

**BMA211**  
**Business Communication**

*Semester 1, 2008*

This unit will be offered in:

**Hobart and Launceston**

The lecturing team responsible will be:

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<http://www.utas.edu.au/management/student.htm>

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## Introduction to the Unit

This unit provides an overview of the role of communication in contemporary business practice. A range of communication concepts, theories and strategies important in the development of effective management skills are covered at an introductory level. The major topics explored include written, oral, interpersonal, organisational and technologically-mediated modes of communication.

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## Learning Outcomes

On completion of this unit, you should be able to:

- Understand communication theory and its relevance to managing organisations successfully
- Demonstrate skills in writing, editing and producing effective written/electronic texts for employment communication
- Demonstrate skills in effectively structuring and presenting information orally
- Understand the processes and effects of non-verbal communication
- Demonstrate skills in effective interpersonal communication such as assertiveness, active listening, conflict resolution and communication process management
- Demonstrate skills in working collaboratively in groups
- Demonstrate the ability to critically reflect on learning processes including group-based learning and personal development
- Display a range of effective and appropriate workplace communication behaviours including those appropriate for managing difficult communication issues

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## Generic Graduate Attributes

The University has defined a set of generic graduate attributes (GGAs) that can be expected of all graduates (see <http://www.utas.edu.au/tl/policies/index.htm>). By undertaking this unit you should make progress in attaining the following attributes:

### Knowledge

- Students will develop knowledge of contemporary communication theory and techniques.

### Communication Skills

- Students will be encouraged to apply their knowledge of communication theory and techniques to demonstrate effective written electronic and oral communication, improving their communication practice in both personal and professional settings.

### Problem-Solving Skills

- Students will develop practical problem-solving skills and apply critical analysis and creative thinking to a range of managerial communications issues.
- Students will develop skills in working effectively with others in a small group collaborative learning task requiring them to reformulate problematic exhibits of business communication.

### Global Perspective

- The unit will briefly cover aspects of intercultural communication and the use of technologically-mediated communication for global business practice.

## Social Responsibility

- Equipping current and future managers with effective interpersonal skills contributes to the creation of more positive organisational environments where employee problems and concerns can be dealt with sensitively.

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## Prerequisites

BMA101 Introduction to Management

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## Texts

### Prescribed Texts

Eunson, B. 2008. *Communicating in the 21<sup>st</sup> century* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Milton, Brisbane: Wiley.

BMA211 Study Guide.

### School Publications

Students must obtain the following electronic publications which are available from the School of Management website:

<http://www.utas.edu.au/management/student.htm>

*Writing Assignments: A Guide*

*School of Management Referencing Style*

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## Recommended Reading

The publications listed below are highly recommended for further reading on the topics covered in the unit.

### Books

Baney, J. 2004. *Guide to interpersonal communication*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.

Blundel, R. 2004. *Effective organisational communication: Perspectives, principle and practices* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Harlow, UK: Prentice Hall.

Bolton, R. 1986. *People skills: How to assert yourself, listen to others, and resolve conflicts*. New York: Simon & Schuster.

Bonner, W.H. & Chaney, L.H. 2004. *Communicating effectively in an information age* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Mason, Ohio: Thomson.

Chaney, L.H. & Martin J.S. 2004. *Intercultural business communication* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.

Dick, R. 1986. *Learning to communicate*. Chapel Hill, Qld: Interchange.

- Dick, R. 1990. *Frameworks for effective third-party conflict management*. Chapel Hill, Qld: Interchange.
- Dick, R. 1991. *Helping groups to be effective*. Chapel Hill, Qld: Interchange.
- Dick, R. & Dalmau, T. 1990. *Values in action: Applying the ideas of Argyris and Schon*. Chapel Hill, Qld: Interchange.
- Dwyer, J. 2005. *Communication in business: Strategies and skills* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.). Frenchs Forest: Prentice Hall.
- Gudykunst, W.B. 2003. *Bridging differences: Effective intergroup communication* (4<sup>th</sup> ed.). Thousand Oaks, Calif: Sage Publications.
- Gudykunst, W.B., Stewart, L.P., & Ting-Toomey, S. 1985. *Communication, culture and organizational processes*. Beverly Hills, California: Sage Publications.
- Gellier, J. & Goerke, V. 2006. *Communication skills toolkit: unlocking the secrets of tertiary success*. South Melbourne: Thomson.
- Greene, J.O. 2003. *Handbook of communication and social interaction skills*. London: L. Erlbaum Associates.
- Keyton, J. 2005. *Communication and organizational culture: A key to understanding work experiences*. California: Sage.
- McKenna, B., Thomas, G. & Waddell, N. 2004. *Australian guide to corporate communication: A practical handbook on effective writing and speaking*. Tuggerah: Social Science Press.
- Putnis, P. & Petelin, R. 1999. *Professional communication principles and applications* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Sydney: Prentice Hall.
- Sigband, N. & Bell, A. H. 1994. *Communication for managers*. Cincinnati: South-Western.
- Spitzberg, B.H. & Cupach, W.R. 1984. *Interpersonal communication competence*. Beverly Hills: Sage Publications.

