

THE CHINESE UNIVERSITY OF HONG KONG

**English Language Teaching Unit**

**Evaluation of the Effectiveness of the new ELTU Curriculum**

**1. Approach**

The English Language Teaching Unit (ELTU) is committed to fulfilling its mission of

1. providing English language enhancement opportunities for CUHK students at all levels of proficiency and in all areas of need;
2. raising awareness of the English language enhancement needs of CUHK students and designing a coherent and comprehensive range of courses to meet them;
3. exploring opportunities to work with departments and faculties across the university in order to address the specific English language learning needs of their students; and
4. ensuring that all ELTU courses, teaching, learning and assessment strategies are informed by quality assurance processes and a concern for professional practice.

**2. Deployment**

ELTU serves to develop and enhance students' level of English language proficiency, both in general usage as well as in specific academic disciplines.

In order to provide top quality language learning experiences for students, a dual approach is adopted: formal language classroom teaching, and the "soft approach" to language acquisition through meaningful exposure and interaction. While the former is realised by offering credit-bearing courses, which are often enriched by web-based learning, the latter involves the use of interactive media and informal meetings to engage students' interest in authentic language use outside of class. The ELTU Facebook page, which provides a wide range of interactive learning activities, and the well-received social meet-up sessions help illustrate that objective.

Specifically, ELTU attempts to achieve its mission by: a) designing and implementing a 9-unit curriculum; b) promoting English use outside class settings; and c) providing full support to college and university language enhancement activities.

**2.1 Design and Implementation of the ELTU Curriculum**

In response to the 334 education reform, and the University's outcomes-based approach (OBA) initiatives, ELTU has designed and implemented a nine-unit curriculum for the new cohort since 2012–2013. The centerpiece of the new ELTU

curriculum is the 4-3-2 ‘Mixed-content’ model of nine compulsory units of English amounting to a total of 126 hours over three years. All courses are coherently articulated with reference to a unified Programme Outcomes Statement (Appendix 1). In addition, interest-driven, topic-based electives have also been designed to encourage appreciation of the aesthetic use of English (Appendix 2).

In this model, students need to complete a four-unit foundation academic English (EAP) language course (*ELTU 1001 Foundation English for University Studies*) in Year One (except for those students who are exempted from the course by attainment or by equivalence). To cater for learner diversity, an alternative advanced English course (ELTU 1002 English Communication for University Studies) is offered for students with IELTS  $\geq$  6.5 or its equivalence.

Upon completion of the foundation course, students will proceed to a three-unit course in Year Two and a two-unit course in Year Three (except for those students who are exempted). These upper-year courses are mostly faculty-based and discipline-specific, all developed with input from respective faculty members to enhance students’ abilities in using English for Specific Purposes (ESP) and for Professional Purposes (EPP).

The following table summarises the structure of the new ELTU curriculum:

Year	Units	Courses	Remarks
1	4	Foundation English courses for academic purposes (EAP)	Compulsory at two different levels
2	3	Discipline/faculty-specific course I (ESP)/EAP	Compulsory
3	2	Discipline/faculty-specific course II (ESP/EPP)/EAP	Compulsory
1 - 4	1 or more	Electives	Optional

## **2.2 Promotion of Authentic English Use in Informal Settings**

In addition to the formal curriculum, ELTU has also adopted a soft-approach to promote the use of English outside of class. With the establishment of the Student Activities Project Team since 2012, the ELTU Facebook page, featuring interactive English learning activities and an online writing clinic, has been launched <https://www.facebook.com/Eltucuhk>, and interest-based workshops and social meet-ups that encourage authentic language use have also been organised, all with positive responses and a steady rise in student numbers.

## **2.3 Full Support of College & University Language Enhancement Activities**

To further enrich the learning experience of undergraduate students, ELTU colleagues have been providing strong support to the implementation of a wide range of informal language enhancement activities in the colleges, as well as activities at the university level. These initiatives include, but are not limited to, conducting skills-based and

interest-based workshops, hosting cultural evenings, conducting bird-watching field trips, to name a few. Colleagues also serve as consultants, tutors, language evaluators/grammarians of Toastmasters clubs, trainers and lead teachers of service-learning trips that involve teaching of English to the underprivileged.

