



Ref. No.
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**Projects on Promoting Outcome-Based Approaches in Student Learning
2007-08
Application for OBA Funding**

PART I: General Information

1. Title

Towards Outcome Based Integration of Language and Computer Skills to Meet Workplace Needs in Hong Kong

2. Name(s) of Applicant(s)

Project Leader

Name	Dept	Post	Groupwise	Ext.
LI Lan	ENGL	Assistant Prof	eglilan@inet.polyu.edu.hk	7978

Team Member(s)

Name	Dept	Post	Groupwise	Ext.
Dora Wong	ENGL	Instructor	egdora@inet.polyu.edu.hk	7557
Winnie Cheng	ENGL	Professor	egwcheng@polyu.edu.hk	7558

3. Total funding requested

4. Expected duration of project: 24 months

Proposed commencement date: 1 Sept 2008

Expected completion date: 30 Aug 2010

PART II: DETAILS OF PROPOSAL

1. Project objectives and significance

(What are your objectives in initiating this project? How does it align with institutional goals and targets in implementing outcome-based approaches in student learning?)

Introduction

Linguistic and computer skills are major indicators of one's professional competence. When corporations recruit staff for their marketing and communications departments, they prefer those who have a strong background in language and communication, particularly those with strong linguistic abilities and practical computer skills and web writing skills. The English Department offers 'English for Technical and Web-based Writing' (ENGL317), and our graduates have been welcomed by employers because they can produce high-quality, effective, professional and multi-semiotic texts, such as promotional leaflets and brochures, user guides, invitation cards, posters and web-based materials. Students taking this subject will have taken core linguistics subjects, including 'Corpus-driven Language Learning' (ENGL303) and 'English Discourse in Professions' (ENGL305).

English for Technical and Web-based Writing (ENGL317)

The subject 'English for Technical and Web-based Writing' (ENGL317) has been designed to provide students with useful resources for achieving a firm grounding in language studies and to apply the knowledge in a variety of professional contexts. The subject's intended learning outcomes are that students will be able to produce effective professional multi-semiotic texts, as a result of acquiring a range of subject-specific and profession-specific knowledge and transferable skills, including linguistic knowledge in professional texts and genres, web-based writing strategies, computer desktop publishing skills, and different software packages in web-writing. In preparation for their project assignments, students have to research and analyse a wide range of multi-semiotic and web-based texts from a variety of business and professional contexts for different communicative purposes.

The interdisciplinary nature of the subject can strengthen students' generic attribute in critical thinking, creativity, and a sense of social, national and cultural identity:

Creativity. The training received in designing, producing and packaging high-quality and professional-oriented texts very much involves a process of developing critical thinking 'which is skilled and active interpretation and evaluation of observation and communications, information and argumentation' (Fisher & Scriven 1997:21). The students learn to use

language creatively for a range of purposes and audiences. They also learn to engage with and interpret meanings within texts, images and other cultural products.

Critical thinking. Students will acquire knowledge actively rather than passively. They will have to reflect critically and make judgements from collected professional writing materials, such as user manuals and company brochures, extract and synthesise key information, and evaluate them critically from the audience's perspective. They also evaluate professional materials and public documentation in relation to the respective corporations' mission and culture.

Sense of social, national and cultural identity. Students will develop a critical understanding of different national, racial and ethnic cultures, through analysing their publicly available texts and genres. They also learn to be sensitive to different cultures, and develop a sense of 'political correctness' in professional writing, for instance, by producing texts and images devoid of gender, age, and race discrimination. Finally, students develop a critical ability to appreciate and evaluate Chinese culture, which is reflected in the professional multi-semiotic texts they produce.

It is also considered valuable to involve graduates of the English Department in delivering the subject. It will be achieved through a web-based platform so that the graduates and students of the subject can exchange information, and the graduates can provide profession-oriented input and recommendations.

Aim and objectives of proposed project

This proposed project aims to systematically evaluate the effectiveness of 'English for Technical and Web-based Writing' (ENGL317) in terms of:

- the alignment of subject learning outcomes and subject contents, instructional materials, instructional methods, and student assessments;
- how well the subject-specific, profession-oriented, and generic learning outcomes have been achieved by students.

The objectives of the project are therefore:

1. To enhance the awareness of OBE among both students and academic staff involved so as to help students develop a high level of communicative competence in English which incorporates linguistic skills, computer skills, and web writing skills for effective communication in the workplace;

2. To evaluate ‘English for Technical and Web-based Writing’ by reviewing the instructional materials and teaching and learning methods, namely lectures, interactive seminars, computer lab work, and self-directed online learning ;
3. To evaluate the effectiveness of assessment task rubrics and assessment model and practices;
4. To recommend an effective OBE-based subject evaluation model which can be applied to other subjects; and finally
5. To establish connection and encourage communication between students and graduates so that students of the subject receive profession-oriented input and critical feedback on their professional writing projects.

2. Target users

(Who are the intended users of the ‘deliverables’ of the project – faculties / departments management or programme/subject teams or students?)

