

## Syllabus Information

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**Academic Year:** 2020/21

**Subject:** 25269 -

**Faculty / School:** 201 - Escuela Politécnica Superior

**Degree:** 571 - Degree in Environmental Sciences

**ECTS:** 6.0

**Year:** 3

**Semester:** Second Four-month period

**Subject Type:** Optional

**Module:** ---

## 1.General information

### 1.1.Aims of the course

The principal aim of this elective course is for the students to improve their oral and written communicative skills in English. In this way, the specific learning goals proposed focus on a balanced practice of the four basic language skills (oral interaction, listening comprehension, reading comprehension and written production), which at the end of the semester, after being assessed separately, ought to have attained at least level B1 of the CEFRL (Common European Framework of Reference for Languages).

It should be made clear that this is *not* a general English course and its contents will adhere to the specific themes of the environmental sciences, which will also serve to introduce the features of academic and professional English.

On the other hand, these objectives are aligned with some of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the 2030 Agenda (<https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/>) and specific aims, contributing to a certain degree of attainment. In particular, according to SDG 5.1 (End all forms of discrimination against all women and girls everywhere), the use of inclusive language will be promoted in the development of teaching materials and class activities.

### 1.2.Context and importance of this course in the degree

Scientific English bears its own characteristics and modalities which students need to identify and understand in order to successfully cope in professional and academic settings. This course will help them to attain this goal from within such international subject matter as the environmental sciences. On extending their comprehension and communication skills in English, the studentship will be able to access the specialised literature and improve their academic or professional presentations and enter the European Space of Higher Education by participating in different kinds of international programmes. In short, it will be of assistance for them to integrate both in the work market and in a research career.

### 1.3.Recommendations to take this course

It is essential to print and carefully read all the relevant documents uploaded on Moodle: detailed evaluation charts or rubrics, content explanations and instructions to perform the proposed tasks. Students are also encouraged to ask the lecturer when they have doubts.

Class attendance and active participation in all the activities or assignments proposed (whenever possible) is strongly recommended, because regular contact with the course contents is paramount to reaching its learning goals. It is also highly advisable for the students to use all the available resources, missing no opportunities to practise their English both in academic contexts and in their leisure time (talks, blogs, travel, newsletters, chats or meetings such as *Spoken English Coffee* at the EPSH, etc.). In the same way, since English is the only language used in class and in most of the information available on the course, the students are encouraged to use it in their exchanges with the lecturer in emails, office conversations, etc. Getting used to these ?good-learner? practices is the key to learning in a more effective, autonomous way and to ?lifelong learning?.

## 2.Learning goals

### 2.1.Competences

#### Basic competences

1. CG11. Communication, argumentation and negotiation both with specialists and non-specialists.
2. CG13. Autonomous learning and self-assessment.
3. CG7. Computer literacy related to the field of study, and use of the internet to communicate and as an information source.
4. CG9. Teamwork, particularly international interdisciplinary teams, common in this field.
5. CG3. Solving problems, whether they are generic or specific of this area, through the analysis and interpretation of data and relevant evidence; assessing, judging, reflecting and diagnosing, complying with the scientific, ethical or social requirements.

#### Specific competences

- 1 Communicating in English at a B1 or B1+ level.
- 2 Identifying the specific features of scientific and technical English as opposed to General English.
- 3 Understanding the technical discourse of the environmental sciences in the oral and written modes.
- 4 Producing scientific and technical texts in a controlled way at the expected level.

### 2.2.Learning goals

**Global and detailed understanding** of spoken English (especially presentations and lectures) and efficient interaction on the course topics at the expected level.

**Fluent, clear presentation in class** of an idea from their field of study, prepared in advance, using appropriate grammar and terminology.

**Global and detailed understanding** of various types of expository or argumentative texts written in general or scientific English about topics connected to their studies, from which the student is expected to extract or infer relevant information.

**Writing** of messages and short essays in acceptable English about a topic of their interest, with textual and lexical coherence at an intermediate level, using appropriate style and conforming to academic or technical conventions.

### 2.3.Importance of learning goals

Any graduate in Environmental Sciences needs an acceptable command of, at least, one foreign language. Given the global supremacy of English in academic and professional environments, the more able the students are to study and communicate in this language, the better career prospects they will have. Achieving the learning goals expected at the completion of this course means that the students have substantially improved their skills to interact in general and technical English as well as their self-confidence in doing so.