### **3. Results**

#### **3.1 Formal Evaluation of Course Effectiveness (CTE)**

The mandatory university-wide standardised Course and Teaching Evaluation Questionnaires (CTE) are administered to all credit-bearing English courses. According to the results, the overall feedback from students (above 91% response rate per year) was generally very positive throughout the past three years, both in terms of *course effectiveness* (ranges from 4.24 to 4.41) and *satisfaction with teachers' performance* (ranges from 5.05 to 5.12). Given the large number of students involved and their diverse backgrounds, the overall CTE ratings clearly show the effectiveness of the ELTU programme.

#### **3.2 Grade Distribution of Credit-bearing Courses**

In addition to large-scale student surveys, course grade distribution, to a good extent, also reflects student learning with reference to the intended learning outcomes.

All new ELTU courses have been designed using the OBA approach. Thus, students' performance has been measured not on the curve but by their achievement of the intended learning outcomes. Hence, the final course grade distribution indicates the extent to which the intended learning outcomes of a particular course have been achieved.

The bar charts in Figure 1 (Appendix 3) shows the grade distribution percentages of students in the 4-year curriculum over the past three academic years (2012–2015). For each year, more than 60% of the students were awarded a B grade or above in their final course grades (i.e., 65.79% in 2012–2013, 61.08% in 2013–2014, and 79.89% in 2014–2015), and only less than 1 % failed the courses, mostly due to excessive absenteeism or no submission of homework assignments.

#### **3.3 Steady Improvement in IELTS Scores (2002–2014)**

Under the Common English Proficiency Assessment Scheme (CEPAS) financed by the University Grants Committee (UGC) from 2002 to 2014, some 60% of each year's cohort at CUHK has taken part in an international English language test (IELTS). Over the past decade or so, CUHK students have shown steady improvement in the IELTS results, rising from 6.65 (lowest) to 6.98 (highest) on a 9-point scale, which are all above the average overall score attained by students of UGC-funded undergraduate degree programmes.

### 3.4 IELTS Results of Stratified Samples (2015) from the First 334 Cohort

Motivated by the ELTU internal quality assurance (QA) mechanism to help monitor students' progress over the programme period, nearly 1000 year three students were approached to participate in IELTS. These students were identified using *stratified sampling*, by faculty and by English proficiency level. Eventually, a total of 243 eligible students from the first 334 cohort (2012–2013) attended the IELTS examination in summer 2015. Among them, 218 were JUPAS students and 25 were non-JUPAS students. They represented eight different faculties and a wide range of English language proficiency levels.

All the participants attained encouraging IELTS results, with an average overall score of 7.16 and all the sub-scores better than the previous years (Appendix 4).

## 4. Improvement

As indicated in the IELTS results and students' self-perception reported in the entry class questionnaire, as well as based on ELTU teachers' professional judgement, students in general need more support in the enhancement of their speaking and writing abilities. In order to further improve students' English communication skills, ELTU has proactively been launching a series of actions to encourage more language use both in and out of class, as follows:

1. **Core curriculum:** nearly all existing courses within the core language curriculum are multi-modal with a dual emphasis on speaking and writing.
2. **Curriculum expansion:** informed by the ELTU internal QA mechanism, more speaking and writing courses have been developed in 2015, in addition to the core curriculum, to address students' specific needs in these two modalities.
3. **English Across the Curriculum (EAC):** this on-going initiative includes and extends the learning of English in formal course settings to the acquisition and use of English in content subjects. This is implemented through close collaboration with content teachers in enhancing students' level of language awareness and language use in the discipline. Emphasis is placed both on the speaking and writing modalities.
4. **Peer Tutoring Scheme (PTS):** this scheme, to be launched in Term 2 of 2015–16, is a learner-centred service organised by the EAC team. It aims to offer informal opportunities for CUHK students to consult trained Peer Tutors on the use of English language in a supportive environment.
5. **Impromptu Speaking Platform (ISP):** this newly launched project focuses on the promotion and enhancement of impromptu speaking among students who can use this platform as a self-access learning tool. They can also obtain professional feedback from experts by uploading their own speech to the "Challenge Zone" of the platform <http://www.eltu.cuhk.edu.hk/isp/>.
6. **Student Activities Project (SAP):** this on-going project aims to improve students' use of English in an informal, stress-free and supportive environment

by organising Social Meet-ups and Movie Appreciation Nights, which are supported by local and international ELTU student ambassadors, and by hosting a Facebook Page <https://www.facebook.com/Eltucuhk> that offers a wide range of language learning activities online.

