

Upper Iowa University External Degree Program

BA 374-08 Business Communications

Please read this introduction carefully before starting the course and refer to it as needed as you work through the course.

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

Application of writing skills specifically for business managers includes annual reports; routine, persuasive and special messages; proposals; and brochures. This course places written and oral business communication within the context of general communication processes and familiarizes learners with recent technological advances. Strategy for effective writing is emphasized by engaging in a variety of business tasks. Prerequisite: ENG 102. Three semester credits.

COURSE OBJECTIVES:

By the end of the course, students will:

1. Explain the communication process from the positions of “receiver” and “sender” in business contexts, including faxes and email.
2. Apply reasoned, practical, and ethical communication principles when writing business messages.
3. Recognize the nuances of written and oral communication practices in a global context.
4. Demonstrate business communication skills in independent and collaborative situations.
5. Analyze various business communications employing communication theory.
6. Design and deliver an effective oral presentation on a business topic.

REQUIRED COURSE MATERIALS AND OTHER:

1. Text: Ober, S. (2009). *Contemporary Business Communication* (7th ed.). Boston: Houghton-Mifflin.
2. Syllabus.

You may purchase your textbook through MBS Direct by calling their toll free number at: 800-325-3252 or through the UIU homepage: www.uiu.edu. Click on the link for current students then select order textbooks from the options in the left hand column. Follow the link and select External Degree for your location.

3. Skills Applications:

This course fulfills the following General Education outcomes:

- Communications
- Information Technology
- Global and National Diversity
- Social Responsibility

In addition, this course fulfills the following Business Administration, Management, and Human Resources Management major goal:

- The identification and evaluation of socially responsible and ethical business practices.

Also, this course fulfills the following Management major goals:

- Application of rational problem solving skills, communication techniques, and critical thinking skills to management.
- Identification of the managerial, marketing and financial aspects required for an entrepreneurial venture.

The course also fulfills the following Human Resources Management major goal:

- * Analysis of the impact of individual behavior and communication style in the workplace.

Finally, this course supports writing across the curriculum.

WRITING PROFICIENCY:

It is recommended that all papers and research are done in the APA style. We expect appropriate writing skills of proper grammar, punctuation, sentence structure, paragraph development, and logical sequence of thought in all written work, and exams.

It is recommended that all students purchase the APA guide/manual listed on the UIU website. *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association*. \$27.00 new.

CITATION:

Encyclopedias of any kind, including the very popular Wikipedia, are not primary sources and should not be cited or used in constructing academic papers at the graduate or undergraduate level. They can, however, be useful to help gather some background information and to point the way to more reliable sources.

COURSE OVERVIEW: BUSINESS COMMUNICATIONS:

In this course, we will place written and oral workplace communication within the context of general communication processes and will become familiar with recent technological advances that have impacted such communication. We will also develop strategies for effective business writing by engaging in a variety of business writing tasks including routine, persuasive, and special messages, as well as longer documents including proposals. In each case, we will be concerned with identifying the goals and constraints of the rhetorical problem; projecting professional “ethos,” selecting, organizing, drafting, and revising the material for maximum effectiveness and reader efficiency, and adhering to basic standards for business writing.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

Students taking the Business Communications course will complete the following:

1. Read the chapters in the textbook as assigned.
2. Complete the exercises and writing assignments as assigned for Unit 1 (Chapters 1-4) and send them to the address listed on the second page of this syllabus. This is the address for your instructor. At the time of submission, the first examination may be requested from the External Degree Office. Please do not send requests to the instructor as this will delay scheduling of your exam.
3. Take the First Examination on Unit 1 (Chapters 1-4).
4. Complete the exercises and writing assignments as assigned for Unit 2 (Chapters 5-8). Send them to the address listed on the second page of this syllabus. At the time of this submission, the second examination may be requested.
5. Take the Second Examination on Unit 2 (Chapters 5-8).
6. Complete the exercises and writing assignments as assigned for Unit 3 (Chapters 9-12) and send them to the address listed on the second page of this syllabus. At the time of this submission, the third examination may be requested.
7. Take the Third Examination on Unit 3 (Chapters 9-12).

