory describes conveying messages verbally and non-verbally from a sender to a receiver in the simple transmission model,<br>   c) How different communication theories explain communication and perceptions,<br>   d) Applying this knowledge to professional practice.<br>2. **Non-verbal communication**<br>   a) Defining non-verbal communication,<br>   b) Classification of non-verbal behaviour (e.g., Kinesics, Proxemics, Chronemics, Haptics, and Vocalics),<br>   c) Examination of how non-verbal communication is measured,<br>   d) Relative importance of non-verbal and verbal communication, and how context matters,<br>   e) How we use non-verbal communication in professional practice and in personal relations.<br>3. **Verbal communication**<br>   a) The power of verbal communication,<br>   b) Words as symbols, |

    c) Bringing verbal and non-verbal communication together,

    d) How to use verbal and non-verbal communication, effectively in the workplace.

4. **Working and communicating in groups**

    a) Groups and teams – how they differ,

    b) Group and team formation,

    c) Group dynamics and the role of individuals in groups and teams,

    d) How to create and manage effective groups and teams in professional practice.

5. **Communication with minorities**

    a) Definition of different types of minorities,

    b) Language of minorities – how does it differ from the language of majority groups?

    c) Effective communication between minority and majority groups,

    d) Understanding how minority and majority groups influence workplace climate.

6. **Self-concept and communication**

    a) What is impression management?

    b) What is impression formation?

    c) How we perceive ourselves and others in the workplace environment,

    d) What is important for making a positive impression in professional practice?

7. **Conflict resolution and management Skills**

    a) A model of conflict and the associated stages and responses to conflict,

    b) The nature of conflict both functional and dysfunctional conflict,

    c) Effective styles of communication during conflict,

    d) Adapting different conflict management styles according to the situations faced.

8. **Communication in relationships**

    a) Workplace and personal relationships,

    b) Effective management of difficult relationships at work and at home.

    c) Relational dialectics

9. **Intercultural communication**

    a) Defining culture and communication

    b) The role of language (verbal and non-verbal) in intercultural relations,

    c) Hofstede's Dimensions of Culture and their relevance to effective management,

    d) Managing diverse intercultural groups in the workplace.

10. **Communication and the media**

    a) The history of mass communication,

    b) The role of the media in our communication,

    c) The power and influence of the media?

    d) How can managers effectively use the media?

11. **Communication and deception**

    a) What do we know about communication and deception?

    b) Identifying characteristics of deception,

    c) Deception in the workplace and ethical practice.

12. **Effective Communication**

a) What are the elements of effective communication across different contexts?
b) What leads to miscommunication in the workplace and at home and are they different?
c) Intergroup relations and miscommunication.
**13. Bringing it all together**
a) General reflections on what the students have learned over the semester with specific examples drawn from real-life and research to demonstrate communication dilemmas.
b) Discussion of each of the examples and what we have learned in this subject to explain the issues presented.

| **Teaching/Learning Methodology** *(Note 3)* | 1. Lectures (with required set reading for each week)<br>2. Analysis of video material<br>3. Group discussions<br>4. In-class presentations<br>5. Discussion forum on blackboard<br><br>There will be several different learning stimuli. We will have some lecture content, but the students will have been provided with a basic reading to assist them.<br><br>Some videos will be shown to illustrate communication skills and problems.<br><br>There will be break-out sessions in class to discuss issues raised. |
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| **Assessment Methods in Alignment with Intended Learning Outcomes** *(Note 4)* | Specific assessment methods/tasks | % weighting | a | b | c | d | e | f | g | h | i |
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| | 1. In-class group presentations | 20% | ☑ | ☑ | ☑ | ☑ | ☑ | ☑ | ☑ | ☑ | ☑ |
| | 2. Participation in mini in-class quizzes and in-class role-plays | 15% | ☑ | ☑ | ☑ | ☑ | ☑ | ☑ | ☐ | ☑ | ☑ |
| | 3. Written assignment | 40% | ☑ | ☑ | ☑ | ☑ | ☑ | ☐ | ☑ | ☑ | ☑ |
| | 4. Multiple choice | 25% | ☐ | ☑ | ☑ | ☑ | ☑ | ☐ | ☐ | ☑ | ☑ |
| | Total | 100 % | | | | | | | | | |