7. **eLearning Projects:** *English Through Music* is a series of micro-modules designed to engage students in blended learning that aims to expand their listening comprehension, vocabulary and enhance their phonological awareness. Another project, *iVocab*, is an interactive mobile application that aims to support independent vocabulary learning. More such projects would be launched if manpower permits.

Dr Jose Lai  
Director of ELTU  
12 December 2015

## Outcome Statement for the 9-unit ELTU Programme

<b><i>Writing modality</i></b>	
PLO 1	Write accurate, clear and well-structured <b>texts for academic and professional purposes</b> , such as summaries, essays, letters and reports, highlighting the relevant salient issues, expanding and supporting points of views with supplementary points, providing reasons and relevant examples, and ending with a logical conclusion.
PLO 2	Write <b>personal accounts</b> , expressing thoughts and opinions about abstract and/or cultural topics, such as music and film, describing experiences, feelings and events in sufficient detail.
<b><i>Speaking modality</i></b>	
PLO 3	Give <b>informative and persuasive presentations</b> on a range of subjects related to his/her field of interest/study in a logical and coherent manner with an awareness of the target audience and contexts.
PLO 4	Participate in <b>discussions</b> and interviews by expressing himself/herself clearly and fluently and with a good degree of confidence and spontaneity.
PLO 5	Give clear <b>descriptions with appropriate levels</b> of detail related to a range of subjects in his/her field of interest/study which are either concrete or abstract in nature.
PLO 6	Produce <b>intelligible and comprehensible</b> speech.
<b><i>Reading modality</i></b>	
PLO 7	Read independently, adapting style and speed of reading to different texts and purposes, with a broad and active reading vocabulary.
PLO 8	Understand in detail a range of texts, identifying finer points of detail, including attitudes and implied as well as stated opinions.
<b><i>Listening modality</i></b>	
PLO 9	Understand and follow the <b>essential points and features</b> of a range of spoken genres, including lectures, talks and reports, and other forms of academic and professional presentations.
PLO 10	Understand a range of spoken discourses, identifying attitudes and implied as well as stated opinions.

## Mapping Courses to the Programme-level Learning Outcomes

Use **crosses** to indicate how particular courses map to programme-level learning outcomes

ELTU Courses (University Core Requirements)	PLO 1	PLO 2	PLO 3	PLO 4	PLO 5	PLO 6	PLO 7	PLO 8	PLO 9	PLO 10
1001	X	X	X	X		X		X		X
1002	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		
2011 (ARTS Y2)	X		X		X	X	X	X		
2012 (BSA Y2)	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
2013 (EDU Y2)	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
2014 (ERG Y2)	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
2015 (LAW)	X		X		X	X	X	X		
2016 (MED Y2)	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
2018 EC (SCI Y2)	X		X		X	X	X		X	
2019 RW (SCI Y2)	X		X		X	X	X	X	X	
2020 (SSC Y2)	X		X		X	X	X	X		
2406 (CCS)	X	X						X		
2411 (SOWK)	X	X	X	X	X	X				
3011 (ARTS Y3)	X	X	X	X	X	X				
3012 (BSA Y3)	X	X	X	X	X	X				
3013 (EDU Y3)	X	X	X	X	X	X				
3014 (ERG Y3)	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
3016 (MED Y3)	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
3017 (MB ChB)	X			X	X	X	X	X	X	X
3018 (SCI Y3)	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X
3020 (SSC Y3)	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	

## Appendix 2

### **Course List: Four-year curriculum**

<i>Course Code</i>	<i>Course Title</i>	<i>Unit</i>
<b>English Language Courses (University Core Requirements)</b>		
ELTU1001	Foundation English for University Studies	4
ELTU1002	English Communication for University Studies	4
ELTU2011	English for Arts Students I	3
ELTU2012	Business Communication I	3
ELTU2013	English for Education Students I	3
ELTU2014	English for Engineering Students I	3
ELTU2015	English for Law Students	3
ELTU2016	English for Medicine I (Excluding MBChB Programme)	3
ELTU2018	English for Science Students I – Effective Communications	3
ELTU2019	English for Science Students I – Science Research Writing	3
ELTU2020	English for Social Science Students I	3
ELTU2406	Academic Writing for Contemporary China Studies	3
ELTU2411	Professional Communications for Social Workers I	3
ELTU3011	English for Arts Students II	2
ELTU3012	Business Communication II	2
ELTU3013	English for Education Students II	2
ELTU3014	English for Engineering Students II	2
ELTU3016	English for Medicine II (Excluding MBChB Programme)	2
ELTU3017	English for MBChB Programme	2
ELTU3018	English for Science Students II	2
ELTU3020	English for Social Science Students II	2
ELTU3412	Professional Communications for Social Workers II	2
<b>Elective English Language Courses</b>		
ELTU1006	Grammar in Context	3
ELTU2003	English Through Popular Culture	2
ELTU2005	Speaking and Presenting Like TED	3
ELTU2407	English Through Creative Writing	2
ELTU3014	English Through Film	3
ELTU3413	Research Writing in the Humanities and Social Sciences	2
ELTU3414	Learn to Write Better! English Through Great Essays	2
ELTU3502	Essentials of Public Speaking	2