## **Journals and Periodicals**

Apart from books, you will find it valuable to get into the practice of reading relevant articles from journals and periodicals (including newspapers and magazines).

Relevant theory and research articles can also be found in the following journals:

- Journal of Business Communication*
- Management Communication Quarterly*
- Human Relations*
- Journal of Applied Communication Research*
- Journal of Communication Management*
- International Journal of Inter-cultural Relations*
- Health Communication*
- Journal of Applied Social Psychology*
- Western Journal of Communication*
- Human Communication Research*
- Communication Research Reports*

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## Flexible Learning: MyLO

MyLO software has been incorporated into the delivery of this unit to enhance the learning experience by providing access to up to date course materials and by allowing for online discussion through this web based environment.

The School of Management has prepared a MyLO Information Sheet which includes access guidelines and contact information. It is available to download as a word document from the School of Management website:

<http://www.utas.edu.au/management/student.htm>

### Privacy Policy and Notice

The School of Management takes the utmost care to protect the privacy and security of your personal information and to ensure its accuracy.

If you have any concerns about your privacy in MyLO please contact the lecturer-in-charge of this unit or view the University of Tasmania MyLO Privacy Policy Statement available from the university website on

<http://www.utas.edu.au/courseonline/privacy/index.html>.

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## Assessment

In order to pass this unit you must achieve an overall mark of at least 50 per cent of the total available marks. Details of each item of Coursework are provided in the Assignment Topics section.

Method of Assessment	Value	Due Date	Length*
<b>Coursework</b>			
Employment communication package	30	Friday 11 April 2008	1500 words + communication sample
4 in-class tests	20	Weeks 4, 5, 6 & 7	4 x 10 multiple choice questions
Communication case study (Group project)	35	Monday 2 June 2008	2500 words + communication samples
Reflective practice report	15	Friday 6 June 2008	1000 words
Total Marks	100		

\* **Word Limit:** The word count includes such items as headings, in-text references, quotes and executive summaries. It **does not** include the reference list at the end of the assignment.

### Study Week

All undergraduate units offered by the School of Management are scheduled to include a Study Week. The dates for this Semester are shown in the attached Study Schedule.

The purpose of the Study Week is to allow students an opportunity to consolidate their studies thus far, and to research coming assignments.

## Special Consideration and Student Difficulties

If a student is experiencing difficulties with their studies or assignments, have personal or life planning issues, disability or illness which may affect their course of study, they are advised to raise these with their lecturer in the first instance. Students may also contact the Catalyst Officer, who will be able to help in identifying the issues that need to be addressed, give general advice, assist by liaising with academic staff, as well as referring students to any relevant University-wide support services. The Catalyst Officer is located in room 318a in the Commerce Building in Hobart and is contactable by phone on 6226 1916. There is also a range of University-wide support services available including Student Services, International Services and Learning Development. Please refer to the *Current Students* homepage at: <http://www.utas.edu.au/students/index.html>

Should a student require assistance in accessing the Library, visit their website for more information at <http://www.utas.edu.au/library/>

Students who have completed their examinations and who feel that they have been disadvantaged due to illness or other circumstances affecting their study, may fill out a form to request that their lecturer takes this into consideration when marking the examination. Forms should be submitted directly to the relevant school, accompanied by appropriate supporting documentation, as soon as possible after the completion of the examination. Granting of special consideration is at the discretion of the lecturer and school. The relevant form can be found at the following website:

[http://www.studentcentre.utas.edu.au/examinations\\_and\\_results/forms\\_files/index.htm#eits](http://www.studentcentre.utas.edu.au/examinations_and_results/forms_files/index.htm#eits)

Students with a non-English speaking background may be permitted to take a bilingual dictionary into an exam. This dictionary must not be annotated, that is, it must have no notes written in it. In order to use a bilingual dictionary students must request permission from the Student Centre.

