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FOREIGN- LANGUAGE ACADEMIC COMMUNICATION

Recommended Teaching Methods for Practical Classes and Self-Study

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The recommended teaching methods for practical classes and self-study are designed to develop students' speaking, listening, reading and writing skills in an academic environment. Masters will learn how to write academic texts effectively, as well as to improve grammar and vocabulary.

Recommended for training masters of the branches of knowledge 05 "Social and behaviour sciences" and 07 "Management and administration" in specialties 051 "Economics", 071 "Accounting and Taxation", 072 "Finance, banking, insurance and stock market", 073 "Management", 075 Marketing and 076 "Entrepreneurship and trade".

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Introduction

The course focuses on speaking, listening, reading and writing skills in an academic environment. Students will learn how to write short academic texts effectively, as well as to improve their grammar and vocabulary. Strategies for scan and skim reading are also included. Furthermore, students will gain confidence in speaking English in an academic context and understanding what foreigners are saying more easily.

It is a course designed to enable students to use English effectively in the academic contexts they will encounter in their studies. The main emphasis is on improving students' confidence and competence in using English in these contexts. The study method is primarily based on seminars. Use will also be made of video and tape recordings and relevant Web-based materials/activities.

After this course students should be able to:

- demonstrate the written communicative skills and critical thinking skills necessary for English-medium university studies;
- apply appropriate linguistic registers in different communicative situations;
- apply standard conventions for essay structure;
- use correct English grammar in writing with regard to sentence structure, verb and noun forms;
- critically evaluate sources and use references with proper citation conventions in their own writing;
- provide constructive feedback on both the content and the structure of essays written by other students;
- identify their own problem areas as regards academic writing in English and show an ability to improve their writing;
- listen to academic lectures and take effective notes;
- give oral presentations;

- develop academic vocabulary.

Goal and Objectives of the Educational Component

The discipline "Foreign Language Academic Communication" is part of the list of mandatory courses for the Master's degree level. It aims to develop the scientific-research professional competence of Master's students and involves mastering the culture of academic writing and communication in a foreign language (English), taking into account the canons of modern scientific discourse.

The goal of the educational component is to study the features of foreign language usage in scientific written and oral communication, to master the specifics of academic writing, reading, listening, and speaking through familiarization with contemporary original scientific texts of various genres, identifying their structural, content, linguistic, communicative, and rhetorical features.

The objectives of the educational component are:

Familiarization with the characteristics of modern scientific texts of different genres.

Identifying the structural, content, linguistic, communicative, and rhetorical features of scientific texts.

Improving skills to produce high-quality professional texts in a foreign language, properly formatting scientific texts, and enhancing the effectiveness of scientific research activities of Master's students.

Learning outcomes (competencies)

General competencies:

GC 1. Ability to adapt and act in new situations.

GC 4. Ability to communicate with representatives of other professional groups at different levels (with experts from other fields of knowledge/types of economic activity).

Special competencies:

SC 6. Ability to plan and conduct scientific research using theoretical and applied achievements in entrepreneurship, trade, and/or stock market activities.

SC 10. Ability to establish, maintain, and develop business relationships with external stakeholders. Ability to use communication technologies to protect the interests of the business entity.

Program learning outcomes:

PLR 1. Ability to adapt and demonstrate initiative and independence in situations arising in professional activities.

PLR 4. Ability to apply business communication to support interaction with representatives of different professional groups.

PLR 12. Ability to plan and conduct scientific research, present and discuss results in both the national and foreign languages.

PLR 13. Ability to apply modern research technologies and methods in the fields of entrepreneurship, trade, and/or stock market activities.

Theme 1. English Academic Style and Language

1. What is Academic English?

Academic English is a formal, precise, and objective style of communication used in educational and research contexts.

2. Key Features of Academic English:

- Formality: Avoids colloquial language and slang.
Example: Use “conduct” instead of “do,” “subsequently” instead of “then.”
- Objectivity: Focuses on facts, not personal opinions or emotions.
Example: Avoid phrases like “I believe” or “I feel.” Use evidence to support statements.

- Clarity and Precision: Uses specific and clear language to convey meaning without ambiguity.

Example: “The study included 500 participants aged 18–25” instead of “A large number of young people participated.”

- Impersonality: Focuses on the subject rather than the writer, often using the passive voice.

Example: “The results were analyzed” instead of “We analyzed the results.”

3. Why is Academic Style Important?

- Ensures professionalism and credibility in writing.
- Makes texts accessible to a global academic audience.
- Provides clarity and supports effective communication of complex ideas.

4. Common Errors to Avoid:

- Overusing contractions (e.g., “don’t” → “do not”).
- Including informal language (e.g., “a lot of” → “numerous”).
- Being vague or imprecise (e.g., “things” → specify what things).

Activity 1: Identifying Features of Academic Language

1. Read the Text:

- Access an academic text or article from PLOS ONE Open Access Articles or EAP Foundation.

2. Individual Task:

- Highlight examples of the following features in the text:
 - Formality: Look for formal word choices (e.g., “utilize” instead of “use”).
 - Objectivity: Identify neutral language that avoids personal opinions.
 - Precision: Find specific terms, numbers, or data that provide clarity.
 - Impersonality: Note instances where passive voice is used (e.g., “It was observed that...”).

3. Class Discussion:

- Share examples you found. As a group, discuss why these features are essential in academic writing.

Activity 2: Paraphrasing for Academic Style

1. Text for Practice:

- Choose a paragraph from an academic text (use a resource such as [Springer Open Access Articles](#)).

2. Pair Work:

- Rewrite the paragraph to make it more formal and academic if it isn't already.
- Focus on improving:
 - Word choice (replace informal phrases with formal synonyms).
 - Sentence structure (use complex, precise sentences).

3. Peer Review:

- Exchange your rewritten paragraphs with a partner. Review each other's work to ensure it maintains formality, objectivity, and clarity.

Activity 3: Avoiding Common Errors in Academic Writing

1. Interactive Quiz:

- Complete an online quiz on academic language and style, such as the one available at BBC Bitesize: Formal and Informal Language.

2. Reflection:

- After completing the quiz, reflect on common errors you might make in your own writing.

3. Group Discussion:

- Discuss strategies to avoid these errors in future academic assignments.

Activity 4: Comparative Analysis of Academic Styles

Task:

1. Form small groups and assign each group a different academic discipline (e.g., science, humanities, business).
2. Analyze sample texts from each chosen discipline (e.g., journal articles, essays, lab reports).
3. Compare the following elements:
 - Writing style (formal vs. informal, use of first-person, etc.)
 - Vocabulary (technical vs. general language)
 - Structure (e.g., introduction, body, conclusion, methodology)
4. Present your findings to the class, highlighting the differences in academic communication across disciplines.

Preparation Materials:

- Science:

The Missing Risks of Climate Change - Nature

Summary: Discusses the underestimated risks associated with climate change, emphasizing the need for comprehensive risk assessments.

- Humanities:

Climate Change as a Cultural Problem - LASA Forum

Summary: Explores the cultural dimensions of climate change, focusing on how cultural narratives and practices influence environmental policies and perceptions.

- Business:

The Arts and Humanities on Environmental and Climate Change - Routledge

Summary: Examines how cultural institutions and their collections can support environmental and climate change goals, broadening approaches to research and public engagement.

Activity 5: Role-Play Academic Interactions

Task:

1. Assign roles for a seminar discussion (e.g., presenter, discussant, moderator).

2. Provide the topic and guidelines for interaction (e.g., asking questions, summarizing key points).
3. Conduct a mock seminar:
 - Presenter presents their topic.
 - Discussant summarizes key points and offers feedback.
 - Moderator facilitates the discussion and asks guiding questions.
4. After the seminar, reflect on the communication:
 - Was the interaction effective?
 - What could have been done to improve language use and style?

Preparation Materials:

- Presenter's Material:
IMF Blog: Tackling Inflation Around the World
Summary: Examines the reasons behind rising inflation, its effects on consumers, and the policy measures being implemented globally.
- Discussant's Material:
OECD: Inflation and Its Impacts on Income Inequality
Summary: Discusses how inflation disproportionately affects low-income groups and suggests policy interventions.
- Moderator's Material:
World Bank Report: Global Economic Prospects, January 2025
Summary: Discusses the economic outlook for 2025, focusing on inflationary pressures in developed and emerging markets.