LIBRARY RESOURCES:

As a student of Upper Iowa University, you have access to the resources of the Henderson-Wilder Library on the Fayette campus. If travel to the campus is not feasible, you can access the library through the University’s website. Go to: www.uiu.edu and click on the Library option located on the left side of the home page. If you would like to use InfoTrac, please contact the UIU Library staff at library@uiu.edu.

COURSE FORMAT:

Unit 1 (Four Chapters)

- Chapter 1: Understanding Business Communication
- Chapter 2: Contemporary Issues in Business Communication
- Chapter 3: Interpersonal Communication Skills
- Chapter 4: The Writing Process

FIRST EXAMINATION: UNIT 1 (Chapters 1-4)

Unit 2 (Four Chapters)

- Chapter 5: Revising Your Writing
- Chapter 6: Routine Messages
- Chapter 7: Persuasive Messages
- Chapter 8: Bad-News Messages

SECOND EXAMINATION: UNIT 2 (Chapters 5-8)

Unit 3 (Four Chapters)

- Chapter 9 Planning the Report and Managing Data
- Chapter 10 Writing the Report
- Chapter 11 Making Oral Presentations
- Chapter 12 Employment Communication

THIRD EXAMINATION: UNIT 3 (Chapters 9-12)

ADMINISTRATIVE INFORMATION:

Deadlines:

If you have concerns over submitting assignments before *administrative deadlines*, please contact the External Degree Office. I am not able to retain you in the class or withdraw you.

Emailing Units of Work:

I use AppleWorks 5.0 and MS Word (Mac version) for word processing, so I should be able to read most WP attachments. It's best to send your revisions as **attachments** rather than text in the email. Some email programs send HTML formatted mail, and my email program doesn't read that.

If for some reason, I can't open your attachment, I will have to ask you to re-submit the Unit via another method.

2. If at all possible, please send your work as **four or fewer attachments**. For many students it works out well to send one attachment per one chapter of work (thus, four attachments total for each unit of work). Other students put all of the work from all four chapters in one attachment. When students send each individual part of the lesson as one separate attachment, I often end up opening 15 to 20 attachments and that slows my progress in grading your work.
3. If the syllabus states that **revisions** need to be submitted, I will need to see handwritten revisions or something from a program that allows you to make actual proofreading marks (examples are on the back cover of your textbook). Because of this, those assignments will need to be mailed through the post office, unless you can duplicate proofreading marks with a computer program. Some students have found programs that do this very well.
4. If the syllabus states that a document must be **formatted**, it will have to be sent via regular mail or as an attachment via email. Formatting is a necessary skill in Business Communications and it will be important for you to have a chance to practice. A formatted document should be on one page only.
5. When emailing, if possible, please scan a copy of the **assignment cover sheet** in this syllabus, type in your contact information and email that to me. If you neglect to do this, I will attach an assignment cover sheet and will write in your name only. With a large number of students taking the course, it would be impossible for me to complete the rest of the information for all students. Not completing the cover sheet might delay the ED office in returning your work.
6. See below for information on labeling assignments.

Submission of Units Through Other Methods:

I don't recommend that students send Units to me by any method that requires a signature upon receipt. I am often not home when deliveries arrive and a packet requiring a signature often means a separate trip to the post office, which could delay grading your assignment. If you want to make sure that I have received something, please call or e-mail me.

It is a good idea to **weigh assignments before mailing**. *I retain the option to refuse postage-due assignments.* If I have to send a Unit of work back to you because of inadequate postage, it will ultimately delay your progress in the course.

Other Submission Issues:

It is extremely important that you **keep one copy of each assignment**. This will protect you from loss which may occur through the mail or if my computer is not able to read your e-mail format.