Explanation of the appropriateness of the assessment methods in assessing the intended learning outcomes:

In-class group presentations enable the students to learn how to work together. Students often encounter difficulties with group-work, but this is part of the intended learning outcome as they reflect on how they managed the challenges within the group. The presentation will require that the

students choose a short video clip to demonstrate some aspect of miscommunication. They will also need to conduct a small literature review to support their presentation. The presentation will be 15 minutes. The readings form 5% of the ER requirement. For presentations to be successful, the students must research additional readings that will inform the presentation and reflect extended learning beyond the recommended texts.

The mini-quizzes are implemented to ensure students attend each class and have completed the required readings for that specific week. It is aimed to test their comprehension of the readings. The readings for the weekly quiz form 10% of the ER requirement. The mini-quiz will be conducted at the beginning of each lecture. The questions can only be answered successfully upon completion of that reading, without relying on exposition by the instructors before the assessments.

The role-plays in class will provide the students with active learning allowing them to gain necessary communication skills. Participation in role-plays is essential.

Concise and clear articulation of what each student has learnt throughout the subject will be achieved through the written assignment. This will be in an essay form. It will comprise a) personal reflection with respect to the subject and the learnings achieved and, b) it will also include answering a question about barriers and facilitators of communication. Students must obtain a D or above on the Writing Requirement assignment to pass the subject. This includes the 10% from the ELC and 30% from the CAR teacher on content.

Multiple choice tests the broad range of information provided in the class and again tests that the students have completed the required readings. The questions in the multiple choice represent topics which have not been tested in other forms of assessment. The readings for the multiple choice form 10% of the ER requirement. Students can only answer the multiple-choice questions successfully upon completion of a comprehensive reading, of the recommended texts and cannot rely on exposition by the instructors before the assessments.

| **Student Study Effort Expected** | Class contact: | |
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| | ▪ Lectures (13 x 2 hours) | 26 Hrs. |
| | ▪ Seminars/Tutorials (1 x 13 hours) | 13 Hrs. |
| | Other student study effort: | |
| | ▪ Individual and Group Study | 26 Hrs. |
| | ▪ Written Assignment | 26 Hrs. |
| | ▪ Private Study | 26 Hrs |
| | Total student study effort | 117 Hrs. |

| **Reading List and References** | A text of readings was compiled by me into a book form from a subject I previously taught. The readings were taken from the following texts. Students will read these selected chapters plus relevant articles on communication theory and related communication skills articles. |
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| | **Required Reading**<br>Ray Archee, Myra Gurney, Terry Mohan (2013). *Communicating as Professionals*, 3rd Edition, Cengage Publishing<br>Chapters taken from this text are as follows<br>Chapter 1: Communicating theory and professional practice (26 pages)<br>Chapter 3: Non-verbal communication: meanings without words (25 pages)<br>Chapter 4: Intercultural communication (24 pages)<br>Chapter 5: Mediated communication (35 pages)<br>Chapter 7: Concepts and applications in interpersonal communication (32 pages)<br>Chapter 8: Communicating in groups and teams to achieve professional goals (28 pages)<br>Julia T. Wood (2016). *Interpersonal Communication: Everyday Encounters*, 8th Edition, Cengage Publishing<br>Chapters taken from this text are as follows<br>Chapter 6: Mindful Listening (23 pages)<br>Chapter 8: Communication Climate: The Foundation of Personal Relationships (23 pages)<br>Chapter 9: Managing Conflict in Relationships (28 pages)<br>Can You Listen to Me? Building Practical Skills for Effective Listening (2016) *Anne Pisarski & Glenda Waring (*112 pages)<br><br>https://itunes.apple.com/us/book/can-you-listen-to-me/id1125618852?mt=11<br><br>**Further readings**<br>Aharon, T., & Lily, C.-H. (2012). Perspectives on Groups and Work Teams in the Workplace. *Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology, 28*(1), 51-66. doi:10.5093/tr2012a5<br>Allison, S., & Herlocker, C. (1994). Constructing Impressions in Demographically Diverse Organizational Settings A Group Categorization Analysis. *The American Behavioral Scientist (1986-1994), 37*(5), 637. doi:10.1177/0002764294037005005<br>Angouri, J. (2014). Multilingualism in the workplace: Language practices in multilingual contexts. *Multilingua, 33*(1), 1-9. doi:10.1515/multi-2014-0001<br>Derek, H. (2016). Workplace Discrimination. *Wisconsin Law Journal*.<br>Fox, S., & Lituchy, T. R. (2012). *Gender and the Dysfunctional Workplace*. Cheltenham: Cheltenham : Edward Elgar.<br>Hogg, M. A., Van Knippenberg, D., & Rast, I. D. E. (2012). Intergroup leadership in organizations: leading across group and organizational boundaries. *Academy of Management Review, 37*(2), 232-255. doi:10.5465/amr.2010.0221<br>Mayfield, J., & Mayfield, M. (2017). Leadership Communication. *International Journal of Business Communication, 54*(1), 3-11. doi:10.1177/2329488416675446 |

