

**The Hong Kong University of Science and Technology**  
**UG Course Syllabus**

From Report to Presentation: Mastering Effective Communication in Environmental Impact Assessments

LANG4010

3 credits

Co-requisites: OCES4203

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**Office Hours of Course Coordinator:** Available by appointment only.

**Course Description**

LANG4010 is a three-credit required course for the BSc in Ocean Science and Technology programme, offered in the Fall semester as a co-requisite for OCES 4203 Environmental Impact and Risk Assessment. The course develops the linguistic, critical thinking, and analytical skills necessary to evaluate and communicate environmental impacts in ocean science contexts. Interactive tutorials and online tasks support this active learning approach through collaborative activities and hands-on practices.

Key topics covered include:

**Module 1 – Communication Principles for EIA**

Explore the communication skills required to effectively convey environmental information to diverse audiences.

- Understand the critical role of clear, concise communication in the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) process.
- Identify and analyze key stakeholders involved in and affected by EIA outcomes.
- Translate complex scientific information and data into accessible narratives for non-expert audiences and decision-makers.

**Module 2 – Writing an EIA Report**

Understand the structure, organization, and language conventions of professional EIA reports.

- Assert professional judgment through evidence-based observations and assessments of environmental features and impacts.
- Articulate predictive scientific data, evaluate environmental implications, and communicate projected future outcomes.
- Strengthen arguments and justifications by integrating academic and regulatory sources.
- Apply visual communication strategies to present complex environmental data clearly and effectively.

**Module 3 – Giving Recommendations and Conducting Public Consultations**

Develop the skills needed to present and defend environmental proposals in conference-style and public consultation settings.

- Propose feasible mitigation measures and evaluate their compliance with relevant regulatory frameworks.
- Communicate complex scientific information effectively to diverse audiences and navigate stakeholder dynamics in formal professional contexts.

## Intended Learning Outcomes (ILOs)

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

1. Critically evaluate, select, synthesize, and communicate information from scientific, academic, and regulatory sources to conduct environmental assessments.
2. Support claims and recommendations with appropriate evidence and acknowledge sources using accepted academic and professional conventions.
3. Organize ideas logically, coherently, and cohesively in both written reports and spoken presentations.
4. Use an appropriate professional tone, style, and clear, accurate language to suit the technical and public-facing context of environmental consulting.
5. Use body language, vocal variety, and visual aids effectively to build rapport with the audience.
6. Display teamwork, project management, and collaborative leadership skills when navigating group projects.
7. Demonstrate effective learning skills by using appropriate learning strategies and evaluating progress through reflection and feedback.

## Assessment and Grading

This course will be assessed using criterion-referencing and grades will not be assigned using a curve.

### Assessments

Assessment Task	Contribution to Overall Course grade (%)	Due date
WA1 – A. Summary of field-trip findings for the public B. Peer review of students' work	25%	Approx. week 6/7*
WA2 – Analytical report of environmental impacts and implications for a proposed development project	25%	Approx. week 9/10*
SA – Public consultation simulation	35%	Approx. week 12/13*
Self-directed learning tasks	15%	spread through course

\* Specific due dates are posted on Canvas.

### Mapping of Course ILOs to Assessment Tasks

Assessed Task	Mapped ILOs	Explanation
WA1 – Summary of field-trip findings for the public and peer review of student work	1, 2, 3, 4, 7	This writing assignment assesses students' abilities to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• produce a clear and concise summary of the environment description and potential environmental impacts based on observations from the OCES4203 field trip and relevant external sources, using an EIA writing style appropriate for public review.</li></ul>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>provide constructive and actionable feedback on peers' written work.</li> </ul>
WA2 – Analytical report of environmental impacts and implications for a proposed development project	1, 2, 3, 4	<p>This writing assignment assesses students' abilities to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>conduct an in-depth analysis and prediction of the environmental impacts of a proposed development project, supported by credible references and well-reasoned justifications.</li> <li>synthesize, evaluate and present findings on the environmental impacts and their implications in a formal EIA report suitable for review by technical and professional audiences.</li> </ul>
SA – Public consultation simulation	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6	<p>This speaking assignment assesses students' abilities to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>communicate the context, rationale, and environmental impact analysis of a proposed development project in a professional group presentation.</li> <li>respond effectively to questions, issues, and concerns raised by different stakeholders.</li> <li>use appropriate spoken language, presentation techniques, and delivery skills to engage and inform the audience.</li> </ul>
Self-directed learning tasks	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7	<p>This task assesses students' completion of a series of tasks throughout the semester which practise learnt skills, self-directed study and active learning from feedback.</p>

### Grading Rubrics

Detailed rubrics for each assignment are provided on Canvas. These rubrics clearly outline the criteria used for evaluation. Students can refer to these rubrics to understand how their work will be assessed.