If you are **concerned about whether or not I have received an assignment**, feel free to contact me by phone or e-mail and I can let you know whether or not I have received and graded an assignment. Since there are so many students taking this course, *I do not automatically notify students upon receipt of their Units of work.*

Because of the large number of students enrolled in my courses, **I am not able to contact you if parts of the Unit of work are missing.** It is the student's responsibility to make certain that all required elements are submitted in the Unit of work. If elements are missing from a Unit of work, points will be deducted. You are welcome to contact the instructor if you find that you have forgotten to submit elements of the Unit. If the work has not been reviewed by that point, I will allow you to make an immediate submission and add the missing elements of work. If the work has already been reviewed, submission will not be possible.

ASSIGNMENT INFORMATION:

Be certain to read the directions for the assignments **carefully** before you begin. In some cases, certain elements must be submitted to receive full credit.

Submission Guidelines:

I will only accept entire UNITS of work. **Do not send individual chapters.** I only provide feedback on complete units of work.

Please **submit all chapters in the order in which they appear in the syllabus.** If you are emailing work, please label assignments as noted below. This will help me know in what order to open and print your documents. Again, it will help me complete the review process in a more efficient manner and will help you to get your results more quickly.

Please note that for this course, **all assignments must be submitted in typed form.** If directions state that you must **revise a draft**, please do so with the *proofreaders' marks which can be found on the back inside cover of your text.* You will need to do this in your own handwriting unless you can find a computer program which duplicates these markings.

Whenever possible, please **double space** answers to **textbook questions.** When **preparing the business documents** (i.e. memos, letters, etc.), follow the guidelines in the **Reference's Manual Section B** beginning on page 514.

It would help me greatly if you would **label assignments** as noted in the example below from Chapter Eight.

Chapter Seven: Exercise Seven: Continuing Case Seven
Page 257
"Who Knows What Evil Lurks in the Hearts of Men?"

(This helps me to know immediately that you have turned in the correct exercise. It also keeps me from having to look up in the syllabus whether or not you have turned in all required elements from each chapter. Ultimately this means that I grade it and get it back to you much more quickly.)

Formatting Work:

When submitting a **final draft** of a document, please format according to the guidelines in the text's **Reference Manual B: Formatting Business Documents**, beginning on page 514. In addition, please format **final drafts of letters and memos on one separate sheet of paper**. This is a good chance for you to practice correct format and will allow me to assess your formatting skills. Please review each lesson's directions for more information.

When **answering questions from the text** (this is when you are *not* composing documents, etc.), please whenever possible, submit your work in traditional, academic formatting. This includes the following:

- Double spaced, typed submissions
- Use of one of the following fonts: Times, Times New Roman, or Courier
- Use of a 12 point typeface
- One inch margins all around
- Indented paragraphs, rather than "block" formatting
- If these specifications are followed, a typical page should contain 275-350 words. Most word processing programs have a word count function to help you determine your word count per page.

(I don't specify these guidelines to confuse or upset you. Instead, I issue these as a reminder to all students. I understand that many students have been away from school for a long time and don't quite recall what is expected in college courses. I also understand that many students submit all their work in this fashion already.)

Importance of Depth and Writing Style in Assignments:

Unless a question asks you to simply list something, these assignments will require that you **explain or describe in some detail**. A one or two sentence answer will not be sufficient in most cases. Try to put thought and depth into your answers.

In addition, **do not simply re-copy information from the text verbatim**. Try to explain or describe text concepts in your own words, yet in somewhat formal language (for example, formal language avoids the use of first and second person pronouns such as "I" and "You.").

If the work submitted on your Unit One **is too brief or if it doesn't relate enough to text terms/concepts** you may have some points taken off the final total, depending upon the seriousness of the problem. You will also receive a warning. If no improvement is

Importance of Text Terms and Concepts in Assignments:

It is essential in this course that you **incorporate text terms and concepts into your answers**. In addition, it is always necessary to **go a little beyond the "basics" of the question**.

