

Subject Code	ENGL4006
Subject Title	Understanding English Legal Texts
Credit Value	3
Level	4
Pre-requisite / Co-requisite/ Exclusion	None
Objectives	The subject enables students to understand the relationship between language and the law and how they work together in professional settings. Training in analyzing linguistic features, investigating cognitive structures and interpreting meanings of various types of legal texts will help develop students as effective communicators. In the process of developing a critical understanding of legal texts, students will be able to develop their abilities in problem solving, critical and strategic thinking.
Intended Learning Outcomes	<p>Upon completion of the subject, students will be able to:</p> <p>Category A: Professional/academic knowledge and skills</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. demonstrate an understanding of legal discourse; b. identify and analyse the characteristics of legal English; c. interpret the cognitive structure of legal judgments and legislative provisions; d. evaluate the effectiveness of legal texts in relation to their language use and structure; e. apply plain Legal English principles in rewriting complex legal texts for the purpose of reader accessibility; f. interpret legislative provisions and synthesize them in legal issues diagnosed. <p>Category B: Attributes for all-roundedness</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> g. display critical and creative thinking; h. extend and enhance strategies for learning autonomously and collaboratively;
Subject Synopsis/ Indicative Syllabus	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. General background to the law and Hong Kong legal system 2. Syntactic and lexical features of legal language 3. Critical analysis of legal texts 4. Rhetorical principles of legal writing 5. Principles of writing plain legal English 6. Summarizing and understanding legal judgements

Teaching/ Learning Methodology	<p>A task-based approach will be employed. The class sessions will consist of seminars, workshops and discussions. Students are required to investigate the linguistic features of legal texts and evaluate their effectiveness in the form of a seminar; to participate in workshops of writing plain legal English; and to present summaries of legal issues from the relevant ordinances.</p>																																																	
Assessment Methods in Alignment with Intended Learning Outcomes	<table border="1" data-bbox="464 517 1386 875"> <thead> <tr> <th rowspan="2">Specific assessment methods/tasks</th> <th rowspan="2">% weighting</th> <th colspan="8">Intended subject learning outcomes to be assessed (Please tick as appropriate)</th> </tr> <tr> <th>a</th> <th>b</th> <th>c</th> <th>d</th> <th>e</th> <th>f</th> <th>g</th> <th>h</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>1. In-class assignment</td> <td>30%</td> <td>✓</td> <td>✓</td> <td>✓</td> <td>✓</td> <td>✓</td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>2. Written Report</td> <td>70%</td> <td>✓</td> <td>✓</td> <td>✓</td> <td></td> <td></td> <td>✓</td> <td>✓</td> <td>✓</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Total</td> <td>100 %</td> <td colspan="8"></td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>The continuous coursework will assess students' understanding of legal discourse and their ability to analyse and produce legal texts.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> In a one-hour in-class assignment, students will be required to use Plain English to re-write legal texts which are written in complex structures and with difficult words. The assessment is on an individual basis. Each student will also write a report of approximately 1,000 words, applying relevant ordinances to discuss a legal issue from a Hong Kong business context. 		Specific assessment methods/tasks	% weighting	Intended subject learning outcomes to be assessed (Please tick as appropriate)								a	b	c	d	e	f	g	h	1. In-class assignment	30%	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓				2. Written Report	70%	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓	Total	100 %								
Specific assessment methods/tasks	% weighting	Intended subject learning outcomes to be assessed (Please tick as appropriate)																																																
		a	b	c	d	e	f	g	h																																									
1. In-class assignment	30%	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓																																												
2. Written Report	70%	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓																																									
Total	100 %																																																	
Student Study Effort Expected	<table border="1" data-bbox="456 1344 1402 1758"> <tr> <td>Class contact:</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>▪ Seminars</td> <td>39 Hrs.</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Other student study effort:</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>▪ Private study</td> <td>58 Hrs.</td> </tr> <tr> <td>▪ Take-home assignments</td> <td>29 Hrs.</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Total student study effort</td> <td>126 Hrs.</td> </tr> </table>		Class contact:		▪ Seminars	39 Hrs.	Other student study effort:		▪ Private study	58 Hrs.	▪ Take-home assignments	29 Hrs.	Total student study effort	126 Hrs.																																				
Class contact:																																																		
▪ Seminars	39 Hrs.																																																	
Other student study effort:																																																		
▪ Private study	58 Hrs.																																																	
▪ Take-home assignments	29 Hrs.																																																	
Total student study effort	126 Hrs.																																																	
Reading List and References	<p>Reading List</p> <p>Bhatia, V. 1993 <i>Analyzing Genre: Language use in Professional Settings</i>. London: Longman</p> <p>Bhatia, V. 1994 <i>Cognitive structuring in legislative provisions In Gibbons, J. Language and the Law</i>. p.136-155. New York: Longman</p>																																																	

Crystal, D. & Davy D. 1969 *The Language of legal documents In Investigating English Style*. London. p.193-217. New York: Longman

Dobinson, I & Roebuck, D. 2001 *Introduction to Law in the Hong Kong SAR (2nd ed) Hong Kong*: Sweet & Maxwell Asia

Garner B. 2001 *Legal Writing in Plain English*. US: University of Chicago Press

Gibbons, J. 2003 *Forensic Linguistic: An Introduction to Language in the Justice System*. Malden, Mass: Blackwell Publishing

Authentic contracts, terms and conditions, legislations and legal judgements

On-line Resources:

Bilingual Laws Information System

<http://www.legislation.gov.hk/eng/index.htm>

Dictionary for Legal Professionals

<http://dictionary.lp.findlaw.com>

Prepared by Xunfeng Xu, June 2014