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ACADEMIC WRITING
SYLLABUS

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Anna E. Afanasyeva,
Associate Professor at the School of Cultural Studies, NRU HSE
Staraya Basmannaya ul., 21/4, office 406
Email: aafanasieva@hse.ru

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1. COURSE DESCRIPTION

PRE-REQUISITES:
A good working knowledge of English is required.

COURSE TYPE:
Optional

ABSTRACT:

The course is aimed to introduce students to the conventions of academic English. It addresses different genres of academic writing and is focused on developing writing and presentation skills that would enable students to communicate effectively in the academic environment.

These skills are evaluated on the basis of an examination at the end of the course. During the examination the students are expected to present their research proposals, based on their BA theses, first in the written form (2000 - 2500 words) and then orally, in front of the examination committee. The course guides students through all stages of preparing their research proposals: designing its structure, defining methodology, critically assessing sources as well as scholarly texts, and developing their own arguments. The students also learn the principles of an effective academic presentation: they are taught to speak in front of an audience, keep within time limits and handle questions. The course involves an intensive practice of grammar and academic vocabulary to ensure the accurate use of language.

In addition to writing academic texts, the students are taught to write curricula vitae and cover letters; these skills are seen as equally important in helping students to pursue their academic careers. The students will also learn the rules of academic communication, both direct and mediated, and have an extensive practice in academic socializing.

2. LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

- to introduce students to the conventions of academic writing;
- to develop their writing and presentation skills;
- to build up the students' vocabulary of academic English;
- to ensure students' accurate use of language;
- to enable them to communicate effectively in the academic environment.

3. LEARNING OUTCOMES

Students who complete this course will be able to:

- write research proposals;
- critically assess the literature in their field of study;
- explain the significance of the study and place it in relation to the works of other scholars;
- organise their arguments both in writing and speaking;
- write summaries of their research;
- present their findings in front of an academic audience;
- handle questions regarding their research;
- write curricula vitae and cover letters;
- communicate effectively with their academic colleagues.

5. COURSE PLAN

Class 1. Introduction to the course

What is academic English? Overview of the course. Grading system. Requirements for the course: class work and written assignments.
Organisation of the final examination: research project proposal and project presentation.
Speaking: discussion of students' professional interests and prospective projects.

Classes 2 – 3. Writing curricula vitae

The purpose of a curriculum vitae. Layout and the typical order of information. Using templates: Europass. Readability. Accuracy and attention to details. Choosing relevant skills and qualifications. Personal details. Writing objectives /personal statements. Education and further qualifications. Grade point average (GPA) and academic honours. Work experience. Publications, conferences and research seminars. Fellowships, grants and awards. Academic and social outreach. Skills and personal interests. Providing references.
Speaking: vocabulary exercises.
Grammar exercises: countable vs uncountable nouns.
Home task: writing a curriculum vitae according to the discussed requirements.

Classes 4 – 5. Writing cover letters

Feedback on students' home task: discussing CVs.
What is a cover letter? Its purposes and typical structure. Grammar and sentence construction. Thinking of a reader's point of view. Maintaining balance in describing one's strong points. Explaining the relevance of the provided information. Ways to describe "soft skills". Providing details to substantiate the information given in the letter. Useful phrases.
Speaking: vocabulary exercises.
Grammar exercises: relative pronouns (*that, which, what, who, whose*). Word order.
Home task: writing a cover letter.

Classes 6 – 7. Academic correspondence

Feedback on students' home task: discussing cover letters.
Subject lines. Forms of initial salutation. Levels of formality in writing e-mails. Spelling and readability. Making requests and sending reminders. Contacting editors. The use of modal verbs. Final salutations.
Writing: composing an e-mail containing a request. In-class discussion.
Speaking: vocabulary exercises.
Grammar exercises: quantifiers (*some, any, few, little, a lot of, lots, much, many*).
Home task: writing an e-mail to an editor regarding a previously submitted manuscript.

Classes 8 – 9. Writing a research proposal: abstracts and titles

Feedback on students' home task: discussing e-mails.
The structure of a research proposal. Titles: basic rules. Articles and prepositions. Titles for conferences and journals: differences in style.
The structure of an abstract. An abstract for a conference. An abstract of a published research paper. Personal vs impersonal style. Usage of tenses. Covering relevant points. Avoiding redundancy.
Writing: composing titles for research proposals and conference papers. In-class discussion.
Grammar exercises: Present Simple and Past Simple tenses. Definite, indefinite and zero articles. Prepositions.
Home task: writing an abstract of a research project.

Classes 10 – 13. Review of the literature

Feedback on students' home task: discussing abstracts (classes 10 – 11) and article reviews (classes 12 - 13).
The structure of a literature review. Reviewing an academic text. Acknowledging a scholar's contribution. Commenting the limitations of previous work in a constructive way. Suggesting alternatives. Expressing opinion. Avoiding plagiarism. Direct quotation. Summarising and paraphrasing. Structuring paragraphs. The use of tenses. Referencing styles: Chicago, Harvard, Turabian styles, APA and MLA.
Grammar exercises: Present Simple and Present Perfect. Active and passive voices.
Speaking: 1) classes 10 – 11: vocabulary exercises. 2) classes 12 – 13: conference small-talk. Introducing yourself to a group of people.
Home task: 1) classes 10 – 11: writing a review of an article (200 words). 2) classes 12 – 13: writing a review of the literature on a student's research project (700 words).