. *Self-study:*

- Analyze Academic Style in a Text:
 - Choose a short academic article from JSTOR Open Access Content or DOAJ.
 - Highlight examples of formality, objectivity, and precision.

- Write a short paragraph summarizing how the author uses academic style effectively.

Theme 2. Genre Analysis and Academic Texts

1. What is a Genre?

- Definition: Genres are categories of texts with common conventions, structures, and purposes.
- Academic genres include essays, research articles, literature reviews, reports, and abstracts.

2. Purpose and Audience in Academic Genres

- Different genres serve specific purposes (e.g., research articles aim to share findings, essays aim to argue a position).
- Importance of tailoring the style and structure to the audience and purpose.

3. Key Features of Common Academic Genres:

- Essay: Introduction, thesis statement, body paragraphs, conclusion.
- Research Article: Abstract, introduction, literature review, methodology, results, discussion, conclusion.
- Report: Title page, executive summary, introduction, findings, recommendations, references.
- Literature Review: Summary and synthesis of relevant literature to frame research.

4. Analyzing Academic Genres

- Focus on structure, language (formal, precise, objective), and style (impersonal tone, clear logic).

Activity 1: Research Article Analysis

1. Read the Text: You will be provided with a short research article (e.g., PLOS ONE Open Access Articles <https://journals.plos.org/plosone/> or [PubMed Central](#)).

- Focus on identifying the structure: locate the abstract, introduction, methodology, results, discussion, and conclusion.
 - Look for formal and objective language.
2. Group Work:
- In small groups, analyze the article. Discuss the purpose of each section:
 - What does the introduction aim to achieve?
 - How are the results presented?
 - How does the discussion relate findings to the research question?
3. Class Discussion:
- Each group will present their findings. Compare how different teams interpreted the structure and style.

Activity 2: Comparing Two Genres

1. Read Two Texts on a Similar Topic:
- Text 1: An academic essay (e.g., sample essays from EAP Foundation).
 - Text 2: A research article (e.g., from [ResearchGate](#) or [Springer Open](#)).
2. Pair Work:
- Work with a partner to compare the two texts. Answer these questions:
 - How is the structure different (e.g., essays use paragraphs, research articles use sections like "methodology")?
 - How does the language differ (essays may use argumentative language, while research articles are more formal and precise)?
 - Who is the intended audience for each?
3. Write a Comparison Paragraph:
- Together, write a short paragraph summarizing the differences in structure, style, and purpose.

Activity 3: Writing an Abstract

1. Read a Research Article Without an Abstract:
 - Select an article from Elsevier Open Access Journals or another suitable resource.
 - Your task is to summarize the article in 150–200 words.
2. Include the Following in Your Abstract:
 - Purpose of the study.
 - Methodology used.
 - Key results.
 - Main conclusion.
3. Peer Review:
 - Exchange your abstract with a partner. Provide feedback:
 - Does the abstract include all the key elements?
 - Is the language concise and formal?

Activity 2: Genre Awareness and Writing Practice

Task:

1. Select a specific genre (e.g., literature review, research proposal).
2. Read the provided model text that demonstrates the chosen genre.
3. Analyze the structure using the checklist:
 - Introduction: Clearly states the research question and context.
 - Body: Summarizes and synthesizes relevant literature; critically evaluates sources.
 - Conclusion: Summarizes key findings and suggests areas for further research.
4. Write a short piece in the genre (e.g., a mini literature review on a topic of your choice).

5. Peer-review the written work using the checklist to ensure it follows the structural features.

Preparation Materials:

- Model Text:

Environmental Humanities Approaches to Climate Change - MDPI

Summary: This introduction provides an overview of how environmental humanities approach the issue of climate change, serving as a model for structuring academic writing in this genre.

. *Self-study:*

- Find and Analyze: Choose a text in an academic genre not covered in class (e.g., a literature review, book review, or conference paper). Resources include:
 - JSTOR Free Content
 - DOAJ: Directory of Open Access Journals
- Write a Reflection: In one paragraph, summarize the genre's purpose, structure, and audience. Bring your reflection to the next class.

Theme 3. Reading: Developing Critical Approaches

1. What is Critical Reading?

- Critical reading goes beyond understanding a text; it involves evaluating the content, questioning assumptions, and assessing the validity and relevance of arguments.
- It is essential for academic success, as it helps identify credible sources, avoid biases, and develop informed opinions.

2. Steps in Critical Reading:

- Pre-reading: Skim the text to understand its structure and main purpose.

- During Reading:
 - Identify the thesis statement or central argument.
 - Highlight key ideas, arguments, and evidence.
 - Note the author’s tone, perspective, and potential bias.
 - Post-reading:
 - Summarize the main points.
 - Reflect on the strength of the arguments.
 - Question the reliability of the source and whether evidence is sufficient.
3. Key Skills for Critical Reading:
- Distinguishing Facts from Opinions: Look for evidence to support claims.
 - Evaluating Arguments: Analyze whether the arguments are logical, well-supported, and relevant.
 - Identifying Bias and Assumptions: Recognize when a text reflects a particular viewpoint and consider alternative perspectives.
4. Questions to Guide Critical Reading:
- What is the author’s purpose?
 - What evidence is used to support the claims? Is it credible?
 - Are there any assumptions or biases in the text?
 - How does this text compare to other sources on the same topic?

Activity 1: Analyzing the Structure of an Academic Text

1. Text for Practice:

- Choose a short academic article or opinion piece from PLOS ONE Open Access Articles or The Conversation.

2. Task:

- Skim the text to identify:
 - The main argument or thesis statement.

- The structure of the text (e.g., introduction, body, conclusion).
 - Highlight key pieces of evidence used to support the main argument.
3. Class Discussion:
- Share your findings. Discuss whether the structure and evidence effectively support the author's argument.

Activity 2: Distinguishing Facts from Opinions

1. Text for Practice:
- Provide students with a text that mixes facts and opinions (e.g., an article from BBC Future or EAP Foundation's Critical Reading Exercises).
2. Task:
- In pairs, underline factual statements and highlight opinions.
 - Discuss:
 - What evidence is provided to support the opinions?
 - Are the opinions justified based on the evidence?
3. Output:
- Write a short paragraph summarizing whether the text is balanced or biased.

Activity 3: Evaluating Arguments and Bias

1. Text for Practice:
- Use an editorial or argumentative article from The New York Times Opinion Section or The Guardian Opinion.
2. Task:
- Answer the following questions in groups:
 - What is the main argument of the text?
 - What evidence does the author provide to support their claims?
 - Are there any logical fallacies or weaknesses in the argument?

- Does the text show bias or assumptions? Provide examples.

3. Class Discussion:

- Present your group's evaluation and compare perspectives with other groups.

Activity 4: Analyzing Abstracts for Critical Reading

Text for Practice:

SOCIAL MEDIA USE AND ITS IMPACT ON MENTAL HEALTH

Anna L. Roberts

The increasing prevalence of social media platforms has sparked widespread concern about their effects on mental health. This article examines the relationship between social media use and mental health outcomes, focusing on anxiety, depression, and self-esteem. A mixed-methods approach was employed, combining survey data from 1,200 participants with in-depth interviews to gain a nuanced understanding of these effects. The findings indicate that the impact of social media is complex: while excessive use is linked to negative outcomes like anxiety and reduced self-esteem, moderate use can foster social connections and improve well-being. These results suggest the need for a balanced approach to social media engagement and highlight the importance of digital literacy in mitigating risks. (Roberts, A.L. (2022) *Journal of Digital Behavior* 12 (4), 102-118)

Task:

Underline the main components of the abstract above:

- (a) Background position – What is the context or concern being addressed?
- (b) Aim and thesis of the article – What is the purpose of the study, and what is the main argument?
- (c) Method of research – How was the research conducted?
- (d) Results of research – What are the main findings?

Follow-up Questions for Class Discussion:

1. How effectively does the abstract summarize the article?
2. Are the research methods appropriate for addressing the aim? Why or why not?
3. What further questions would you ask after reading this abstract?