Patterson, M. L. (2012). *Nonverbal Communication*: Elsevier Inc.

Richardson, B., Taylor, P., Snook, B., Conchie, S. M., & Bennell, C. (2014). Language Style Matching and Police Interrogation Outcomes. *Law Hum. Behav., 38*(4), 357-366. doi:10.1037/lhb0000077

Sánchez-Vidal, M. A. E., Cegarra-Leiva, D., & Cegarra-Navarro, J. G. (2012). Gaps between managers&#039; and employees&#039; perceptions of work–life balance. *The International Journal of Human Resource Management, 23*(4), 645-661. doi:10.1080/09585192.2011.561219

Simon, E. (2016). Variety of skills, traits combine to create a good leader. *Hotel Management, 231*(10), 48.

Sterling, E., Bravo, A., Porzecanski, A. L., Burks, R. L., Linder, J., Langen, T., . . . Bynum, N. (2016). Think before (and after) you speak: practice and self-reflection bolster oral communication skills.(RESEARCH and TEACHING)(Report). *Journal of College Science Teaching, 45*(6), 87.

Ting-Toomey, S. (2010). Applying Dimensional Values in Understanding Intercultural Communication. *Communication Monographs, 77*(2), 169-180. doi:10.1080/03637751003790428

Ying Liao, Y., Soltani, E., Wang, W.-Y., & Iqbal, A. (2016). The dynamics of workplace relationships in a diverse internationally staffed organisation: a qualitative ethnographic assessment. *The International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 1-30. doi:10.1080/09585192.2016.1166788

Zeidner, M., & Kloda, I. (2013). Emotional intelligence (EI), conflict resolution patterns, and relationship satisfaction: Actor and partner effects revisited. *Personality and Individual Differences, 54*(2), 278-283. doi:10.1016/j.paid.2012.09.013

Revised by Amy Suen, August 2023

*Note 1: Intended Learning Outcomes*
Intended learning outcomes should state what students should be able to do or attain upon completion of the subject. Subject outcomes are expected to contribute to the attainment of the overall programme outcomes.

*Note 2: Subject Synopsis/ Indicative Syllabus*
The syllabus should adequately address the intended learning outcomes. At the same time over-crowding of the syllabus should be avoided.

*Note 3: Teaching/Learning Methodology*
This section should include a brief description of the teaching and learning methods to be employed to facilitate learning, and a justification of how the methods are aligned with the intended learning outcomes of the subject.

*Note 4:Assessment Method*
This section should include the assessment method(s) to be used and its relative weighting, and indicate which of the subject intended learning outcomes that each method purports to assess. It should also provide a brief explanation of the appropriateness of the assessment methods in assessing the intended learning outcomes.