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## Submission of Coursework

### Lodging Coursework

All Coursework must have the School of Management Assignment Cover Sheet and Title Page attached. Both of which are available as a blank template from the School of Management website:

<http://www.utas.edu.au/management/student.htm>

Please remember that you are responsible for lodging your written Coursework on or before the due date. We suggest you keep a copy—photocopying is ideal. Even in the most ‘perfect’ of systems, items sometimes go astray.

Note that you may also be required to submit an electronic copy of your written Coursework. More details of this will be given in Lectures.

*Hobart students:* Lodge in assignment box beside room 325, Commerce & Economics Building.

*Launceston students:* Lodge in assignment box beside room A170.

All coursework must be handed in at 2.00 p.m. on the due date.

### Late Coursework

#### *Written Work*

Extensions will only be granted on medical or compassionate grounds and will not be granted because of work or other commitments. Requests for extensions should be **made in writing** to the lecturer-in-charge prior to the due date. Medical certificates or other evidence must be attached and must contain information which justifies the extension sought.

Late assignments which have **not** been granted an extension will, at the lecturer's discretion, be penalised by deducting ten per cent of total marks for each full day overdue.

Assignments submitted more than six days late will normally not be accepted by the lecturer-in-charge.

### ***Tests***

Students who are unable to sit a test on medical or compassionate grounds (**work or other commitments are not considered 'compassionate grounds'**) may request that they be permitted to complete alternative coursework.

Please do not expect a special test to be held for you if you choose to go on holidays or undertake other activities on the scheduled date. If you do need to request alternative coursework, you should do so in writing to the lecturer-in-charge prior to the due date. Medical certificates or other evidence must be attached and must contain information which justifies the request. The telephone number of the doctor should also be included.

### **Return of Coursework**

Coursework will be returned during classes or it can be collected from the lecturer's or tutor's room at nominated times; it will not be available from the School's offices.

### **Plagiarism**

Plagiarism is a form of cheating. It is taking and using someone else's thoughts, writings or inventions and representing them as your own, for example:

- using an author's words without putting them in quotation marks and citing the source;
- using an author's ideas without proper acknowledgment and citation; or
- copying another student's work.

**If you have any doubts about how to refer to the work of others in your assignments, please consult your lecturer or tutor** for relevant referencing guidelines, and the academic integrity resources on the web at <http://www.utas.edu.au/tl/supporting/academicintegrity/index.html>.

The intentional copying of someone else's work as one's own is a serious offence punishable by penalties that may range from a fine or deduction/cancellation of marks and, in the most serious of cases, to exclusion from a unit, a course or the University. Details of penalties that can be imposed are available in the Ordinance of Student Discipline—Part 3 Academic Misconduct, see <http://www.utas.edu.au/universitycouncil/legislation/ord9.pdf>

**The University reserves the right to submit (or to require you to submit) assignments to online plagiarism detection software, and might then retain a copy of the assignment on its database for the purpose of future plagiarism checking.**

### **Occupational Health and Safety (OH&S)**

The University is committed to providing a safe and secure teaching and learning environment. In addition to specific requirements of this unit you should refer to the University's policy at: [http://www.admin.utas.edu.au/hr/ohs/pol\\_proc/ohs.pdf](http://www.admin.utas.edu.au/hr/ohs/pol_proc/ohs.pdf)

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# Learning Program

As this unit is predominantly skills-based, an alternative format of a weekly one-hour lecture and weekly two-hour workshops is offered.

## Week 1

The lecture will provide an introduction to the unit and an overview of communication in contemporary business practice. The issues related to communication in context are also covered, e.g. the role of gender, culture and status in communication are examined.

There are no workshops in week 1 but you should sign up for your preferred times on MyLO.

## Week 2

The lecture will focus on an important aspect of business communication, the skills required to obtain employment and manage career progression. This content will be central to the first assessment item.

The first workshop will be focussed on setting the scene for your personal development and creating a supportive atmosphere for future role-play activities and group work, covering the following major topics:

- Icebreakers
- Personal skills audit
- Johari window
- Communication breakdowns/problem analysis using communication model.

## Week 3

There is no lecture this week. You should work independently on your employment communication assignment using the text book and study guide material.

The workshop will assist you with the employment communication assignment by developing your skills in:

- Presenting yourself effectively in writing
- Developing a personal 'brand' statement
- Using the 'CAR' principle to write for selection or promotion criteria.

## Week 4

The lecture this week examines the phenomenon of non-verbal behaviour and outlines important points in presenting information orally in situations such as public speaking.

During the workshop this week you will work on developing your skills in oral communication and analysis of non-verbal behaviour. The workshop will help you to structure the oral communication aspect of your employment communication assignment and develop an awareness of your personal strengths and weaknesses using the following activities:

- Structuring an impromptu presentation
- Developing self-awareness through peer feedback: identifying areas for development
- Preparing for your video clip of interview opening.