Activity 5 : Distinguishing Fact and Opinion

Introduction:

When reading academic texts, it's essential to identify facts and opinions.

- Facts are statements that can be verified as true or false based on evidence or data.
- Opinions are personal beliefs, judgments, or interpretations that cannot be proven true or false.

Task:

5.1: Identify the Type of Statement

Decide whether the following statements are facts, opinions, or both:

1. Global warming is causing sea levels to rise.
2. Climate change policies should focus more on renewable energy sources.
3. Many species of wildlife are at risk due to deforestation.
4. The government is responsible for addressing climate change.
5. Climate change is a serious threat to future generations.

5.2: Read the Following Sentences and Decide

Decide if the following statements are fact or opinion.

- If they are fact, decide whether they are true or false based on your knowledge or available evidence.
- If they are opinion, decide whether you agree or disagree with the statement.

1. The Earth's average temperature has increased by 1°C since the early 20th century.
2. Governments worldwide are not doing enough to combat global warming.
3. Air pollution in large cities is linked to respiratory diseases.
4. The use of electric vehicles will significantly reduce carbon emissions.
5. The world's oceans are becoming more polluted every year.

Follow-up Questions for Class Discussion:

1. How can you distinguish between facts and opinions in academic texts?
2. Why is it important to evaluate both facts and opinions critically when reading research articles?
3. How can the presence of opinions in academic texts affect the interpretation of the data presented?

Activity 6: Assessing Internet Sources Critically

You cannot afford to waste time on unreliable or outdated texts. If you are using material that is not on the reading list, you must assess it critically to ensure that the material is trustworthy. Internet sources are plentiful and conveniently available, but you need to ask several questions about each site:

- Is this a reputable website, for example, with "edu" or "gov" in the URL?
- Is the name of the author given, and is he/she well-known in the field?
- Is the language of the text in a suitable academic style?
- Are there any obvious errors in the text, e.g., spelling mistakes, which suggest a careless approach?

Task

6.1 Compare These Two Internet Texts on Climate Change. Which Is Likely to Be More Reliable?

Text 1: The world is facing an unprecedented crisis due to climate change. Global temperatures are rising rapidly, and experts believe we could soon reach a tipping point beyond which the damage is irreversible. There are extreme weather events happening all over the world, from wildfires to massive floods, and these events are happening more and more frequently. If we do not take immediate action, the entire ecosystem will collapse, and humanity will face devastating consequences. Scientists warn that the effects of climate change could lead to the extinction of thousands of species within the next decade.

Text 2: The impacts of climate change are increasingly evident in ecosystems and human societies worldwide. According to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), global temperatures have increased by approximately 1°C since the pre-industrial era. Extreme weather events, including more intense hurricanes, heatwaves, and floods, are expected to increase in frequency and severity. The 2018 IPCC Special Report warned that limiting global warming to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels is crucial to avoid catastrophic effects, such as the loss of biodiversity and threats to food and water security.

Which text is more likely to be reliable? Explain your reasoning based on the following points:

- The style and tone of the text
- The presence of factual sources
- The language used
- The logical consistency of the arguments

Guidance for the Task:

1. Text 1:

- Notice the informal tone ("The world is facing an unprecedented crisis"), which may suggest that the source is aiming to sensationalize the issue.
- The absence of sources makes it harder to verify the claims.
- The use of dramatic language ("The entire ecosystem will collapse") may also suggest bias or exaggeration.

2. Text 2:

- The tone is semi-formal and the text includes credible sources, such as the IPCC (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change), which adds authority to the claims made.
- The text provides specific figures ("1°C since the pre-industrial era"), which can be verified through scientific sources, adding credibility.
- The language is factual and precise, without exaggeration or emotional appeal.

Here's how the task can be analyzed, including guidance for students to assess the reliability of each text:

Activity 7 Practice: Assessing Trustworthiness of Information

Task

Read the following texts and decide if you can trust the information. Give reasons for your decisions.

Text 1:

Do you want to lose weight without exercising or dieting? Discover our secret weight-loss pill that will melt fat away while you sleep! No side effects and no effort needed.

Thousands of people have already achieved their dream bodies. Order now to get a special 50% discount, only for the next 24 hours!

Text 2:

Saving energy at home can reduce your bills and help the environment. Start by turning off lights when not in use, using energy-efficient appliances, and insulating your home properly to maintain temperature. These simple steps can help you save money and reduce your carbon footprint. For more information on sustainable living, visit the official government website for guidelines on reducing household energy consumption.

- Trustworthiness: Likely to be reliable.
 - Reasoning:
 - Practical advice: The recommendations for saving energy (turning off lights, using energy-efficient appliances, insulation) are commonly recognized and environmentally responsible.
 - Clear language: The text uses simple and factual language without exaggeration or persuasive tactics.
 - Source suggestion: The mention of an official government website adds credibility to the advice provided.

Text 3:

Eating too much sugar is a major cause of diabetes, but there's a revolutionary new sugar alternative that will satisfy your sweet tooth without any negative health effects! This product has been proven by scientists to be the healthiest sugar substitute on the market, and it's available now for a limited-time offer!

- Trustworthiness: Unlikely to be reliable.
 - Reasoning:
 - Exaggerated claims: The text makes bold claims like "proven by scientists" and "healthiest sugar substitute," but it provides no references to scientific studies or reputable sources.

- Lack of evidence: There's no mention of the name of the product, the company behind it, or how the claims were verified, making it hard to assess its validity.
- Sales tactics: The use of phrases like "limited-time offer" and "satisfy your sweet tooth" suggests the focus is on selling the product rather than providing balanced information.

Summary of Key Points for Evaluating Trustworthiness:

1. Look for evidence and sources: Credible texts often provide supporting evidence, such as scientific studies or references to authoritative organizations.
2. Evaluate the language used: Be wary of texts that make exaggerated claims or promises that sound too good to be true.
3. Assess the tone: Reliable texts tend to be neutral, factual, and free of high-pressure sales tactics.
4. Check for practical and realistic advice: Trustworthy information offers actionable, realistic solutions that are supported by known facts.

Self-study

1. Practice: Assessing Trustworthiness of Information

Read the following texts and decide if you can trust the information. Give reasons for your decisions.

Text 1:

Hard up? Why struggle when you could live in luxury? Solve your money worries easily and quickly by working for us. No experience needed; you can earn hundreds of pounds for just a few hours' work per day. Work when it suits you, day or night. Don't delay, call today for an interview on 07795-246791.

- Trustworthiness: Unlikely to be reliable.
 - Reasoning:
 - Too good to be true: The language used seems overly sensational, promising an easy solution to financial problems with little effort.

- No specific details: The text lacks any verifiable information or credible sources to back up the claim. It sounds more like an advertisement or a possible scam.
- Urgency: The call for immediate action (“Don’t delay, call today”) is often a red flag in misleading or fraudulent advertisements.

Text 2:

If you have money problems, there’s lots of ways you can save cash. Instead of spending money on new clothes, try buying them second hand from charity shops, where you’ll find lots of stylish bargains. Eating out is another big expense, but instead you can get together with a few friends and cook a meal together; it’s cheaper and it’s fun. Bus fares and taxis can also cost a lot, so it might be worth looking for a cheap bicycle, which lets you travel where you want, when you want.

- Trustworthiness: Likely to be reliable.
 - Reasoning:
 - Practical and reasonable advice: The suggestions for saving money (buying second hand clothes, cooking at home, using a bicycle) are realistic, widely accepted, and practical tips that can help people manage their finances.
 - No sensational claims: The text does not make exaggerated promises or unrealistic claims, and it focuses on general advice.
 - Clear language: The language is simple and neutral, without emotional manipulation or pressure.

Text 3:

Most students find that they have financial difficulties at times. It has been estimated that nearly 55 per cent experience financial difficulties in their first year at college or university. It’s often hard living on a small fixed income, and the cost of accommodation and food can come as a shock when you first live away from your parents. The most important thing, if you find you are getting into debt, is to speak to a financial advisor in the Student Union, who may be able to help you sort out your problems.