### Appendix 3

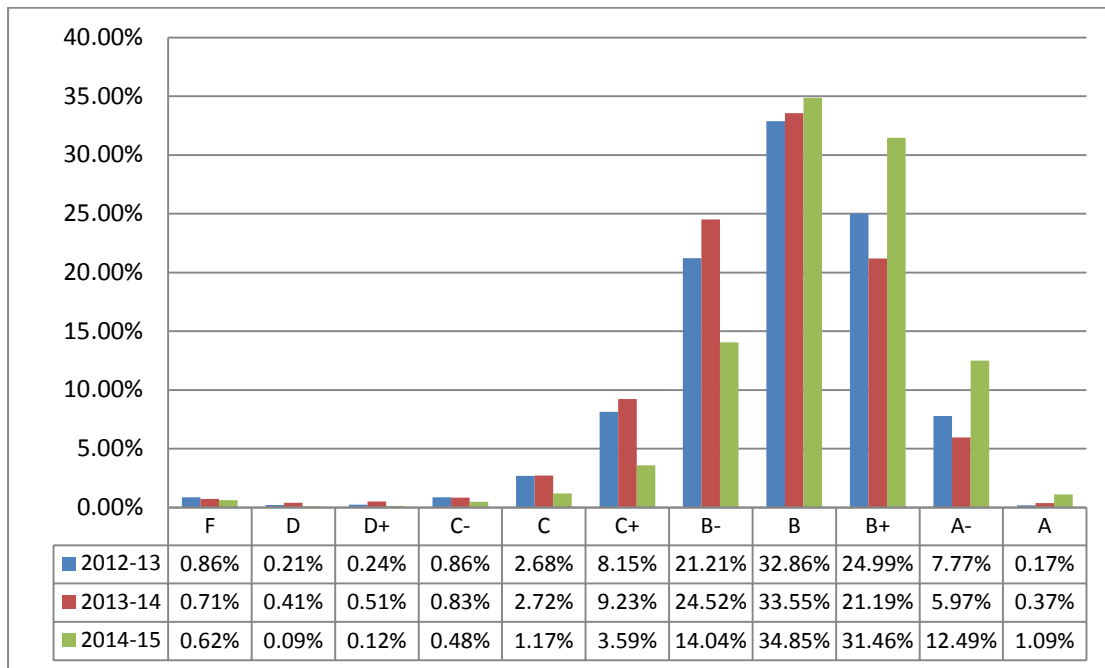


Figure 1. Bar Charts of Grade Distribution Percentages of the 4-Year Curriculum (2012–15)

## Appendix 4

### IELTS Results Over Time (2002–2015)

Year	No. of CU Candidates (%)	Reading	Listening	Writing	Speaking	Overall
2002–03	1313 (45%)	7.06	6.73	6.31	6.24	6.65
2003–04	1626 (56%)	7.30	6.66	6.25	6.25	6.66
2004–05	1696 (59%)	7.31	7.29	6.32	6.36	6.88
2005–06	1872 (66%)	7.44	7.27	6.25	6.30	6.87
2006–07	1888 (69%)	7.52	7.22	6.26	6.20	6.86
2007–08	2019 (69%)	7.49	7.33	6.10	6.17	6.84
2008–09	1987 (58%)	7.75	7.36	6.09	6.16	6.91
2009–10	2221 (72%)	7.69	7.49	6.08	6.12	6.91
2010–11	2206 (69%)	7.71	7.50	6.15	6.20	6.96
2011–12	2241 (67%)	7.73	7.53	6.14	6.21	6.97
2012–13	2133 (61%)	7.79	7.44	6.13	6.17	6.95
2013–14	2195 (60%)	7.67	7.61	6.18	6.26	6.98
2015	243 (7.61%)	7.85	7.67	6.32	6.54	7.16