**A test on the preparatory reading material will be conducted at the end of the session.**

## Week 5

The lecture this week covers skills in communicating your own thoughts, feelings and concerns to others in an effective manner.

The workshop will provide an opportunity for you to practise these important skills such as:

- Emotional self-management
- Formulating assertive statements
- Giving feedback effectively.

**A test on the preparatory reading material will be conducted at the end of the session.**

## Week 6

The lecture covers the reverse of the previous lecture by examining how to reflect an understanding of the thoughts, feelings and concerns of another party in a useful way. The application of listening and questioning skills to employment and performance appraisal interviews will also be covered.

The workshop will allow you to develop or improve skills such as:

- Active listening
- Receiving feedback/complaint handling.

**A test on the preparatory reading material will be conducted at the end of the session.**

## Week 7

The lecture will examine the nature of conflict both interpersonally and within groups. A demonstration of conflict mediation skills will be used as an illustration of a problem-solving approach.

In your workshop you will develop a deeper understanding of some of the ways conflict can be resolved or managed. Three specific activities will be undertaken:

- Conflict analysis discussion (you should bring your completed conflict management survey contained in the study guide to class for this activity)
- Interaction management and problem solving
- Mediation skills role-play.

**A test on the preparatory reading material will be conducted at the end of the session.**

## Week 8

There are no classes this week due to the School of Management study week. During this time you should familiarise yourself with the communication case study materials on the DVD provided as the group assignment will be commencing after the break.

## Week 9

The lecture this week provides you with an overview of some important business protocols regarding written organisational communication both internal and external. These skills will also help you to operate your group project meetings more effectively and get an overview of the report structure you should use.

The workshop begins the group work phase of the course and will get you started on the assignment during class. The major tasks will involve:

- Group formation and team contract development
- Case selection discussion
- Analysis of background case information - how leadership and organisational culture affect communication.

You will need to schedule a group meeting (either virtual or face-to-face) before the next workshop in order to begin drafting material for the assignment.

## **Week 10**

The lecture looks at the issue of technologically-mediated communication tools such as email, videoconferencing and web-interfaced technologies, specifically in terms of their impact on effective business communication.

- During the workshop you will work on analysing the email/memo and audio recording from the case study.

You will need to schedule a group meeting (either virtual or face-to-face) before the next workshop in order to begin drafting material for the assignment.

## **Week 11**

This lecture will focus on an important aspect of communicating on behalf of the organisation for the purposes of public relations.

- During the workshop you will work on analysing the media release and video recording from the case study.

You will need to schedule a group meeting (either virtual or face-to-face) before the next workshop in order to begin drafting material for the assignment.

## **Week 12**

This lecture looks at developing rapport with customers and business contacts in order to develop relationships or persuade and influence others.

- There is no formal workshop this week but during your scheduled workshop time you will need to record your audiovisual material for the group assignment (using the Faculty media facilities if necessary).

You will also need to schedule a group meeting (either virtual or face-to-face) before the next workshop in order to finalise your assignment.

## **Week 13**

The final lecture looks at the concept of reflective practice, focussing on organisational communication audits and personal development strategies.

- During the workshop your group will conduct a peer feedback and evaluation process and you will complete your individual skills audit for the reflective practice report.

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## Assignment Topics

### Employment communication package

*Due Date:* Friday 11 April at 2.00 pm

*Length:* 1,500 words + communication sample

*Value:* 30 marks

You will produce an example of effective written communication for the purpose of obtaining employment. Your assignment will be to respond to an advertisement for a position that contains a selection criterion related to communication skills (you can choose from one of the advertisement examples provided, or find one of your own). You also need to produce a one-minute video clip where you present yourself as a potential incumbent of this position. There are two options for presenting your application:

- 1) Produce a standard written job application (cover letter, statement addressing selection criteria and CV).
- 2) Produce a personal website which includes the above information.

In order to complete this task effectively you will need to utilise material in the textbook that provides both practical and technical advice on written and electronic communication and employment communication. More detailed guidelines for this assessment item are provided in the BMA211 study guide.

You will be allocated time in the Faculty media room in order to make the video recording of your oral communication skills if you require it.