- Trustworthiness: Likely to be reliable.
 - Reasoning:
 - Data-backed: The mention of an estimated 55% of students experiencing financial difficulties is a statistic that seems plausible, though the source of the estimate is not mentioned. It could be verified through research or reports on student finances.
 - Practical advice: The text offers sensible, supportive advice (contacting a financial advisor), which aligns with common recommendations for students facing financial hardship.
 - Balanced tone: The tone is neutral and helpful, not sensationalizing the issue or providing quick-fix solutions.

Summary of Key Points for Evaluating Trustworthiness:

1. Check for sensational language: Be cautious with texts that promise easy solutions or use urgent, dramatic language.
2. Look for verifiable sources: Trustworthy texts often provide specific data or cite sources to back up claims.
3. Evaluate the tone: Reliable information tends to be neutral, practical, and free from emotional manipulation.
4. Check for practicality: Information that offers practical and realistic advice is more likely to be credible.

Self-study

2. Text Analysis:

- Choose an academic article from JSTOR Open Access Content or DOAJ.

2. Task:

- Write a 200-word critical review, addressing:
 - The main argument of the text.

- The strength of the evidence provided.
- Any potential biases or assumptions.

3. Optional Activity:

- Reflect on how the critical reading process helped you better understand and evaluate the text.

Theme 4. Foundations of Academic Writing

What is Academic Writing? Academic writing is formal, objective, and evidence-based writing used to present ideas, arguments, and research findings. It is essential for university-level study and professional communication.

Key Features of Academic Writing:

1. Clarity and Precision: The language must be clear and precise to communicate ideas effectively.
2. Formality: Avoid casual or informal language; use a neutral, formal tone.
3. Objectivity: Present arguments and evidence without personal bias or emotional language.
4. Evidence-based: Support claims with data, research, and citations from credible sources.
5. Logical Structure: Follow a clear structure with an introduction, body paragraphs, and conclusion.
6. Cohesion and Coherence: Ensure ideas are logically connected and flow smoothly.

Types of Academic Writing:

1. Essays: Present arguments, analysis, or evaluation of a topic.
2. Reports: Structured documents that present information, analysis, and findings.
3. Research Papers: In-depth studies of a specific research question, supported by evidence and data.

4. Literature Reviews: Summarize and synthesize research on a specific topic to highlight trends and gaps.
5. Dissertations/Theses: Extensive research projects that contribute new knowledge to a field of study.

Steps in Writing an Academic Text:

1. Pre-writing:
 - Understand the task or question.
 - Plan your approach by outlining the main points.
2. Writing:
 - Introduction: State the thesis or main argument.
 - Body: Develop your argument with evidence, examples, and analysis.
 - Conclusion: Summarize the key points and restate the thesis in light of the arguments made.
3. Post-writing:
 - Revise and edit for clarity, coherence, and logical flow.
 - Check for grammatical errors and citation accuracy.

Activity 1: Structuring an Academic Text

Task:

- Read the sample introduction provided below.

"Over the past few decades, there has been a significant shift in the way businesses approach corporate social responsibility (CSR). Initially, CSR was viewed merely as a way to improve public relations, but in recent years, businesses have recognized its potential as a strategic tool for enhancing long-term profitability and sustainable growth. This article examines the evolution of CSR in the modern business environment and explores how companies can implement CSR strategies that contribute to both social good and their own success. The study specifically focuses on the impact of CSR on consumer

behavior and the long-term financial performance of companies in the retail sector."

- In pairs, analyze the introduction using the following questions:
 1. Does the introduction clearly state the thesis or main argument of the article?
 2. Are the objectives or purpose of the text outlined?
 3. Is there sufficient context or background information provided?
 4. Are the research questions or focus points introduced?

Discussion:

- After your analysis, share your thoughts with the class. Discuss how a well-structured introduction sets the stage for the rest of the text.

Activity 2: Developing a Clear Argument

Task:

- Below is a paragraph with a weak argument. Read the text and work in small groups to revise it. Focus on:
 1. Clarity: Make the thesis and key points clearer.
 2. Evidence: Add examples or credible sources to support your claims (use sources like PLOS ONE Open Access or [Google Scholar](#)).
 3. Coherence: Ensure each sentence logically flows into the next.

Example Paragraph:

- "Social media affects people's relationships. It's clear that people spend a lot of time online. They often don't talk to each other as much anymore, which is bad."

Discussion:

- Share your revised paragraph with the class. Discuss how adding clear evidence and improving structure strengthens the argument.

Activity 3: Cohesion and Coherence in Academic Writing

Task:

- Read the two paragraphs provided below (or use this [link for text example](#)) that lack cohesion and logical flow.
- In pairs, do the following:
 1. Identify areas where cohesion is missing (i.e., where ideas do not connect well).
 2. Add transition words/phrases (e.g., "In addition," "Therefore," "However") to link ideas smoothly.
 3. Ensure coherence by making sure that each paragraph makes sense as a whole.

Example Paragraphs:

- "I like to read books. They help me relax. However, I also enjoy watching TV shows. Books are often more detailed."
- "I work on projects at school. I attend lectures regularly. In my free time, I like to exercise."

Discussion:

- After making revisions, present your new paragraphs to the class. Discuss how transitions help to maintain logical flow and coherence.

Self-study:

Task:

- Choose an academic article from Google Scholar or PLOS ONE Open Access that interests you. Here are some links to help you find suitable articles:
 - [Google Scholar](#)
 - [PLOS ONE Open Access](#)
- Write a 200-word summary of the article you choose. Be sure to:
 1. Identify the thesis or central argument.

2. Highlight key supporting points and evidence from the article.
3. Include a brief conclusion that restates the main argument.

Optional Reflection:

- After completing the assignment, reflect on how understanding academic writing structure and argumentation has improved your approach to academic texts.

Additional Resources:

- For further reading and examples, you can check out these resources:
 - Writing an Academic Paper - EAP Foundation
 - Writing in Academic Style - University of Leicester
 - PLOS ONE Open Access
 - [Google Scholar](#)

Theme 5. Oral Discussion and Presentation in Academic Style

1. Academic Style of Oral Presentations:

Structure: An academic presentation follows a clear structure with an introduction, body, and conclusion.

- Introduction: Briefly introduce the topic, the purpose of the presentation, and outline what will be covered.
- Body: Present key ideas or arguments logically, with evidence to support them. This section may include sub-sections, data, and examples.
- Conclusion: Summarize the main points and suggest implications, future directions, or conclude with a key takeaway.

2. Clarity and Precision:

- Use simple, clear language that your audience can easily understand.

- Avoid jargon unless it is appropriate for the audience, and ensure you define any technical terms.
3. Engagement with Audience:
- Maintain eye contact with the audience.
 - Ask rhetorical questions to engage listeners and keep their attention.
 - Use visual aids (e.g., PowerPoint) to enhance understanding, not to overwhelm.
4. Body Language and Voice:
- Use gestures to emphasize key points.
 - Vary the tone and pace of your voice to maintain engagement.
 - Stand confidently and avoid fidgeting.
5. Handling Questions:
- Be prepared to answer questions from the audience.
 - After presenting, ask if there are any questions and answer them confidently, showing that you understand your material well.
6. Common Pitfalls in Oral Presentations:
- Speaking too fast or too slow.
 - Overloading the presentation with text or too much information.
 - Lack of structure and unclear main points.

Activity 1: Structuring Your Academic Presentation

Task:

- Choose a topic from your current coursework or research (e.g., a research paper, a theory you've studied, or a recent academic article).
- In pairs, prepare a 5-minute presentation on your chosen topic.
- Ensure the presentation follows the basic structure of an academic oral presentation:
 - Introduction: Briefly introduce your topic and outline what you will cover.

- Body: Present your main ideas or findings logically, using evidence to support your argument.
- Conclusion: Summarize your main points and leave the audience with a concluding thought or call to action.

Materials:

- Guideline on Structuring an Academic Presentation: Academic Presentation Tips - Purdue OWL
- Use Google Slides or Microsoft PowerPoint to create your presentation slides.

Discussion:

- After your pair has prepared the presentation, present it in front of your classmates. Get feedback on the structure, clarity, and engagement.