## 3.Assessment (1st and 2nd call)

### 3.1.Assessment tasks (description of tasks, marking system and assessment criteria)

#### Types of assessment tasks

**1 Final written exam** on the date established by the EPS for each sitting, comprising these activities:

- a) Reading comprehension (20%)

- b) Listening comprehension (20%)
- c) Use of English (20%)
- d) Writing (20%)

## **2 Final oral production / interaction exam (20%) with two options:**

- A. Oral presentation in the classroom, *only* for those students who have attended at least 65% of the class sessions.
- B. Final oral interview.

### **Detailed description of assessment tasks**

#### **1 Final written exam**

- a) Reading comprehension. This part will consist of at least one text on (an aspect of) a course topic. Students will have to write short answers to questions, choose the right option, mark 'true?' or 'false?', complete short sentences, fill in tables or diagrams with information from the passage, etc.
- b) Listening comprehension. Two recordings, similar to those used in class, will be heard twice. The tasks (one per recording) will be similar to those described in 1a.
- c) Use of English. Students will have to complete short cloze tests or multiple choice tasks involving general academic vocabulary as well as terminology (definitions, classifications, word families, etc.), match or replace synonyms and/or definitions, and structural conversion exercises (e.g. active to passive, replacing connectors, etc.). These tasks will be similar to those done during the semester.
- d) Writing. Students will need to write at least 150 words in response to one or several tasks dealing with a course topic. Text types (summary, letter, simplified report, essay, etc.) will be also familiar to the students, involving the use of functional expressions of scientific-technical discourse shown in the syllabus (definition, a type of description, expressions of cause and effect, etc.).

#### **2 Final oral production / interaction exam**

- A. Oral presentation in the classroom, a talk delivered by students individually, dealing with a topic or aspect related with the student's area of study. It will be prepared beforehand drawing on (written or audiovisual) materials published *in English*. Its duration will be 8 to 10 minutes on the date scheduled with the lecturer at the beginning of the semester. Each presentation will be followed by questions from the lecturer and a short debate involving the whole class.
- B. Final oral interview. On a date as close as possible to the official sitting date set by the EPS which will be announced on Moodle in due course, those students who have not done or have failed the presentation will be individually scheduled for an interview with the lecturer to validate their command of spoken English. All interviews will be held on the same day as the global written tests, if possible, or on a close date, which will be announced by the lecturer in time for each sitting. The interview consists of

- 1) Short interaction (1'-2') dealing with personal or professional aspects about the student.
- 2) Short monologue (2'-3') about a course topic with a photograph or illustration as a cue.
- 3) Questions about the same (or a related) topic.

### **Assessment criteria**

#### **General requirements for passing**

In order to pass the course, students must achieve at least 60% of the total mark, and at least 50% in each of the five parts. Failure to meet either of these requirements means that they have not passed the course. If at least 50% has been achieved in the first sitting for any of the five parts, the 'pass' marks will be kept for the

second sitting. In the event that a student has achieved 60% of the total final mark for the course (?5 points over 10), but has failed one or more of the five parts in the first sitting, the final grade that will feature in the official degree transcript will be 4.5 (fail).

### **Second sitting (or Second call)**

Those students who have not passed or have not sat for any one of the 5 tests in the first sitting can resit the failed ones (1a, 1b, 1c or 2) or all of them again, if they so wish, on the date scheduled by the EPSH for the second sitting (check the web). These resit exams, consisting of the same parts and weightings, will be organised and assessed in the same way as those of the first sitting. If a student sits for one test that they had already passed, the higher mark will be used.

### **Fifth and Sixth sittings (or calls)**

In the event that a student had to sit a fifth or sixth global exam, the parts, weightings and assessment criteria will be the same as those of the first and second sitting (June and September). The tests will be assessed by a board of examiners.

### **Grading criteria for each assessment task**

**1. Final written exam:** completing all the tasks proposed in activities a, b and c is strongly recommended, since mistakes in these parts will not detract from the total mark.

**a) Reading comprehension:** understanding of the main ideas in written discourse, identifying specific detail, using contextual keys or knowledge of word formation to deduce meanings of unfamiliar words and expressions.