Classes 14 – 17. Writing an introduction. Part 1

Feedback on students' home task: discussing literature reviews (classes 14 – 15) and introductions (classes 16 – 17).

The aims of an introduction. Differences between an introduction and an abstract. The structure of an introduction. The background of the study: presenting the context of the research. Explaining the significance of the study.

The problem statement. Aims and objectives of the study. The scope of the research project: defining the chronological, geographical and subject limits of the study.

Explaining the methodology and theoretical framework of the study. Definitions of key terms.

Speaking: academic socializing: describing your academic interests and current research.

Grammar exercises: Present Simple, Present Perfect and Past Simple. Future in the Past, Simple Past, Third Conditional.

Home task: 1) classes 14 – 15: describing the background and significance of the study; defining the problem; setting aims and objectives; outlining the scope. 2) classes 16 – 17: presenting the theoretical framework of the study; defining the key terms.

Classes 18 – 19. Writing an introduction. Part 2

Feedback on students' home task: discussing introductions.

Describing the methods of the study. Justifying the choice of methods. Passive and active voices. Methods of gathering data. Methods of analysis of the collected materials.

A review of the sources used in the study. Groups and types of sources. Justifying the choice of sources.

Outlining the structure of the study.

Speaking: vocabulary exercises.

Grammar exercises: Passive and active voices. Future in the Past. Second and third conditional.

Home task: writing the rest of the introduction (describing the methods of the study, reviewing the sources and presenting the structure of the research project).

Classes 20 – 21. Writing a conclusion

Feedback on students' home task: discussing methods and sources used in their studies.

Conclusion: presenting the main findings of the study. Differences between an abstract and a conclusion. The structure of a conclusion.

Avoiding ambiguity: word order, usage of pronouns and the use of synonyms. Relative clauses, uncountable nouns and articles.

Removing redundancy: reducing the number of link words, cutting obvious information and general introductory phrases.

Hedging: toning down strong claims.

Speaking: academic socializing: arranging a meeting. Understanding native speakers.

Grammar exercises: various tenses. Modal verbs. Articles and uncountable nouns. Relative clauses.

Home task: writing a conclusion.

Classes 22 – 25. Academic presentations. Part 1

Feedback on students' home task: discussing conclusions.

Presenting a research proposal. Good and bad presentations. Preparing a written script. Being concise: avoiding abstract nouns and unspecific adjectives. Word order. Cutting long sentences.

Writing the text of the slides. The use of visuals in a presentation.

Ways to begin a presentation. Opening phrases. Establishing contact with the audience. Introducing the topic. Pronunciation, speed and intonation. Selecting the key ideas and keeping the explanation short. Maintaining audience attention.

Conclusions: focusing on the most important findings of the study. Closing phrases. Expressing gratitude and inviting questions.

Questions and answers session: strategies of handling questions.

Speaking: short oral presentations of research projects, followed by discussion.

Home task: preparing a presentation with the use of Power Point or similar software.

Classes 26 – 27. Academic presentations. Part 2

In-class presentations of students' research projects followed by discussion.

Individual consultations on written proposals and oral presentations.

6. BIBLIOGRAPHY

1. Anderson K. *Study speaking: a course in spoken English for academic purposes*. 2nd ed. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004.
2. Campbell C. *English for academic study. Vocabulary: course book*. Garnet Publishing Ltd., 2007.
3. Hewings M. *Cambridge academic English: upper intermediate: student's book: an integrated skills course for EAP*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012.
4. McCormack J. *English for academic study. Extended writing and research skills*. Garnet Publishing Ltd., 2005.
5. Pallant A. *English for academic study: Writing: course book*. Garnet Publishing Ltd., 2004.

7. USEFUL ELECTRONIC RESOURCES:

Checking pronunciation:
Cambridge Dictionary: http://dictionary.cambridge.org
English Oxford Living Dictionaries: https://en.oxforddictionaries.com
Oddcast: http://oddcast.com/home/demos/tts/tts_example.php

Checking the accuracy of your language:
Google Scholar: https://scholar.google.com
PaperRater: https://www.paperrater.com

Making presentations:
Prezi: https://prezi.com
Google Slides: https://www.google.com/slides/about/
Keynote: https://www.apple.com/ru/keynote/

Watching presentations:
TED: https://www.ted.com

Citation service:
KnightCite: https://www.calvin.edu/library/knightcite/index.php

WorldCat: http://www.worldcat.org (choose "Cite/Index")

8. GRADING SYSTEM

The final grade of a student (G_{final}) is formed of a cumulative grade ($G_{cumulative}$), which consists of two elements: a grade for the performance during the classes ($G_{classes}$) and an overall grade for ten writing assignments submitted regularly during the course ($G_{writing\ assignments}$). These grades have the following weight in the overall cumulative grade:

$$G_{cumulative} = 0{,}4* G_{classes} + 0{,}6*G_{writing\ assignments}$$

9. GUIDELINES FOR KNOWLEDGE ASSESSMENT

Class attendance and active participation: Regular class attendance and participation in discussion are particularly important for this course, which is mainly focused on practical exercises. The discussion of the written assignments as well as the introduction of new topics are organised in a way that encourages the active involvement of students. There are various in-class activities aimed at the development of students' speaking or presentation skills, learning speech patterns and grammatical rules. This makes the regular class attendance an essential part of the course.

