

Course report LS1415, English for Academic Studies, Höst 2023, Period 1

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The course is entirely online. There are 6 modules and students complete several assignments for each based on the course content they engage with.

The feedback on the course is obtained via an end-of-course written evaluation, which also counts as an assignment. The feedback is very positive, particularly regarding the quantity and quality of feedback from the tutors, helping them to improve from assignment to assignment. There are also positive comments about organisation and flexibility of the course and useful content. There are some concerns regarding how appropriate the early units are for students, as they assume very little experience of academic life. This is because the course is aimed at those new to university, while some participants take the course at a later stage. There are also some comments regarding the desire for some face-to-face contact with the tutor or other students. It should be noted that this has been tried, in response to similar comments in the past, but attendance was 0. Some thought would need to be given to how we might encourage participation. These issues will be addressed with the new courses, replacing this one, in 2224.

Student comments and tutor analysis:

Green section

The most frequent comments by students were about 1) flexibility, 2) feedback, 3) the range of skills covered, and 4) the need for some more teacher or peer contact.

- 1) Many students really liked the flexibility of an online course with a deadline each week.

“The best aspect of the course, in my opinion, was the flexibility and convenience of the online format. The well-structured assignments and clear guidelines made it easier to navigate through the course material.”

“Probably the structure of the course. Having all deadlines each week on Sunday, letting me work independently to get them done.”

- 2) High-quality feedback was noted by many students.

“I was worried in the beginning that they would be harsh and nitpicking, but it has always felt easy to grasp and has been the best thing about the course according to me.”

“The feedback received on assignments was a highlight of the course for me.”

“A standout feature of the course was the provision of constructive feedback. It's rare for students to receive such detailed feedback on language use, making this aspect of the course particularly valuable in honing my language proficiency.”

“I appreciate that the feedback has been so detailed and specific. I also appreciate the links to pages for further reading about the errors I made.”

“The feedback I received on my assignments was invaluable. It is rare to receive language-specific feedback in other courses, as the focus there is usually more on content.”

“The feedback was good. Good contrast from my main science courses where feedback tends to be very short (often only a few words). So having a teacher forming complete sentences as well as giving me feedback from different perspectives is certainly something I have not had in a long time.”

- 3) A number of students appreciated the range of skills (listening, reading, speaking, and writing) covered in the course.

“Every week I got to learn new things about writing, reading, speaking, and listening that I did not know I needed.”

“One aspect that truly stood out was the course's holistic approach, integrating writing, reading, listening, and speaking.”

“The different variations in the tasks given to us was probably the best thing. Even though the most was written assignments the topics were never boring. The fact that we got to practice writing, reading (giving feedback), listening as well as giving presentations was not something I expected from an online based course.”

- 4) The most frequent suggestion for improvement was for some teacher contact. Several students also mentioned wanting more peer-to-peer contact.

“I would suggest incorporating introductory lectures and effective online delivery. The feedback received had been instrumental in my improvement, and the online format, though effective, could be further enriched with scheduled lectures.”

“Maybe one lecture at the beginning via zoom where the introduction is given. This can clear up any misunderstandings in real time regarding examinations etc. Otherwise, I would suggest maybe one voluntarily zoom meeting midway through the course to ask questions directly to the teachers regarding the course.”

“This could be a short introductory lecture before each task.”

“I would also value the opportunity for an optional live session with the lecturer or teaching assistant at the conclusion, allowing for the chance to pose questions or receive additional guidance.”

“While the course had numerous positive aspects, I would suggest refining the communication about the modules with maybe just one zoom meeting at the start of the course for those who are interested.”

“If I were to suggest changes, perhaps incorporating more interactive elements could further enhance the learning experience. Including group discussions or collaborative projects might add another dimension to the course and encourage peer learning.”

“While the course covered vocabulary and techniques for presentations and group work, I felt there could be more opportunities for students to actively apply and practice these skills collaboratively.”

Blue group

1. General experience

- Overall, students are very positive. They appreciate the clear organization of the course and that the instructions are easy to follow. The number of links in the modules can, however, be a bit overwhelming. The weekly deadlines keep students on track even though the course is fully online.
- Several students also mention the diverse themes of the assignment, and the fact that the course covers so many aspects.
- The progression from basic to more advanced tasks is also mentioned.

2. How did the online format work?

- Above all, students comment on the flexibility and how they can study at their own pace, without clashes with other courses.
- The clear course content and assignment instructions also decreases the need for teacher contact.

3. Does the course content meet your needs?

- “The content has been on-point! While the course is said to be aimed at students at the start of their studies, being a master’s student, I’ve still found it immensely beneficial for advancing my English speaking and writing skills.”
- The course content prepares students for future studies. Some also say that the course content shows them the importance of reflection and of constantly challenging oneself.
- One student specifically mentioned the emphasis on various aspects of English, including grammar and how to capture an audience during presentations,
- “It made me think about grammar more than what I did before” (one student suggests that there should be more grammar exercises).

4. How do you feel about the feedback?

- Most students seem to be very happy with the feedback, both from the teacher and from other students in the peer reviews.

- Students say that the feedback has been, for instance, constructive, insightful, providing examples, encouraging, useful, professional, personalized.

5. Best aspect?

Some answers:

- That the course was online.
- The diverse types of assignments.
- The rigorous self-reflection.
- The best aspect of the course was its practical approach to learning. The assignments were well-designed and applicable to many academic scenarios.
- That the assignments were set up as Discussions. “I really enjoyed reading others’ answers.”
- The best aspect of the course was the interactive discussions in the webinars, which provided practical insights and a deeper understanding of the theoretical concepts. These activities fostered a sense of community.

6. Any suggestions?

- A seminar, Zoom session or lecture – several students would have liked something synchronous.
- More speaking and discussion skills
- Guidelines on tools such as Grammarly
- Make it more challenging! (This comment was given by one out of 20-ish students).