For example, assume that if a question asks you whether or not you think conducting an audience analysis is a good thing, it also is asking **why** you think conducting an audience analysis is a good thing (based upon the terms and concepts you have just read about). Whenever in doubt, think beyond the question and write additional information which answers “who, what, when, where, and how,” if applicable. Pretend your instructor has had no experience in Business Communications coursework and **explain everything!**

Importance of Proofreading Assignments:

It is extremely important that assignments are **proofread before submission**. If there are difficulties with proofreading (and/or basic English skills) on your Unit One, you may have some points taken off the final total, depending upon the seriousness of the problem. You will also receive a warning. If no improvement is made on Units Two and Three, more and more points will be taken off the final total.

Students Who Don't Use English as a First Language:

Students taking Business Communication who don't use English as a first language face special challenges. Because part of assessing your work relates to how well you can use English, I feel obligated to take points off of work that is deficient in English skills. For the first Unit of work, I often provide a warning that points will be taken off on the next Unit of work, if the skills don't improve (in some cases, if the work is extremely poor in English skills, I take points off immediately). If there is no improvement on the final Unit of work, I will take even more points off. It is my hope that this will motivate you to work with someone individually to brush up on your English skills. Please take advantage of tutors and English skills/ Writing Labs to help you make your English skills even better.

How to Succeed in an External Degree Course:

External Degree courses are a great option for motivated, organized students. But what if you don't think that describes you? Students who have excelled in the External Degree format have told me that they set goals and timelines in which to meet those goals. It's so easy to put off a reading or an assignment. If you regularly take courses on-site at one of UIU's Centers or another school, it is often helpful to work on your External Degree course during the hours you would normally be in class. It's easy to accomplish a great deal if you stay in the same sort of routine your in-classroom instructors set up for you.

Research Tools:

Students in all External Degree courses may want to become familiar with an excellent **Internet research tool** available to Upper Iowa Students. The Lexis-Nexis Academic Universe can be accessed by going to Upper Iowa's homepage at www.uiu.edu. Click on Distance Learning. On the next page, click on the library tab located on the upper area of the page. This is a valuable source for full text articles from more than 6000 American and foreign newspapers, magazines, trade journals, newsletters, transcripts, and other reference works. In

addition, it is a great source for news transcripts from National Public Radio, Cable News Network, and the British Broadcasting Corporation among others.

ASSIGNMENT GRADING CRITERIA INFORMATION:

Assignments will be graded based on the following criteria:

1. The assignment completely and fully fulfills what is requested in each case.
2. The assignment demonstrates understanding of the principles, rules, and concepts introduced in the text. In addition, the assignment is written in a formal way which does not simply rewrite information word-for-word from the text (please see assignment information above).
3. The assignments are formatted according to the appropriate business form requested (see information above).
4. The assignments have been proofread and relatively error free. Errors will result in a reduction of the grade.

EXAM INFORMATION:

There are three examinations. The first examination covers Unit 1 (Chapters 1-4). The second examination covers Unit 2 (Chapters 5-8). The third examination covers Unit 3 (Chapters 9-12). You will not be re-tested on information from previous examinations.

Each examination is worth a total of 170 points. You will have three hours to complete each exam. **These will be closed book examinations.** You will not be allowed to bring reference materials, notes, or previously graded materials to the exams. In addition, **you will not be allowed to use a laptop computer or any type of computer to complete the exams.**

Exams' Format:

In the **Terms Section**, you will need to write the definition of five terms. You will have the opportunity to choose from a large selection of terms on which to write. Please do not complete more than five terms as I don't give extra credit for completion of more than five terms.

In the **Short Answer Section**, you will be asked to write about topics or concepts from the text. There are eleven short answer items on each exam. Unless the question specifically asks you to list something, **a one sentence answer will not be sufficient.** *Generally on short answer questions I expect to see at least three or four well-developed sentences.*

In the **Essay Section** you will be asked to discuss some of the principles you have learned about in the assigned chapters. Please be sure to put **depth and detail** into your answers. Unless otherwise noted, I expect to see at least three well-developed paragraphs of four or five sentences each for each Essay question. Again, you may choose to write an additional sentence or two on how the item applies to your work or personal life, thus showing me you can relate the concept to your "real-life" and possibly boosting your grade, if it is done well.

Exam Specifics:

You must **write in complete sentences on exams**. See the example below.

Question: “What is a proposal?”

