

Application Form

APPLICANT
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Members of the working group, if applicable²:
GENERAL INFORMATION
Course level bachelor's Course number: 0374, 0838 Semester: WS22/23 (also piloted in SS22 in LV 4425) ECTS credits: 3 Course title: Fremdsprachliche Wirtschaftskommunikation III – Englisch (EBC3)
Further information on the course: This class is an obligatory class for IBW (international business), following English Business Communication 1&2. Students typically take it in the second half of their degree program. The class size is 19-20 students.
If applicable links to the course's online environment: LV 0374: https://learn.wu.ac.at/dotlrn/classes/ebce3/0374.22w/one-community?page_num=0 (Learn) https://wu.instructure.com/courses/1726 (Canvas) LV 0838: https://learn.wu.ac.at/dotlrn/classes/ebce3/0838.22w/one-community?page_num=0 (Learn) https://wu.instructure.com/courses/1727 (Canvas) Please note you will presumably need to be added as a participant by Digital Teaching Services to view the course environment on Canvas.

¹ Courses held during the 2022 calendar year (summer semester 2022, winter semester 2022/23) are eligible for the 2023 Innovative Teaching Award. Courses held over two semesters (WS 2021/22–SS 2022) can also be nominated.

² Please name all the people involved in the development of the course design. (ATTENTION: only people with teaching activities at WU or the Executive Academy in listed semesters are eligible.) The people named in this field will also receive the award in case of a successful application.

Information on application

Please use the template on the following pages to describe your course. The description should not exceed a maximum of 15 000 characters (including spaces).

In part 1, please insert a short description of your course design (maximum of 180 words). If your course design is selected for the award, the short description as well as the application form will be published on the WU homepage and in the Teaching & Learning Academy.

The detailed description of your course design (part 2) is divided into three parts:

- Section 2a is intended to give the jury an overview of your course.
- In section 2b we would ask you to elaborate on the teaching methods and didactic elements.
- Section 2c is intended to highlight the innovative nature of your course in relation to this year's focus of the award.

The questions mentioned in each section are intended to support you in the description of your course design.

Please complete the template directly in Microsoft Word and send it as a .doc or .pdf file to lehrenundlernen@wu.ac.at by **February 19, 2023**.

1. SHORT DESCRIPTION OF THE COURSE DESIGN (max. 180 words)

If your course is selected for an award, this text will be published on the WU website along with the submitted application form.

This English Business Communication 3 (EBC3) course develops the key skills of persuasive communication and managing interaction in international business communication. As well as learning language to present and write about international business topics, there is a strong focus on pragmatic strategies for constructive discussion and effective English as a business lingua franca (BELF) communication.

As well as shifting the focus of this EBC class to include explicit research-based teaching of these pragmatic strategies for effective BELF communication, a major innovation was to embed a genuinely intercultural activity into the framework of the existing curriculum by offering a joint online session with [Dr. Kaisa Pietikäinen](#) and her "English for Business" class at NHH Norwegian School of Economics. In this session, students from both courses came together to simulate an intercultural negotiation in small groups. Feedback in the form of post-hoc questionnaires as well as end-of-semester reflections showed that the activity was a unique and exciting learning activity which allowed the students to gain valuable experience of practising effective persuasive BELF communication.

2. DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE COURSE DESIGN

2a.) Overview

- What are the learning outcomes to be achieved by the students?
- What are the content elements of the course and how is the course structured?
- What are the elements on which the final grade is based?
- How do you address the focus topic "Teaching in Teams: Innovative Collaborations and Partnerships" in your course?

A detailed list of the course learning outcomes (LOs) can be found in the syllabus. The main LOs relate to evidencing a level of general English competence equivalent to [at least C1 on the CEFR](#); using language relating to the relevant business fields and combining these skills to produce written reports, oral presentations and discussions, and the intercultural negotiation with NHH. Although not made explicit in the course syllabus (now added for SS23), the descriptor bands for C1 include:

- *Can identify differences in sociolinguistic/-pragmatic conventions, critically reflect on them and adjust their communication accordingly.*

Fostering the soft skills of intercultural communication and using English as a business lingua franca were listed explicitly as additional learning outcomes.

The content elements of the course are determined by the general EBC3 curriculum and focus on globalisation and sustainability, international market entry, and accountability (financial management and legal English). Students are also required to engage with content on the language of discussion / negotiation, intercultural communication and BELF. The course took place over 15 sessions of 90 minutes, with 2-4 units devoted to each of the main content topics ("modules"). The negotiation with NHH took place in Session 4.