Writing assignments: Ten written texts must be submitted as part of the course requirements:
1) a curriculum vitae;
2) a cover letter;
3) two e-mails containing a request and a reminder;
4) an abstract of a research proposal with a title;
5) a review of an article (200 words);
6) a review of the literature on a student's research project (700 words);
7) the beginning of an introduction, describing the background and significance of the study, defining the problem, setting aims and objectives, and outlining the scope;
8) a theoretical framework of the study and the definition of the key terms;
9) the final part of an introduction, containing the description of the methods of the study, review of the sources and the outline of the structure of the research project;
10) conclusion of the research proposal and the Power Point presentation of the project, containing seven slides.

Each of these home assignments must demonstrate a good knowledge of the material learned during the course. The most typical mistakes made in these home assignments are discussed in the beginning of the classes; the individual consultations on the assignments are provided during office hours.

10. SPECIAL EQUIPMENT AND SOFTWARE SUPPORT (IF REQUIRED)
Laptop and projector. Power Point or similar software.

APPENDIX 1. THE STRUCTURE OF THE RESEARCH PROPOSAL

The written research proposal should be organised according to the following scheme:

1. Cover page (with title and affiliation)
2. Abstract
3. Background of the study
4. Problem statement
5. Literature review
6. Aim and objectives
7. Scope
8. Methodology and theoretical framework
9. Definition of key terms (if necessary)
10. Methods: - of data gathering (if relevant)
    - of analysis
11. Sources
12. Outline of the structure of the study
13. Conclusion (results /anticipated results)
14. Bibliography (sources and literature)

The ***cover page*** requires the following elements (see Appendix 2): 1) the name of the university, faculty and the department /school; 2) the title of the research proposal (typed in bold); 3) the student's name and surname and the group number; 4) the supervisor's academic title, name and surname; 5) place and year of submission. Please note: there is no page number on the cover page.

The ***abstract*** is a summary of your research. It should contain the aim of the study and cover its background, structure and results. The abstract should not exceed 200 – 250 words.

The text of the research proposal should begin with the description of the ***background*** of the research, i.e., the presentation of the context of the research problem and explanation of the potential significance of the study. Then the ***problem statement*** follows, in which you need to define the problem of your research.

The ***literature review*** section is meant to show the range of approaches to this problem or its various aspects, that exists in your field of study. If the problem has not been yet addressed, or it is a subject of the ongoing debates, it means that there is an opportunity for you to fill this gap or contribute to the discussions.

When you have identified the gap in knowledge or located the controversies surrounding the problem you are going to address, you need to state your ***aim and objectives***. The aim usually corresponds with the title of the study. Objectives are the steps towards reaching the aim; they often define the structure of the study. At this point you need to demonstrate the ***delimitations*** of your research, i.e., to set the chronological, geographical or subject limits of the study.

After you have described your research problem and defined your goals, you should show the instruments you are going to use to handle the problem. This is where you describe the ***methodology and theoretical framework*** of your study. This section clarifies the main theoretical principles of your approach and describes the concepts you will apply to your material. To avoid ambiguities in your arguments, you might find it helpful to provide here the ***definitions of the key terms***.

The next part of the research proposal concerns the ***methods*** of your study. These can be the methods of gathering material (e.g., if you are going to conduct interviews), showing the algorithm of your work, or/and the methods of analysing material. The choice of methods should be explained.

Next, you need to describe the ***sources of your study***. These are the materials you analyse to solve your research problem. The sources should be organised into manageable groups

according to their type. You also need to provide an explanation for your choice of sources, to show how the analysis of these particular materials can help you answer your research questions.

This introductory part of your research proposal ends with the ***outline of the structure*** of your study. Here you need to show how your study is organised and describe the parts that it contains.

After having demonstrated the design of your research, you should go to the ***conclusions***. In this section you need to show the results of your study, or, if the research is not yet finished, the preliminary or anticipated results.

The final part of the research proposal is ***bibliography***, containing the list of sources and literature used in the study.

APPENDIX 2. AN EXAMPLE OF A COVER PAGE

National Research University Higher School of Economics
Faculty of Humanities

School of Cultural Studies

Project Proposal

Title (in bold)

Student's Name and Surname
Number of the Group

Supervisor's Academic Title, Name and Surname

Moscow
2018

(there is no number on this page)