Incomplete sentence: “a persuasive report to an external audience.”

Complete sentence: “A proposal is a persuasive report to an external audience.”

Please be certain to **proofread** your exam answers. Since I can’t allow you to use a dictionary on these exams, I don’t expect the spelling to be perfect. However, if there are more proofreading/English errors on an Exam One than I usually see, I will issue a warning. If I continue to see these errors on Exams Two and Three, more and more points will be taken off of the final grade.

Study Guide:

The study guide in this syllabus is provided as a courtesy for students. As students in a college level course, you are responsible for reviewing the entire chapter, including figures, models of letters, “Checklist” sections, “Spotlight” sections, etc. While a study guide will help you focus on the information which is the most important, **it will not cover everything that is included on the exam**. Part of the challenge of successfully completing a college course is understanding the entire chapter and being able to answer questions from all areas, not just those from the study guide.

While you are encouraged to use the study guide to help you prepare for the exam, you must remember to never copy information word-for-word from the text, transfer it to the study guide, memorize it and then simply rewrite it on the exam. This constitutes plagiarism, a very serious offense. Exams which have been completed in this manner will receive 0 points.

The study guides are designed for you to use to help you paraphrase the information and then restate it on the exam. To **paraphrase** means to put the information in your own words. In that sense, you are showing the knowledge you have attained from preparing the study guide and not simply demonstrating your memorization skills.

It has been my experience that most students who read the text and put thought and effort into completing the assignments tend to do well on the exams. You are always welcome to contact the instructor if you have any specific concerns before the exam.

COMPOSITION OF GRADE:

There are 750 points possible for this course. All points must be earned by assigned work on the units and examinations. Because of the nature of this course, there are not options available for extra credit. You may not submit “extra” work in an attempt to boost your grade, nor will you receive extra credit for completing additional not required answers on exams.

NOTE: In order to pass this course, you must get a passing grade (“D” or better), on at least one of the exams and have enough cumulative points to earn a passing grade.

UNDER NO CIRCUMSTANCES WILL A STUDENT RECEIVE A PASSING GRADE FOR THIS COURSE IF HE OR SHE RECEIVES AN “F” ON ALL THREE OF THE EXAMS.

Grading Scale:

100-90 % = A

89-80 % = B

79-70 % = C

69-60 % = D

Below 59 % = F

UPPER IOWA UNIVERSITY USES A STANDARD GRADING SYSTEM:

A = All work is excellent, shows exceptional understanding of materials; logical, clear, and insightful written and oral work, incorporates knowledge from other sources and moves easily to the next level of understanding, works well beyond minimum requirements.

B = Understanding material is good to very good, demonstrates good grasp of material, good oral and written skills, produces more than the minimum requirements, quality of all work is high.

C = Satisfactory understanding of the material, submits only the minimum requirements, communicates adequately in oral and written formats, displays an adequate understanding of all basic concepts.

D = Quality and quantity written and oral work is below average and barely acceptable.

F = Quality and quantity written and oral work is unacceptable.

Here is a worksheet to keep a running total of your grade if you're interested.

Assignment:	Points Possible	Your Score:
Unit 1 – Chapters 1-4 (submit as one unit)		_____
Chapter 1	20	
Chapter 2	20	
Chapter 3	20	
Chapter 4	20	
Examination 1	170	_____
Unit 2 - Chapters 5-8 (submit as one unit)		_____
Chapter 5	20	
Chapter 6	20	
Chapter 7	20	
Chapter 8	20	
Examination 2	170	_____
Unit 3 - Chapters 9-12 (submit as one unit)		_____
Chapter 9	20	
Chapter 10	20	
Chapter 11	20	
Chapter 12	20	
Examination 3	150	_____

	Total: 750	

CHEATING, ACADEMIC DISHONESTY AND PLAGIARISM:

Because cheating, academic dishonesty and plagiarism are affronts to the University community as a whole and a denial of the offender's own integrity, they will not be tolerated. Cheating includes but is not limited to:

- the use of unauthorized books, notes or other sources in the giving or securing of help in an examination or other course assignments,
- the copying of other students' work or allowing others to copy your work,
- the submission of work that is not your own or allowing others to submit your work as theirs,

- the submission of the same work for two or more classes without the approval of any instructors involved.