The course performance components were as follows (1 point = 1%):

- Oral group discussions (15pts)
- Report practice and peer review (12pts)
- Participation and interaction (13pts), of which:
 - 4pts → intercultural communication social media post & discussion
 - 4pts → minutes & feedback on the NHH students' performance
 - 3pts → content quizzes preparing for the final test
 - 2pts → audience contributions to the oral discussions
- Final Report (30pts)
- Business English in Context final test (30pts)

The focus topic was addressed in the "participation and interaction" points and the intercultural negotiation activity held in collaboration with Dr. Kaisa Pietikäinen from NHH. Following a pilot session in SS22, we repeated the activity in WS22, embedding it more intentionally in the learning outcomes. The regular classes took place on campus, with the fourth session (2 November) held online in collaboration with Dr. Pietikäinen's class.

The innovative aspects of this collaboration were threefold. Firstly, bringing two classes from different institutions together for a genuinely intercultural communication activity is in itself innovative, as far as we are aware (and the feedback from my students indicated it is a rarity at WU). Secondly, doing so within the curricular framework of an existing course, rather than developing a new one, is particularly unique. Finally, as two BELF scholars with a keen pedagogical interest, we wanted to explore how we could use the digital tools we had learned during the Covid-19 pandemic to bring added value to our regular EBC classes. In the affordances created by the virtual classroom, we saw an opportunity to offer students the possibility to experience and practise BELF communication strategies in authentic intercultural contexts.

2b.) Teaching methods

- Which teaching methods do you use to help your students achieve the intended learning outcomes?
- What methods encourage international learning and teaching in your course?
- Why did you choose this/these particular method(s)? What specific advantages does it/do they offer in your teaching? What do your students learn through the use of this/these method(s)?
- In which way do the students benefit from the teaching methods used in the course?

Reflecting the principles of “seamless learning”, this EBC3 course comprised a mix of synchronous and asynchronous activities. Students were expected to work through self-study materials (reading/video input + quizzes) in preparation/as follow-up, whereas the live classes were intended to have the students apply that knowledge in presentations and discussions. Additionally, in preparation for the negotiation, students co-constructed knowledge in an adapted “jigsaw” activity (Scrivener 2011). In groups, the students had to read an article on intercultural negotiations or BELF, present the key ideas in a “social media-friendly” format (e.g. an Instagram carousel), and post it in a discussion forum. They then had to read through each others’ posts and respond. These activities allowed students to earn a small number of participation points while co-constructing content knowledge, then practice in class and finally earn more significant scores in the final tests.

The main challenge of the intercultural communication task was to collaborate and coordinate with Dr. Pietikäinen to create a meaningful task that fitted into our existing courses, which are otherwise completely independent of each other. After detailed consideration of our respective syllabi and course schedules, we decided to hold a joint online session where the students from each university would come together in small groups (2-4 students per university) to conduct an intercultural negotiation. The crossover context for the negotiation was finalising a joint venture agreement between a Norwegian and an Austrian energy company.

We chose this task in response to Kaur and Birlik’s (2021) recommendation of “role-play activities that mirror the types of transactions and activities that future practitioners are likely to conduct in BELF, such as negotiating a deal or participating in a business meeting” (p.634). The benefits of this was confirmed by the students’ responses in the feedback (see evaluations). Requiring students to reflect critically on each other’s language practices further consolidated their awareness of effective BELF communication strategies (one of the learning outcomes).

Students were given the task and input ahead of time and met online for the activity. They had a short “socialisation” session first to establish some rapport before entering into the negotiation proper. Figure 1 below shows the class schedule for the online session. In the negotiation, students had to agree on various points, e.g. the equity stake and language policy, and upload their decisions in meeting minutes.

Schedule	
10:15-10:25	Welcome & introduction in plenum
10:25-10:35	Socialization in break-out rooms
10:35-10:50	15 minute break
10:50-10:55	Convene in plenum
10:55-11:40	Negotiation 45 min
11:40-11:50	Feedback session in plenum (Mentimeter)
11:50-12:00	Feedback session for NHH students (break-out room)

Figure 1. Class schedule for online session, 2 November 2022.