### Final Grade Descriptors

Grades	Short Description	Elaboration on subject grading description
A	Excellent Performance	<p>Content: Demonstrates sophisticated synthesis of well-developed ideas from quality sources with skilful coherence.</p> <p>Communication: Uses nuanced language and non-verbal communication with sustained awareness of target audience/reader, context, purpose.</p>

		Teamwork: Approaches working within team settings in a highly sophisticated manner.
B	Good Performance	Content: Demonstrates synthesis of well-developed ideas from quality sources with effective coherence. Communication: Uses effective language and non-verbal communication with very high awareness of target audience/reader, context, purpose. Teamwork: Brings sophistication to work within team settings.
C	Satisfactory Performance	Content: Demonstrates synthesis of relevant ideas from quality sources with mostly clear coherence. Communication: Uses appropriate language and non-verbal communication with some awareness of target audience/reader, context, purpose. Teamwork: Works collaboratively in a team setting in ways that are effective and productive.
D	Marginal Pass	Content: Synthesizes relevant ideas with some analysis, somewhat coherently. Ideas may be superficial, repetitive, missing or inadequate. Communication: Use some appropriate language and non-verbal communication with little awareness of target audience/reader, context, purpose. Communication is often inadequate or awkward. Teamwork: Attempts to work collaboratively in a team setting or does so only somewhat appropriately.
F	Fail	Content: Does not synthesize, develop or organize ideas sufficiently. Ideas are very superficial, repetitive, irrelevant, inadequate, and/or lacking. Communication: limited awareness of audience, context, purpose; limited control of language. Teamwork: Does not work collaboratively in a team setting.

### Course AI Policy

We encourage students to make use of all the tools available that can help them to communicate more effectively in English. We also expect students to uphold the highest standards of academic integrity. There is no penalty for using or not using GenAI. However, GenAI and other tools cannot be used as a substitute for a student's own work. Students are expected to write their own assessed assignments and to prepare their presentations themselves.

GenAI tools can be very useful for:

- Brainstorming ideas and suggesting sources BUT the information provided may not be accurate or relevant to your assignment.
- Giving suggestions about improving the organization of your writing BUT GenAI tends to suggest very formulaic patterns of writing which may not fit your requirements.

- Giving suggestions about improving your language BUT GenAI may make suggestions for language changes which are not appropriate for the intended context and audience.
- Suggesting simple ways of expressing complex discipline-specific concepts BUT these explanations may be unfamiliar to your audience.
- Providing summaries of long texts BUT important information may be omitted, particularly if the original text is not well-written.

In short, GenAI provides opportunities to enhance your use of English and contains pitfalls which you need to be aware of.

### **Communication and Feedback**

Assessment marks for individual assessed tasks will be communicated via Canvas within ten working days of submission. Feedback on assignments will include strengths and areas for improvement where relevant. 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**

Resubmissions are not accepted, except in exceptional circumstances.

### **Required Texts and Materials**

Course materials and additional resources are provided via Canvas.

### **Academic Integrity**

Students are expected to adhere to the university's academic integrity policy. Students are expected to uphold HKUST's Academic Honor Code and to maintain the highest standards of academic integrity. The University has zero tolerance of academic misconduct. Please refer to [Academic Integrity | HKUST – Academic Registry](#) for the University's definition of plagiarism and ways to avoid cheating and plagiarism.

### **Plagiarism**

In CLE assignments, students should not copy from others nor submit the same work for multiple courses. Source materials must be explicitly acknowledged.

Assignments with evidence of plagiarism may score a zero and be followed up with your department's Dean. To demonstrate academic integrity and avoid plagiarism, you are expected to:

- paraphrase, summarize, reference and synthesize ideas from sources
- refrain from copying expressions and ideas directly from any source (e.g. from another student, or from a video, or from an article, etc.) without proper acknowledgement