Academic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to:

- sharing academic materials knowing they will be used inappropriately,
- having access to another person's work without permission,
- providing false or incomplete information on an academic document,
- changing student records without approval.
- obtaining and using texts intended for instructor use only.

Plagiarism includes, but is not limited to:

- the presentation of another's published or unpublished work as one's own,
- taking words or ideas of another and either copying them or paraphrasing them without proper citation of the source,
- using charts, graphs, statistics or tables without proper citation.

Detected cheating, academic dishonesty, or plagiarism will result in consequences that may, at the instructor's discretion, include course failure. In addition, an offender may be reported to the Senior Vice President for the Extended University, the Dean of the Extended University, or designee for possible disciplinary action, which may include suspension or dismissal from the University. Upper Iowa University may make use of various plagiarism detection services. Individuals, by enrolling in courses offered by the University, consent to submission by the University of course-related assignments to such services and the retention of a copy of such assignments by the service.

Cheating, academic dishonesty and plagiarism infractions are tracked by the Dean of the Extended University, and cumulative evidence collected from multiple incidents will be considered when making suspension or dismissal decisions.

Extended University Catalog 2007/08 page 97.

http://www.uiu.edu/catalogs/eu/html/univ_policies.html#cheating

FINAL NOTE:

You're probably feeling pretty overwhelmed right now after reading through this course overview! I am very specific about how I would like to have students complete assignments and exams because if all students submit things the same way, it's quick and easy for me to determine if they understand the concepts and can produce documents in the most professional fashion. In the end, this means that I can review your work and get it back to you quickly with comments that will help you to improve your skills.

In addition, the longer I teach, the more I become familiar with many types of students and their situations. For many students, this may be a first college course after a long absence. They may have forgotten the "basics" of submitting work or completing exams. I have many very specific guidelines here to spell out for them exactly what I am looking for, so they are not confused and so they have the chance to submit things correctly and earn as many points as possible. However, I also realize that for many of you, the rules and regulations in this syllabus refer to things that you already do automatically.

None of this is meant to confuse or upset you, no matter what your situation. If there is something here that you don't understand, please email me or give me a call.

Business Communications is an interesting and challenging course. Even students who have been communicating in the business world for many years have commented to me that they have learned a great deal in this course that they are able to use every day in their work!

So, take a deep breath and relax. As a business student, you most likely already possess the necessary insight to communicate effectively in the business world. Read through the chapters at a slow pace and think about how the concepts apply to what you are doing right now at work. If you progress through this course in a thoughtful manner, I'm sure you will find yourself getting the results you want.

I look forward to your success in this course! Please let me know if there is anything I can do to help you in the process.

ATTENDANCE:

Even though a student does not attend a regular classroom in the traditional sense and keep up with a set schedule of assignments, it should be pointed out how important it is to keep yourself on a regular timely schedule if possible to complete and send in units. It is too easy to set work aside and decide to do it later. Suddenly, the need to complete assignments and get them in by deadlines can become stressful and, at times, impossible. The key would be to set time aside on a regular basis and submit work in a timely manner.

LIBRARY RESOURCES:

As a student of Upper Iowa University, you have access to the resources of the Henderson-Wilder Library on the Fayette campus. If travel to the campus is not feasible, you can access the library through the University's website. Go to: www.uiu.edu and click on the Library option located on the left side of the home page. If you would like to use InfoTrac, please contact the UIU Library staff at library@uiu.edu.

WITHDRAWAL:

If you wish to withdraw prior to the last day of the enrollment period you must contact the External Degree office by phone or in writing. After your original six month enrollment period you no longer have the option to withdraw from the course. You must finish the course or have a final grade assigned based on the coursework submitted.

SPECIAL NEEDS:

If you require accommodation for special needs, please provide documentation to: Director of External Degree.

This syllabus is tentative and subject to change.