Activity 2: Analyzing an Effective Academic Presentation

Task:

- Watch this TED Talk video on an academic topic (Example TED Talk). Pay attention to:
 - How the speaker introduces the topic.
 - How the speaker engages with the audience.
 - The structure of the presentation.
 - Use of visual aids and the speaker's body language.

Instructions:

- After watching the video, answer the following questions:
 - What did the speaker do well in terms of clarity and structure?
 - How did they engage with the audience?
 - Did the speaker use any specific techniques to make complex ideas easier to understand?

Discussion:

- Share your answers with the class. Discuss the elements of effective academic presentations, drawing from the TED Talk example.

Activity 3: Delivering a Mini Presentation

Task:

- Each student will deliver a 1-2 minute mini presentation on a topic they are familiar with (could be from any field of study, but it must be academic in nature).
- Focus on the following:
 - Clear and engaging introduction of the topic.
 - Concise and logical presentation of key points.
 - A strong conclusion.

Instructions:

- Present your mini-presentation to the class. Afterward, the class will provide feedback on:
 - Clarity of your argument or ideas.
 - Effective use of body language and eye contact.
 - Your ability to engage with the audience.

Materials:

- Presentation Rubric (used for peer feedback):
 - Did you introduce the topic clearly?
 - Was the presentation logically structured?
 - Did you maintain good eye contact and body language?
 - Was the conclusion effective?

Self-study:

Task:

- Prepare a 3-minute oral presentation on a topic related to your course. Use the following steps to guide you:

- Write an outline of your presentation (introduction, body, and conclusion).
- Create 1-3 slides with visuals to support your presentation.
- Practice delivering your presentation several times to improve clarity and timing.

Optional Reflection:

- Reflect on the experience of preparing for your presentation. What worked well? What challenges did you encounter? How can you improve next time?

Additional Resources:

- TED Talks for Presentation Inspiration: TED Talks
- Presentation Tips and Resources: University of Leicester: Presentations
- <https://students.unimelb.edu.au/academic-skills/explore-our-resources/speaking-and-presenting/effective-presentations-preparation-organisation-language-questions>
- [Effective presentations - delivery: body language and voice](#)
- [Managing stress for oral presentations](#)

Theme 6. Developing Academic Vocabulary

1. What is Academic Vocabulary?

- Definition: Academic vocabulary refers to words and phrases commonly used in academic settings and written materials. These words are typically formal, precise, and often field-specific. They are critical for expressing complex ideas clearly and convincingly.
- Importance: Mastering academic vocabulary improves communication in academic writing and speaking. It allows you to present ideas, arguments, and research with authority and clarity.

2. Features of Academic Vocabulary

- **Formality:** Academic vocabulary avoids casual language and colloquialisms, opting for more formal terms.
 - Example: Use “increase” instead of “go up,” or “analyze” instead of “look at.”
- **Precision:** Academic words convey specific meanings and provide clarity.
 - Example: Instead of using the word “thing,” opt for more specific terms like “factor,” “element,” or “concept.”
- **Complexity:** Academic vocabulary is often more complex and can include longer words or phrases to express abstract ideas.
 - Example: Use “interdisciplinary” instead of “related to many fields.”
- **Nominalization:** Academic language frequently transforms verbs and adjectives into nouns to achieve more formal and abstract expression.
 - Example: “Decide” becomes “decision,” “analyze” becomes “analysis.”

3. Key Strategies for Building Academic Vocabulary

- **Read Academic Materials Regularly:** Read textbooks, academic articles, and journals to encounter academic vocabulary in context.
- **Use a Thesaurus:** Look up synonyms for commonly used words and find more formal or precise alternatives.
- **Practice Writing and Speaking:** Apply new academic vocabulary in your writing assignments and oral presentations.
- **Create Word Maps:** For each new word, create a map that includes its definition, synonyms, antonyms, and example sentences.
- **Use Flashcards:** Write the word on one side and its definition, synonym, and usage examples on the other side to help reinforce learning.

4. Using Academic Vocabulary in Different Contexts

- **In Writing:** Use academic vocabulary in essays, research papers, and reports to make your argument more convincing.

- In Presentations: Incorporate academic vocabulary in presentations to demonstrate your expertise and to express ideas with clarity.
- In Discussions: Use academic vocabulary in discussions and debates to participate actively and sound informed.

Activity 1: Academic Vocabulary Exploration

Task:

1. Select an academic article or chapter related to your field of study. You can find academic articles using the following resources:
 - Google Scholar
 - JSTOR
 - PubMed
2. Highlight unfamiliar words in the article that you think are academic terms.
3. Look up the meaning of these words in a reliable dictionary. You can use:
 - Merriam-Webster
 - Oxford Learner's Dictionaries
4. Write a paragraph (150-200 words) summarizing the article. In your summary, use at least five new academic words you identified and explain them in context.

Activity 2: Word Family Creation

Task:

1. Choose an academic word (e.g., “analyze,” “theory,” “evaluate”) from your coursework or reading materials.
2. Find its different forms (e.g., noun, verb, adjective, adverb). Use online dictionaries such as:
 - Cambridge Dictionary
 - WordReference

3. Write example sentences for each form of the word you've chosen. Make sure the sentences are related to an academic topic you are studying.

Example:

- Analyze (verb): "Researchers analyze the data to draw conclusions."
 - Analysis (noun): "The analysis of the results revealed significant trends."
 - Analytical (adjective): "The analytical approach helped clarify the problem."
 - Analytically (adverb): "She solved the problem analytically, considering all factors."
4. Share your sentences with a peer or in class, and discuss any difficulties you faced using the word in different forms.

Activity 3: Formal vs. Informal Language

Task:

1. Choose an informal paragraph (e.g., a summary of an article or personal reflection). You can write your own or use a piece of informal writing that you've previously created.
2. Rewrite the paragraph using more formal academic language. Replace casual words with formal alternatives. For example:
 - "Kids" becomes "children."
 - "Get" becomes "obtain."
 - "A lot of" becomes "many" or "numerous."
3. Use this formal writing guide for more tips on improving formality in your writing.
4. Present the rewritten paragraph to the class or submit it for feedback on your use of formal academic language.

Activity 4: Synonym Practice

Task:

1. Choose common everyday words (e.g., “good,” “bad,” “help,” “make”) that you often use in your writing or speaking.
2. Find more formal synonyms for these words. For example:
 - “Good” → “Beneficial,” “Effective,” “Advantageous”
 - “Bad” → “Detrimental,” “Harmful,” “Adverse”
 - “Help” → “Assist,” “Support,” “Facilitate”
 - “Make” → “Create,” “Generate,” “Formulate”
3. Use each synonym in a sentence related to an academic topic. For example:
 - “Good” → "A beneficial outcome was achieved through the study."
 - “Help” → "The tutor will assist in understanding the difficult concepts."
4. Create a list of 10 common words and their academic synonyms, and practice using them in different contexts.

Self-study

Task:

1. Choose a topic related to your course or field of study. This could be a theory, concept, or recent article you’ve encountered in your studies.
2. Identify key academic terms related to this topic. You can use the following resources to find terms:
 - [Google Scholar](#)
 - [Oxford Academic](#)
 - [Cambridge Academic Content Dictionary](#)
3. Research these terms by looking them up in reliable sources (e.g., academic articles, textbooks) and understanding how they are used in context.
4. Create 1-3 slides with visuals to support your topic and vocabulary. Use tools like:

- Google Slides
 - Microsoft PowerPoint
5. Write a 300-word summary of the topic using the new academic vocabulary you learned. Incorporate at least five academic words.
 6. Practice delivering your summary as an oral presentation to yourself or a peer.

Reflection Questions:

1. What words or terms did you find most challenging to understand or use correctly?
2. How did using academic vocabulary affect your writing or speaking? Did it make your communication clearer or more effective?
3. What strategies do you plan to use to continue expanding your academic vocabulary?

Additional Resources for Expanding Academic Vocabulary

- COCA (Corpus of Contemporary American English): A tool for exploring word usage and frequency in academic contexts.
- The Academic Word List (AWL): A collection of words frequently used across academic disciplines.
- Online Thesaurus (e.g., Thesaurus.com): Great for finding more sophisticated synonyms and related words.
- Vocabulary.com: This site provides definitions, examples, and usage guides for both general and academic vocabulary.