The intended users of the deliverables of the project are language students and teachers in the subject team. The subject is compulsory for BA in English for Business and Professional Communications (BAEBPC) students, and an elective for BA in Language Study for the Professions (BALSP), a joint programme of Departments of English and Chinese and Bilingual Studies, and BA in English Studies for the Professions (BAESP). It is also open to students in other department as an elective.

If the target users are students, complete the table below:

Programme/ subject code	Programme/subject title (ENGL317)	Credit units	Mode of study	Student intake quota per year
BALSP (elective)	English for Technical and Web-based writing	3	seminars	52
BAEPBC (compulsory)	English for Technical and Web-based writing	3	seminars	90
BAESP (elective)	English for Technical and Web-based writing	3	seminars	70
Minor (elective)	English for Technical and Web-based writing	3	seminars	50
Total				242

Please insert rows in the table if more space is required for additional information.

3. Outcomes and deliverables

(a) Major outcomes and deliverables

(What will be the major outcomes and deliverables of the project?)

	Major outcomes and deliverables with descriptions
(1)	The project will increase awareness of OBE among students and staff. Such awareness will be incorporated into teaching and learning so as to enable students to appreciate and analyse existing professional documents from different corporations and institutions; to observe the rules of linguistics, semiotics and political correctness; as well as to nurture generic attributes.
(2)	The project will result in a set of assessment rubrics to measure students' professional competence, including language skills and computer skills; social, national and cultural awareness; critical thinking; and creativity. These criteria will be reflected in task description and tutor and peer assessment form.
(3)	A website complementary to OBE will be set up. It will enhance students' autonomous learning by providing linguistic, semiotic and cultural resources for professional writing. It will also function as a platform for students to showcase their projects and have interactive functions for peer and teacher comments and evaluation. Use of the website will be extended to the graduates of the English Department, so that the views and comments from the graduates will also be elicited.
(4)	A complete set of subject portfolio with (a) learning outcomes, (b) subject deliverables, (c) teaching and learning activities, (d) assessment scheme, and (f) subject reflection reports. The portfolio will benefit future students and teachers.
(5)	An OBE-based subject evaluation model.
(6)	Project final report and project findings disseminated in conferences and journal papers.

Please insert rows in the table if more space is required for additional information.

(b) Plan for developing and piloting / implementing the deliverables

(Detail the plan and procedures that you will adopt to develop and pilot/ implement the outcomes and deliverables. Also specify the dates of the pilot / implementation period)

The project will be conducted in two phases. Phase 1 is to improve teaching and learning of the subject, and produce the OBE oriented deliverables, including the website. The second year is to implement the deliverables and further improve the subject. The deliverables of the project will be developed from action research by means of student questionnaire, student online forum, staff subject report and reflection, and graduates' feedback. The steps are:

1. collecting and analyzing student needs, student reported achievement of learning outcomes;
2. collecting and analyzing teaching staff's views on delivering the subject;
3. collecting and analyzing graduates' reports on the subject contents, learning activities, assessments, and usefulness of learning outcomes in the workplace; and

4. developing and implementing the deliverables (1), (2) and (3) listed in Section 3(a).

The procedure can be illustrated by the following chart.

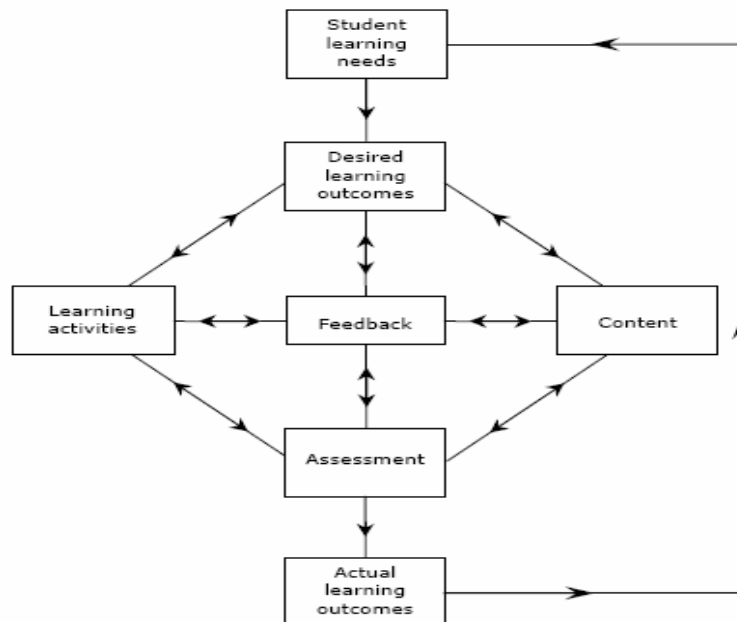


Fig 1 Flowchart of the project (adapted from the website of the Chinese University of Hong Kong)

Phrase 2 is the implementation of the deliverables when the subject is delivered again to another cohort of students. The steps are:

1. evaluating the effectiveness of deliverables (1), (2) and (3) from students, teachers and graduates;
2. implementing modified deliverables (1), (2) and (3);
3. evaluating the effectiveness of modified deliverables (1), (2) and (3);
4. producing deliverables (4) and (5) in Section 3(a); and
5. reporting on successful achievement of project aim and objectives, i.e. deliverables (5) and (6).