Additionally, the WU students prepared for the activity in their “local” teams by working on the social media task and determining their ideal outcome and best alternatives. After the negotiation, they were required to reflect on the NHH students’ performance (evaluating their linguistic and intercultural competence based on

criteria drawing on the social media input tasks) as a performance component for which they received participation points. Additionally, some of the input material was also tested in the final test.

Planning and implementing the activity with Dr. Pietikäinen entailed several steps which we have been carrying out in the form of an action research project (Burns 2010); see Figure 2 below for details.

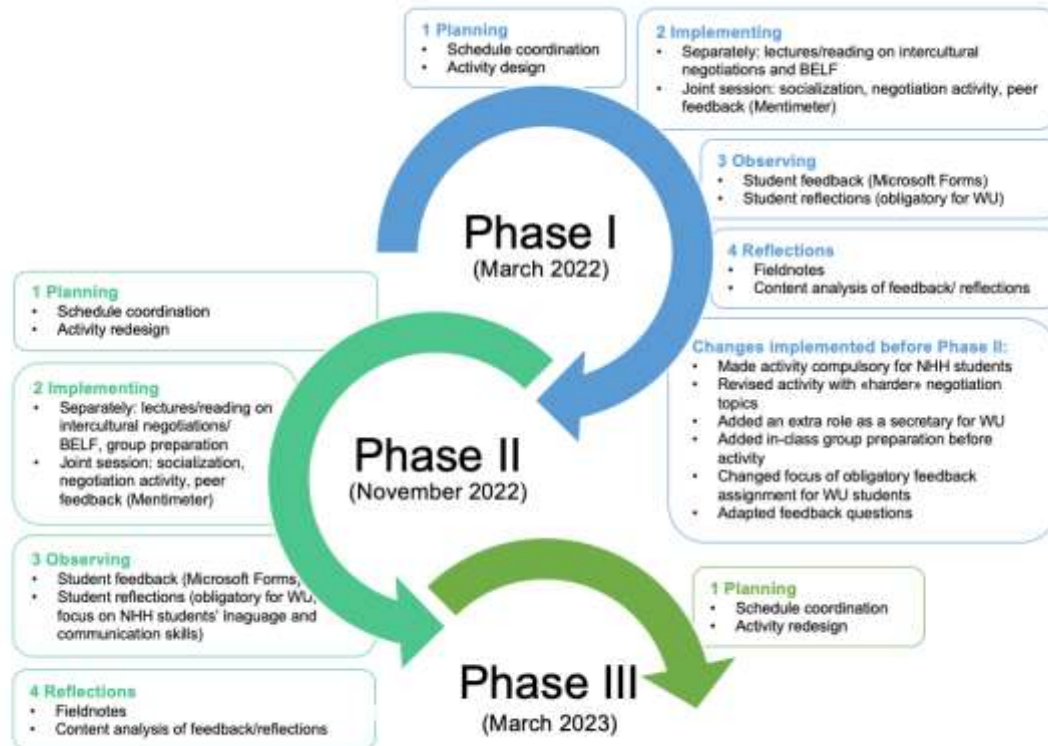


Figure 2. Action research phases to date (Pietikäinen & Komori-Glatz, in progress).

2c.) Innovative character of the course

- In which dimension (see call section 2) do you place your submission?
- Which didactic elements of your course design do you consider particularly innovative with regard to the focus of this year's award "Teaching in Teams: Innovative Collaborations and Partnerships"?
- In which ways can your course design be adapted for other courses? Which didactic elements of your course can also be used in other courses?
- Which elements could be improved/reconsidered in a second edition of the course?

This submission is placed in the dimension “**Collaborations between Teachers of different Universities**”. When designing the course we took care to make it as meaningful as possible by basing the companies in the role-play on actual Austrian and Norwegian companies that could realistically be expected to cooperate (and in fact [a similar JV between these companies already exists](#)). We discussed the additional preparation material (articles, lecture notes) together to ensure we were broadly covering similar topics but agreed that potentially different levels of knowledge and/or approaches reflected the diverse BELF scenarios we were trying to simulate.