Theme 7. Structuring Academic Assignments

Understanding the Structure of Academic Assignments

In academic assignments, a clear and logical structure is essential for effectively presenting your ideas. The main components typically include:

1. Introduction:

- Purpose: Introduce the topic, provide context, and present the research question or thesis statement.
- Elements:
 - Brief overview of the topic
 - Thesis statement or research question
 - Outline of the structure of the assignment

2. Literature Review :

- Purpose: Summarize and critically analyze existing research on the topic.
- Elements:
 - Overview of key theories, concepts, and findings
 - Identification of gaps in existing research
 - Integration of sources (quotations, paraphrasing, and summarizing)

3. Methodology :

- Purpose: Describe the research methods you used to investigate the topic.
- Elements:
 - Research design
 - Data collection methods
 - Justification for chosen methods

4. Main Body (Discussion/Analysis):

- Purpose: Present and analyze the findings or arguments.
- Elements:
 - Logical sections/subheadings
 - Presentation of evidence and analysis
 - Critical discussion of findings

5. Conclusion:

- Purpose: Summarize the key points, answer the research question or restate the thesis, and suggest further research or implications.
- Elements:

- Recap of main arguments or findings
- Discussion of implications
- Suggestions for future research

6. References/Bibliography:

- Purpose: List all sources used in your assignment.
- Elements:
 - Citation of books, journal articles, websites, and other sources
 - Follow a specific citation style (e.g., APA, MLA, Chicago)

Activity 1: Structuring Your Assignment

Task:

1. Choose a topic from your coursework or a recent research paper you are working on.
2. Write an outline of your assignment, following the typical structure:
 - Introduction (1-2 sentences)
 - Literature Review (brief summary of key studies)
 - Methodology (for research-based assignments) or Main Body (for argumentative assignments)
 - Conclusion (summarize key arguments or findings)
 - References (list any sources you plan to cite)
3. Use the Purdue OWL Guide on Structuring Essays and Research Papers for reference.

Activity 2: Reviewing and Critiquing Academic Assignment Structures

Task:

1. Find an academic assignment (research paper, essay, etc.) that has been previously written or use your own draft.
2. Review the structure:
 - Does it include an introduction, body, and conclusion?

- Are the sections logically organized and clearly separated?
 - Is the argument or research question presented clearly in the introduction?
 - Is there a proper reference list at the end?
3. Critique the structure: Write a brief evaluation (150-200 words) focusing on:
- The clarity of the structure
 - The logical flow of ideas
 - The effectiveness of the introduction and conclusion
 - The quality of the references

Resources:

- Purdue OWL - How to Organize a Paper
- University of Leicester - Structuring Assignments

Activity 3: Writing an Introduction and Thesis Statement

Task:

1. Choose a research topic you are currently working on or select a topic of interest related to your course.
2. Write the introduction for your assignment. Ensure that it:
 - Clearly introduces the topic.
 - Provides context for the topic.
 - Includes a clear research question or thesis statement.
 - Gives an overview of the structure of your assignment (what you will discuss).
3. After writing, check your introduction against the Introduction Writing Guide from University of Melbourne.

Activity 4: Organizing and Writing the Main Body

Task:

1. Choose a section of your assignment (this could be the literature review, methodology, or analysis section).
2. Organize your ideas logically by breaking down the section into subheadings. For example, if writing a literature review:
 - Organize the review by themes, theories, or key authors.
 - Use evidence and citations to support each section.
3. Write the section, ensuring it is clear and logical.
4. Check your referencing style using a guide such as APA Referencing Guide.

Objective:

To develop your skills in organizing and writing the main body of an academic assignment, ensuring clarity and logical flow.

Activity 5: Writing a Conclusion and References

Task:

1. Write the conclusion of your assignment. It should:
 - Summarize the key findings or arguments made in the body of your paper.
 - Answer the research question or restate the thesis.
 - Suggest implications, solutions, or areas for future research.
2. Create a reference list:
 - Use a specific citation style (e.g., APA, MLA, Chicago).
 - Include all sources cited in your assignment.
3. Use Citation Generators to ensure proper formatting.

Self-study

Task:

1. Choose a topic you are currently working on for an academic assignment or select one from your coursework.
2. Create an outline for your assignment using the standard structure:

- Introduction: Context and thesis
 - Main Body: Logical sections with evidence
 - Conclusion: Summary and implications
3. Write the introduction and one main body section (for example, the literature review or analysis section) following the structure you outlined.
 4. Use this Structuring Your Assignment - University of Leicester as a resource for guidance.

Reflection Questions:

1. What challenges did you face while organizing your assignment structure?
2. How did structuring your assignment in an organized manner help clarify your ideas?
3. What improvements would you make to your writing process in the future?

Theme 8. Intercultural Academic Communication

Understanding Intercultural Academic Communication

In an academic setting, effective communication across cultures is crucial. Understanding cultural differences, respecting diversity, and adapting your communication style are key components of successful intercultural academic communication. Below are some essential points:

1. Cultural Sensitivity:
 - Awareness of cultural differences and how they influence communication styles, behaviours, and expectations.
 - Avoiding assumptions and stereotyping.
 - Practicing respect and tolerance for different perspectives.
2. Communication Styles:
 - High-context vs. low-context communication:

- High-context cultures (e.g., Japan, China): Communication is indirect, and context plays a major role in understanding.
 - Low-context cultures (e.g., Germany, the USA): Communication is direct, and meaning is explicit.
 - Adapting your communication style depending on the cultural norms of your audience.
3. Non-Verbal Communication:
- Different cultures interpret non-verbal cues (gestures, eye contact, body language) in various ways.
 - Be aware of gestures or actions that might be perceived as rude or inappropriate in different cultures.
4. Academic Writing Styles:
- Academic writing can vary across cultures. For example, some cultures may favour a more formal tone, while others may prioritize clarity and conciseness.
 - Be mindful of varying expectations regarding argumentation, structure, and citation styles.
5. Managing Intercultural Conflicts:
- Be open to feedback and different approaches to problem-solving.
 - Encourage inclusive dialogue and create an environment where everyone feels heard.

Activity 1: Exploring Cultural Communication Styles

Task:

1. Choose two different cultures that you are familiar with (e.g., your own culture and one you have interacted with or studied).
2. Compare and contrast the communication styles:
 - How are greetings handled?

- How direct or indirect is communication?
 - What are the common non-verbal communication practices?
 - How does this affect academic discussions or collaborations?
3. Prepare a short presentation (3-5 minutes) that highlights the similarities and differences between the two cultures' communication styles.

Materials:

- Purdue OWL - Intercultural Communication

Activity 2: Analysing an Intercultural Academic Discussion

Task:

1. Watch a video or read an academic article featuring an intercultural discussion (e.g., a panel discussion with diverse international scholars or a webinar).
 - Pay attention to how speakers adapt their communication styles.
 - Focus on how they manage cultural differences, use language, and non-verbal cues.
2. Answer the following questions after watching/reading:
 - How do the participants adjust their communication based on cultural norms?
 - How do they navigate disagreements or misunderstandings?
 - Are there specific strategies they use to ensure effective communication?

Materials:

- TED Talks for Intercultural Communication
- Intercultural Communication in the Classroom - University of California

Activity 3: Developing Intercultural Communication Strategies

Task:

1. Identify a cultural group you have little experience with in academic settings.

2. Research the communication preferences, etiquette, and common practices of that group (this could be a country, an academic discipline, or an academic community).
3. Create a list of strategies you would use to communicate effectively with members of that cultural group. Consider the following:
 - How would you adapt your tone and formality level?
 - What cultural norms should you be aware of when interacting?
 - How would you ensure you are respecting their communication style during discussions?

Materials:

- [Culture Crossing Guide](#)
- University of Leicester - Intercultural Communication

Activity 4: Intercultural Conflict Resolution in Academic Settings

Task:

1. Discuss a case study where intercultural misunderstandings occurred in an academic context (e.g., a disagreement in a multicultural group project).
2. Propose solutions on how the conflict could be resolved:
 - How could better communication have prevented the misunderstanding?
 - What strategies could be used to manage or resolve the conflict?
 - How can you ensure that all parties feel respected and understood?
3. Role-play: In pairs, simulate a conversation where you work through a cultural misunderstanding. Practice using the strategies you have identified to resolve the issue.