Timeline and actions

Time	Actions
I. Identifying problems (M1-3)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • conducting a thorough literature review • conducting student questionnaire and semi-structured interviews with students to establish student awareness of subject objectives, expectations and learning outcomes, and to identify areas for enhancement • conducting semi-structured interview with graduates to

	elicit their views and experiences related to subject objectives and learning outcomes
II. Improving subject contents and learning activities while teaching (M4-8)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • conducting the first stage of the project • building a website as an additional interactive platform for teaching and learning • reviewing contents by the teaching team • collecting and analyzing data from student online forum
III. Getting feedback on subject implementation (M 9-11)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • conducting a student questionnaire survey after teaching in one semester • collecting student projects for analysis • interviewing teaching staff for their feedback • interviewing graduates who have participated in the first stage of the project
IV. Developing the deliverables (M12)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • summarising recommendations from the feedback • revising subject contents, assessments, website, teaching and learning methods
V. Re-running and re-assessing (M 13-21)*	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • conducting the second round of the project, i.e. delivering the enhanced version of the subject • evaluating the enhanced subject
VI. Dissemination (M22 -24)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • scholarly dissemination of project outcomes at international conference and in academic journals • submitting project report

*The subject ENGL317 has duration of 14 weeks and is run in one semester every year.

Planned pilot / implementation period of the deliverables:

Start Date (dd/mm/yyyy):01/07/2008.....

End Date (dd/mm/yyyy):30/6/2010.....

4. Dissemination and sharing plan

(How are you going to disseminate and share the outcomes and deliverables of your project?)

1. Building and maintaining a website that is complementary to OBE of Professional Writing, to be shared with other institutions. The website will showcase students' Professional Writing projects.
2. Writing academic articles for international conferences and journals.

5. Evaluation plan

(How do you plan to evaluate the effectiveness of the project, particularly its impact on the implementation of outcome-based approaches in student learning in the PolyU?)

The evaluation of the project mainly incorporates PolyU's quality assurance procedures used for subject quality assurance. In addition, triangulation in terms of using different research methods (survey methods and textual analysis) from different sources (students, teachers and graduates)

will be used to ascertain the effectiveness of the project in achieving the intended learning outcomes.

- 1) Hard evidence of student grades, together with qualitative descriptions of how assessment criteria have been achieved
- 2) The teaching feedback of current teachers will be used to identify problems in subject delivery
- 3) Comparison of pre-questionnaire and post-questionnaire surveys to find out students' perceptions of teaching and learning, students expectations and their understanding of subject learning outcomes
- 4) Group semi-structured interviews with students at different stages of the project
- 5) Peer review of subject implementation by colleagues in English Department
- 6) The evaluation cycle will be conducted again after the second implementation of the subject.

6. Impact

(How will the project contribute to the success of the implementation of outcome-based approaches in student learning in the PolyU/ department/ programme/ subject?)

The project will provide resources to a fast developing subject which contributes greatly to the all-round education in PolyU with specific focuses on both linguistic and computer skills in professional writing. It also emphasises students' ability of critical thinking, creativity, learner autonomy, self-directed learning, team work, and awareness of and sensitivity to social, national and cultural identity. The outcome-based approaches to teaching and learning of 'English for Technical and Web-based Writing' (ENGL317) should contribute to similar English subjects such as 'English for the Media', 'English Texts and Image', 'English for Public Relations and Marketing' so as to improve the BALSPP, BAESP and BAEBPC programmes, and produce 'preferred' language graduates.

7. Target date(s) for submission of progress and completion reports

	Planned submission date (mm/yyyy)
1. Progress report <i>(for projects whose duration lasts more than 1 year; to be submitted mid-way through the proposed project period)</i>	09/ 2009
2. Completion report <i>(to be submitted within 3 months after the project completion date)</i>	10/2010

PART III: BUDGET OF PROPOSAL

***Important Notes**

- 1. Funding requests for equipment and/ or software will be considered only if:
 - a. the equipment / software is essential to the successful implementation of the project, AND
 - b. it is not available in the department concerned. The Project Leader has the responsibility to check this out.
- 2. The purchasing policies and procedures of FO must be followed for the procurement of approved items.
- 3. Funding request for conference attendance will not be considered.

Project Leader

Name: Signature:

Dept: Date:

PART IV: DEPARTMENTAL ENDORSEMENT

Endorsement by Chair of FLTC/ DLTC:

Comments on the proposal:

Name: Signature: Date:
(in block letters)

Endorsement by Dean/ HoD:

Comments on the proposal:

By endorsing this proposal, I agree that:

- 1. The proposal suitably addresses the School/Department's needs in promoting and implementing outcome-based approaches in student learning and will be considered as part of the School's/Department's Business Plan.**
 - 2. The School/Department will receive a funding as calculated for item (e) in the Budget section which I will use for providing the time release recommended by the project proposers, based on the Total Workload Model, to support them to work effectively on the project.**
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Please return this form to Miss Miranda Fung, Secretary of Working Group on Outcome-based Education,
c/o Educational Development Centre
by **31 January 2008**