**This assessment item is focused on the learning outcome of the development of skills in writing, editing and producing effective written or electronic texts for employment communication. This assessment item is also designed to focus on the learning objective of demonstrating skills in effectively structuring and presenting information orally.**

## **In-class tests**

*Due Date:* Weeks 4, 5, 6 and 7

*Length:* 4 tests, each consisting of 10 multiple choice questions

*Value:* 20 marks (5 marks per test)

In four of the skills workshops a test will be held after the major learning activities are completed. Each test will consist of 10 multiple choice questions that examine material in the preparatory reading for that week's lecture and workshop. Different versions of the test will be given to different workshop groups. The tests will be worth 20 marks in total (5 marks per test).

**This assessment is designed to focus on the learning outcome of understanding communication theory.**

## **Business communication case study (group project)**

*Due Date:* Monday 2 June at 2:00 pm

*Length:* 2500 word consultancy report + communication samples

*Value:* 35 marks

You will work together in groups of five to analyse an organisational communication case study. The workshops and learning resources will prepare you with strategies for analysing the communication and for making recommendations for improvements. The case analysis will involve a communication consultancy report which refers to your case exhibits of ineffective communication (e.g. written material, video clips and audio recordings). Your task is to analyse the exhibits of communication according to what you have learned in the unit and make recommendations for improvement. Linked to these recommendations will be samples of effective communication that your group produces (e.g. re-written material, re-enacted video clips and audio recordings). You will also be required to submit minutes of your group meetings. The material in Chapter 21 will assist you in operating the group and you will be expected to apply the communication skills developed in the skills workshops in resolving any group problems before consulting the teaching staff. All group members should be involved in writing and presenting these materials.

More detailed guidelines for this assessment item will be provided in the BMA211 study guide.

You will be allocated time in the Faculty media room in order to make the audiovisual recordings if necessary.

**This assessment item is designed to focus on a number of the learning outcomes for the unit such as verbal and non-verbal interpersonal communication skills, an understanding of communication theory and its relevance to managing organisations successfully, and the ability to work collaboratively.**

## **Reflective practice report**

*Due Date:* Friday 6 June at 2.00 pm

*Length:* 1000 words

*Value:* 15 marks

Critical to your development as an independent learner is your ability to reflect on and learn from your experience. Organisations hire their employees for a range of skills – effective communication and personal reflexivity rank highly, particularly for management and leadership positions. Consequently, you are asked to engage with the process of critical self-reflection based on the development of your skills in business communication over the course of the semester.

Two aspects of the course will assist you to identify aspects of your skills to discuss in this report. Firstly, the communication effectiveness audit you complete in weeks 1 and 13 will help you to identify any possible areas of development. Secondly, after each workshop and group meeting you should make some personal notes about the experience in the journal entry space provided in the study guide. The journal (although private and not submitted) will give you material to select from and write about in this report. In these journal entries you may like to comment on how specific learning activities contributed to your understanding of a topic or improvement of your skills in business communication. Your report will draw on the journal material in order to examine the ways in which you applied skills developed in the unit to your behaviour within the case study learning group and other personal experiences/relationships. You should also reflect upon how this learning will be of practical utility in your current or future business practice.

More detailed guidelines for this assessment item are provided in the BMA211 study guide.

**This assessment item is designed to focus on the learning objective of demonstrating skills in reflecting critically on your own communication skills, behaviour and learning processes.**

# Study Schedule

Semester 1, 2008

Week	Start of Week	Reading	Topic	Due Dates
1	25 Feb	Ch 1	Introduction and course overview	
2	3 Mar	Ch 22	Communication for employment and career management	
3	10 Mar		<b>No lecture – public holiday</b>	
4	17 Mar	Chs 8 & 11	Non-verbal behaviour and oral communication	MC test in workshops
Mid-Semester Break 20-26 March, 2008				
5	31 Mar	Ch 9 + extra reading in study guide	Assertiveness and providing feedback	MC test in workshops
6	7 April	Ch 10 + extra reading in study guide	Active listening and receiving feedback	MC test in workshops 11 <sup>th</sup> of April employment communication assignment due at 2:00 pm
7	14 April	Ch 15 + extra reading in study guide	Conflict resolution and management	MC test in workshops
8	21 April	DVD Case materials	<b>No lecture - Study Week</b>	
9	28 April	Ch 21, 5	Effective meetings, letters/memos, reports	
10	5 May	Ch 6	Technologically mediated communication	
11	12 May	Ch 19	Media releases and public relations (Guest)	
12	19 May	Ch 18	Customer communication and business networking (Guest)	
13	26 May	Extra reading in study guide	Communication audits - personal and organisational development  Unit evaluation	Study break: 2 June group assignment due; 6 June reflective report due
A Calendar/Study Planner showing dates is available from School of Management website at <a href="http://www.utas.edu.au/mgmt/student.htm">http://www.utas.edu.au/mgmt/student.htm</a> .				