Materials:

- [Conflict Resolution Strategies - University of California](#)
- [Harvard Business Review - Managing Cross-Cultural Conflict](#)

Self-study

Enhancing Your Intercultural Communication Skills

Task:

1. Choose a cultural group you are not very familiar with.
2. Write a 500-word reflection on how you would communicate with members of this cultural group in an academic setting. Focus on:
 - Language and tone considerations.
 - Non-verbal communication (eye contact, gestures, body language).
 - Ways to adapt your communication to avoid misunderstandings.
3. Practice the skills you have learned by having a conversation (in person or online) with a peer from a different cultural background.

Materials:

- Intercultural Communication Reflection Guide - University of Melbourne
- Intercultural Competence - The University of Arizona

Reflection Questions:

1. What cultural differences did you identify in the communication styles during your research and activities?
2. How can you use these insights to improve your academic communication?
3. What challenges did you encounter while trying to understand intercultural communication, and how did you overcome them?

Theme 9. Visualizing Data in Academic Communication

Understanding the Importance of Data Visualization in Academic Communication

Data visualization is a powerful tool for communicating complex information clearly and effectively in academic contexts. Visualizing data enables researchers and students to present their findings in a way that is easily understandable and accessible to

a wide audience. Below are some key concepts in visualizing data for academic communication:

1. Types of Data Visualizations:

- Bar Charts: Useful for comparing quantities across different categories.
- Line Graphs: Ideal for showing trends over time.
- Pie Charts: Best for representing proportions or percentages.
- Scatter Plots: Show relationships between two variables.
- Histograms: Depict the distribution of data across intervals.
- Heatmaps: Visualize data density or correlations.

2. Principles of Effective Data Visualization:

- Simplicity: Avoid clutter and unnecessary elements in your visuals.
- Clarity: Ensure that the meaning of the data is easily interpretable.
- Consistency: Use consistent colours, fonts, and scales.
- Relevance: Choose the appropriate type of visualization for the data you are presenting.
- Accuracy: Be careful not to manipulate data or visual elements in a way that distorts the information.

3. Tools for Creating Visualizations:

- Microsoft Excel: Common for simple bar charts, pie charts, and line graphs.
- Tableau: A more advanced tool for interactive data visualization.
- Google Charts: An easy-to-use tool for embedding charts into presentations.
- Canva: Great for creating visually appealing graphics and charts.
- R and Python: For statistical and more advanced data visualizations.

4. Interpreting Data Visualizations:

- Understand the axes, scales, and data points presented in the visual.
- Consider the context of the data and what the visualization is trying to convey.

5. Ethical Considerations:

- Avoid misleading your audience with manipulated visual data.
- Always provide clear legends, labels, and sources for your visuals.

Activity 1: Creating an Academic Data Visualization

Task:

1. Choose a dataset: Select a dataset related to your field of study. If you don't have one, you can use publicly available datasets such as those from Kaggle or UCI Machine Learning Repository.
2. Decide on the appropriate visualization:
 - Choose a visualization type that best represents the data (e.g., bar chart, scatter plot, pie chart, etc.).
3. Create the visualization using a tool such as Microsoft Excel or Google Sheets.
4. Analyze the visualization: Write a short summary (100-150 words) explaining the insights you gained from the data and the key message the visualization communicates.

Materials:

- Data Visualization Tools and Resources
- Kaggle Datasets
- Google Sheets Data Visualization Guide

Activity 2: Analysing Data Visualizations in Academic Articles

Task:

1. Choose an academic article that includes data visualizations (e.g., a journal article or a research paper from Google Scholar).
 - Pay special attention to how the data visualizations are integrated into the narrative of the paper.
2. Answer the following questions:

- How do the visualizations support the research findings?
 - Are the visualizations clear and easy to interpret? Why or why not?
 - Do the visualizations adhere to the principles of effective data visualization (simplicity, clarity, accuracy)?
3. Discussion: In pairs or small groups, discuss how these visualizations could be improved.

Materials:

- [Google Scholar](#)
- [Example of a Data-Driven Academic Article](#)

Activity 3: Creating an Interactive Data Dashboard

Task:

1. Choose a dataset from any academic field (science, economics, sociology, etc.).
2. Use a tool such as Tableau, Google Data Studio, or Microsoft Power BI to create an interactive data dashboard.
 - Ensure the dashboard includes at least 2-3 types of visualizations (e.g., bar chart, line graph, and a map).
3. Write a short description (100-150 words) on how the interactive features of the dashboard enhance the understanding of the data.

Materials:

- Tableau Public
- [Google Data Studio](#)
- [Microsoft Power BI](#)

Activity 4: Ethical Considerations in Data Visualization

Task:

1. Find an example of a misleading data visualization (a chart or graph from social media, news, or a research paper).

2. Explain why the visualization is misleading or unethical. Discuss any of the following:
 - Use of scales that distort the data.
 - Lack of context or necessary labels.
 - Cherry-picking of data to fit an agenda.
3. Propose improvements to make the visualization more accurate and ethically sound.

Materials:

- [How to Lie with Statistics - Common Misleading Graphs](#)
- [Data Visualization Ethics - Data Science Central](#)

Self-study

Task:

1. Collect your data: Gather the data for your current research or academic project.
2. Create a visualization: Choose a suitable type of visualization to present your data (e.g., bar chart, pie chart, scatter plot).
3. Write a reflection (200 words) on how the visualization enhances your research and makes the findings more accessible to your audience.

Materials:

- [Excel Data Visualization Guide](#)
- [Data Visualization Principles](#)

Reflection Questions:

1. How did your understanding of the data improve after creating the visualization?
2. Did you face any challenges while interpreting or creating data visualizations? How did you overcome them?
3. How do you think data visualizations can be used to enhance your academic communication?

Theme 10. Soft Skills in Academic Communication

The Role of Soft Skills in Academic Communication

Soft skills are crucial in academic communication, enabling students and professionals to effectively express ideas, collaborate with others, and navigate various academic and professional environments. While technical knowledge is important, how you communicate that knowledge often plays a decisive role in your success.

1. Key Soft Skills in Academic Communication:

- **Active Listening:** Understanding and processing information from others to contribute meaningfully to discussions or presentations.
- **Empathy:** Recognizing and respecting the feelings, thoughts, and perspectives of others.
- **Clear Communication:** Expressing ideas concisely, clearly, and in an understandable manner.
- **Collaboration:** Working effectively with others to share ideas, solve problems, and contribute to academic projects.
- **Conflict Resolution:** Managing disagreements constructively and finding mutually agreeable solutions.
- **Presentation Skills:** Delivering information effectively in a way that engages the audience and enhances understanding.
- **Non-verbal Communication:** Understanding and using body language, eye contact, and facial expressions to support communication.
- **Feedback Reception and Giving:** Offering constructive criticism and receiving feedback graciously to improve work and interactions.

2. Why Soft Skills Matter in Academia:

- Effective academic communication involves more than just writing papers or giving presentations. It requires the ability to engage with peers,

professors, and audiences in a constructive, respectful, and professional manner.

- Soft skills help build strong academic networks, collaborate with peers on research projects, and effectively contribute to seminars, conferences, and classroom discussions.
- Good soft skills can enhance your academic reputation and make you a more effective student, researcher, or educator.

3. Developing Soft Skills for Academic Communication:

- Practice active listening and participate in discussions regularly.
- Be open to feedback and use it for personal and academic growth.
- Hone your ability to present ideas clearly and confidently.
- Develop a constructive approach to resolving disagreements.
- Seek opportunities for group work to strengthen collaboration skills.