As already mentioned in Section 2a., this activity is innovative at several levels. First, the joint online session with NHH takes advantages of the affordances provided by online teaching allows students to practise the pragmatic strategies they have learned in an authentic intercultural, BELF context. This not only addresses the pedagogical implications of BELF research (e.g., Kankaanranta et al., 2015; Kaur & Birlik, 2021) but also offers a practical example of Internationalisation at Home as “the purposeful integration of international and intercultural dimensions into the formal and informal curriculum for all students within domestic learning environments” (Beelen and Jones 2015: 69), i.e. to give students some experience of genuine international/intercultural exchange without the time and financial investments of traditional mobility. Secondly, to the best of our knowledge, embedding such an activity within the formal and existing curriculum is particularly innovative (and indeed transferable in a way that creating an entirely new course might not be). The difficulty of scheduling constraints when working with different academic systems can make extensive collaboration so daunting (or impossible) that the risk of failure is high, and the time and effort required to set it up represent a significant barrier. In contrast, we propose that limiting the collaboration to a single unit or activity, while it still requires considerable coordination and cooperation, makes it viable. Furthermore, once such an activity is in place, it is easier to implement it again and develop it further. Finally, while there have been several calls to integrate exposure to authentic BELF interaction into Business English syllabi (e.g., Kankaanranta et al., 2015; Kaur & Birlik, 2021), this largely remains a desiderata: few Business English programs include explicit training in BELF communication, and even fewer use digital pedagogies to practise these strategies in authentic settings.

The basic concept of the activity (collaboration with a lecturer from a different institution for a single, joint, online activity embedded in existing curricula) is transferable to almost any course context. The only requirements are a willing collaborator, some flexibility, and at least one session which takes place at the same time within the regular teaching semester. Key points to bear in mind are:

- start by identifying crossover points with a meaningful opportunity for intercultural interaction (what is the added value?)
- identify a concrete outcome/output that the students need to co-create, ideally linking this to learning outcomes, an assessed performance component and including a reflection on the intercultural interaction
- plan and fix the date (for WU, at least one semester ahead) and determine the respective class sizes **before** planning the task details; identify any academic cultural constraints (e.g. preparation, follow-up, breaks)
- establish punctuality and communication guidelines (pay attention to time zones if applicable)
- include a “socialisation” component to establish a baseline of rapport (students typically used this to reflect on their different academic contexts and cultural expectations)
- remind students that they are representatives of their institution and need a reliable internet connection.

We are already supporting colleagues from our respective institutes who are planning to do a similar activity for Spanish business communication courses.

Since we had piloted the activity in SS22 to determine its value and viability, and revised it in line with the students’ feedback and to embed it better in the learning outcomes, the task we conducted in WS22 worked well and there will be only minor adjustments for the next session in March 2023, centering on the preparation and revising the social media jigsaw activity. Additionally, though, the WU students will use the case as the basis for writing their final report, linking it to and integrating it with the other modules by

preparing a "dossier" of information during the semester which they then need to convert to a written text in the final exam.

Nevertheless, there are various potential avenues to develop the activity in future:

- 1) collaborating with colleagues in more culturally diverse contexts, e.g. Asia
- 2) holding the activity in VR instead of Zoom (although anecdotal evidence suggests that students would prefer to see each others' faces on camera rather than using avatars, particular for communication courses)
- 3) exploring options for assessing the students' live performances in the negotiation itself, e.g. (a)through recordings or (b)employing and training tutors. However, we considered these for SS22 and rejected (a) based on data security concerns and (b) due to impossible costs.

All in all, the students found the activity extremely worthwhile, and a genuine learning experience where they were able to learn and apply strategies for effective BELF communication in an authentic intercultural context. Dr. Pietikäinen and I have had an equally valuable learning experience, and it has led to closer collaboration on the research side through writing up our experiences for a journal article and presenting together at international conferences.

References:

- Beeley, J. & Jones, E. 2015. Redefining Internationalization at Home. In: Curaj, A., Matei, L., Pricopie, R., Salmi, J., & Scott, P. *The European Higher Education Area. Between Critical Reflections and Future Policies*. Cham: Springer, 59-72.
- Burns, A. 2010. *Doing Action Research in English Language Teaching: A Guide for Practitioners*. Routledge.
- Kankaanranta, A., Louhiala-Salminen, L., & Karhunen, P. 2015. English in multinational companies: Implications for teaching "English" at an international business school. *Journal of English as a Lingua Franca*, 4(1), 125-148.
- Kaur, J., & Birlik, S. 2021. Communicative effectiveness in BELF (English as a Business Lingua Franca) meetings: 'Explaining' as a pragmatic strategy. *The Modern Language Journal*, 105(3), 623-638.
- Scrivener, J. 2011. *Learning Teaching*. New York: MacMillan.

Note: By sending the application form and documents, the applicant confirms that the course design has not received any other awards or grants.

Attachment: Please attach evaluation results, if available.