Activity 1: Active Listening and Feedback Exercise

Task:

1. Pair up with a classmate. One person will be the speaker, and the other will be the listener.
2. The speaker will talk for 3-4 minutes on a topic related to their academic work, project, or any subject of interest.
3. The listener will practice active listening:
 - Make eye contact, nod, and use small verbal cues ("I see," "Interesting").
 - After the speaker finishes, summarize what was discussed (without adding personal opinions).
 - Provide feedback on how clearly the speaker expressed their ideas and ask for clarification if necessary.
4. Switch roles: The listener becomes the speaker, and the previous speaker listens and provides feedback.

Materials:

- Active Listening Tips
- Giving and Receiving Feedback

Activity 2: Constructive Feedback in Group Discussions

Task:

1. Form small groups (3-4 people). Each person will present a short summary (2-3 minutes) of their current academic project or research.
2. After each presentation, group members will provide constructive feedback using the following structure:
 - What was clear and effective? (Positive feedback)
 - What could be improved? (Suggestions for improvement)
 - How can the feedback be implemented in a practical way? (Actionable advice)
3. After all group members have received feedback, discuss as a group how giving and receiving feedback can improve academic work.

Materials:

- Effective Feedback Strategies
- How to Give and Receive Constructive Feedback

Activity 3: Non-Verbal Communication in Academic Presentations

Task:

1. Choose a topic from your academic field to present briefly (2-3 minutes).
2. Focus on your non-verbal communication during the presentation:
 - Use appropriate gestures to emphasize key points.
 - Maintain eye contact with the audience.
 - Be mindful of your posture and avoid fidgeting.
3. After your presentation, ask for feedback from your classmates on:

- How engaging your non-verbal communication was.
 - Any suggestions for improving eye contact, gestures, or posture.
4. Reflect on how non-verbal communication can affect the delivery of an academic message.

Materials:

- Non-Verbal Communication in Presentations
- Effective Presentation Skills

Activity 4: Conflict Resolution in Academic Settings

Task:

1. In pairs, discuss a hypothetical academic conflict:
 - You and your peer are co-authors on a research paper, but you disagree on the direction of the research.
 - Use the collaboration and conflict resolution techniques discussed to resolve the disagreement constructively.
2. After the discussion, each pair should summarize their approach to resolving the conflict and reflect on how these skills could be applied in actual academic situations.

Materials:

- Conflict Resolution Strategies
- Collaboration and Teamwork in Academic Settings

Activity 5: Presentation of Ideas in Groups

Task:

1. Work in groups to create a 5-minute presentation on a topic related to your field of study. Ensure that each member presents a part of the topic.
2. Focus on effective group collaboration:
 - Practice giving constructive feedback during rehearsals.

- Focus on coordinating your presentation style (tone, pace, body language).
 - Ensure all members contribute equally to the presentation.
3. After the presentation, reflect on how the group worked together and what could have been improved in terms of communication.

Materials:

- Teamwork in Academic Work
- Effective Group Presentation Tips

Self-study

Enhancing Your Soft Skills

Task:

1. Identify one soft skill you feel you need to improve (e.g., active listening, feedback reception, or conflict resolution).
2. Develop a personal plan on how to improve this skill. This could include:
 - Participating in discussions or group work.
 - Practicing feedback techniques in academic settings.
 - Watching academic presentations and noting how the presenter uses soft skills.
3. Keep a journal of your progress over the next two weeks, noting any challenges and successes in improving the chosen soft skill.

Materials:

- Personal Development Plans for Soft Skills
- Soft Skills Development Guide

Reflection Questions:

1. Which soft skill do you find most challenging to use in academic settings, and why?
2. How do you think improving your soft skills will affect your academic and professional success?

3. What steps will you take next to continue developing your soft skills for academic communication?

Final Assessment

The credit is awarded in the form of a project defence (Academic Poster), which is evaluated with a maximum of 60 points.

An academic poster is a graphic and textual representation of research, designed to convey key information concisely and visually. A well-balanced poster combines content (information) with layout (presentation).

Why Present a Poster?

- **Effective Communication:** Some information is better understood visually.
- **Memorable:** Images and diagrams make a lasting impression.
- **Assessment Task:** Posters may be part of coursework or conference presentations.
- **Networking:** A great way to introduce work to peers and experts.

Key Features of an Academic Poster

- Clear, concise message that is understandable without explanation.
- Appropriate visuals such as charts, diagrams, or images.
- Minimal text with bullet points and short paragraphs.
- Logical flow that guides the reader smoothly.

Steps to Developing Your Poster

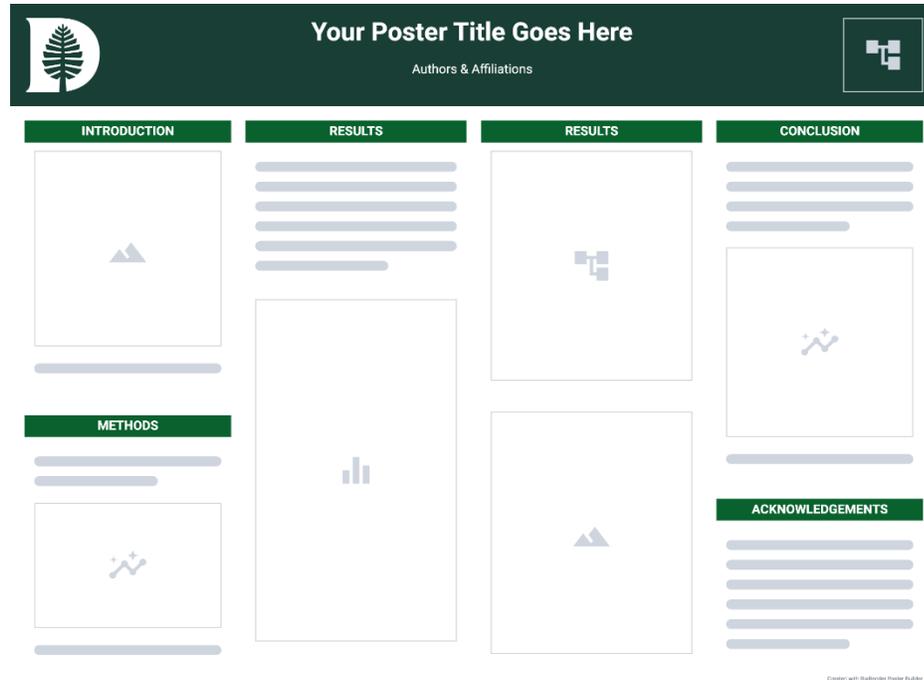
1. Define your main message: What do you want viewers to remember?
2. Sketch different layouts: Try out various arrangements.
3. Refine drafts: Edit and improve for clarity.
4. Check clarity and balance: Step back and review from a distance.
5. Proofread: Ensure correct spelling, grammar, and formatting.

Structure of an Academic Poster

A well-structured academic poster consists of the following sections:

1. Title (Top Section)
 - Clear, concise, and informative.
 - Use a large, bold font (80–96 pt).
2. Introduction / Abstract
 - Briefly introduce your research.
 - Provide background information (30–36 pt font size).
3. Methods
 - Describe how the research was conducted.
 - Use bullet points or flowcharts for clarity.
4. Results
 - Present key findings using graphs, tables, or diagrams.
 - Keep text minimal and let visuals communicate data.
5. Discussion / Conclusion
 - Summarize findings and their implications.
 - Highlight key takeaways in simple terms.
6. References & Acknowledgments (Bottom Section)
 - Cite key sources.
 - Acknowledge contributors or funding sources.

Graphic Example of an Academic Poster Layout



Design Tips for an Effective Poster

- Use large, readable fonts (80–96 pt for titles, 18–24 pt for text).
- Choose a clear font (e.g., Arial or Helvetica).
- Maintain a balanced ratio of text to graphics (50:50).
- Keep color selection simple; use 2-3 colors for consistency.
- Avoid clutter; use white space to improve readability.
- Utilize software like PowerPoint or Canva for professional design.

Common Mistakes to Avoid

- Overloading with too much text.
- Using small or fancy fonts that are hard to read.
- Poor colour contrast that makes reading difficult.
- Lack of structure or flow in content arrangement.

Further Resources

- Creating Effective Posters: www.ncsu.edu/project/posters
- Scientist's Guide to Poster Presentations by P. Gosling
- Techniques for Successful Poster Presentations by R. Lethbridge

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Additional Resources

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