**b) Listening comprehension:** understanding of main idea and relevant details from two recordings.

**c) Use of English:** grammatical, syntactic, spelling and semantic appropriacy.

**d) Written production:** message relevance, clarity and coherence; topic adequacy and text organization; adequacy of grammar, syntax, vocabulary and style. Marking criteria: the written piece will be marked over 12 points, distributed according to three specific criteria: correctness and variety of grammar forms and structures (6); style, vocabulary / terminology range and adequacy (4); relevance, coherence and organisation of ideas (2).

Failure to comply with the topics or tasks proposed may result in a mark of 0 (fail) in this part. Extra points may be awarded (+0.2 per item) to those students who adequately use terms, expressions and structures clearly pertaining to levels above B1. There may be deductions for serious spelling or grammar mistakes (-0.25 to -1 point per item).

### **2. Oral production / interaction exam**

-Assessment type A (topic presentation): audience consideration and interaction skills 20%; non-verbal communication and visual aids 10%; relevance, message clarity, quality of information sources and content coherence 20%; fluency, spontaneity, text independence, communication strategies and correctness (grammar, syntax, lexicon, phonology) 50%.

-Assessment type B (interview): interaction skills 20%; naturalness and communicative resources (gestures, conversational conventions) 10%; relevance, clarity and coherence 20%; fluency, communicative strategies (so as not to resort to mother language) and correctness (phonology, lexicon, grammar, syntax) 50%.

Extra points will be awarded (+0.2 per relevant contribution) to those students who, as audience members, take part in the debates with their comments or questions for the presenters. On the other hand, failure to comply with the directions given for assessment A task (see Moodle document) will mean deductions (-0.2 per item), while consistent lack of spontaneity (reading) and general unintelligibility may result in a mark of 0 (fail) in this part.

## **4. Methodology, learning tasks, syllabus and resources**

## 4.1. Methodological overview

The teaching and learning process in this course rests on the principles and tenets of the communicative approach to language teaching (CLT), assumed on the basis of its contribution to the development of students' many-fold communicative competence: discursive, grammatical, pragmatic, strategic and intercultural, in a realistic, contextualized way. This focus on communication requires the students' active participation in the activities proposed, with English as the principal language used in all modes of communication student-lecturer. Since *English for the environmental sciences* is a special-purpose, comparatively flexible course, collaboration projects with other courses can be easily designed. The students are in turn encouraged to share their own career-related interests from the beginning, in an attempt to better suit their needs.

## 4.2. Learning tasks

**1** Interactive lectures held in a conventional classroom, which are aimed at presenting each aspect of the program: forms, meanings and uses of the relevant grammar structures, terminology, and rhetorical elements. Task types will be based on observation, reflection, inference or classification (1.2 ECTS).

**2** Practice sessions such as problem-solving or other types to carry out individually or in small groups (1.8 ECTS), including:

- Intensive reading of texts of varying lengths, followed by tasks aimed at extracting specific information, deducing meanings and carrying out simple language / discourse analyses and reformulations.
- Listening or viewing sessions followed by analyses and comprehension exercises.
- Mini-debates.
- Oral presentations followed by whole-class interaction.

**3** Sessions aimed at supervised individual practice of communicative skills (except oral production) to be held periodically in a computer room (3 ECTS).

- Reading comprehension.
- Writing of different kinds of text.
- Listening comprehension.
- Tasks involving autonomous use of a variety of online resources in English and about English.

The necessary materials for class work and voluntary homework (except from the coursebook) will be available from Moodle, where they are organized on a weekly basis.

## 4.3. Syllabus

### 1 Use of English

#### a) Grammar and Syntax (B1+)

- Ordinary verbs and modal verbs
- The imperative and the indirect style
- The passive voice
- Comparative and superlative forms of adjectives and adverbs
- Countable and uncountable nouns

- Use of definite and indefinite articles
- Conditional clauses
- Relative clauses
- Cause and consequence clauses
- Time clauses.

### **b) Vocabulary**

- Common academic vocabulary
- Word formation: prefixes, suffixes and compounds
- The lexicon of the environmental sciences.

## **2 (Written and spoken) scientific and professional discourse**

- The paragraph: summary writing
- Direct and indirect instructions
- Describing objects and actions (in sequence and processes)
- Describing change and trend
- Expressing quantity and probability
- Classification and definition
- Expressing cause and effect
- Expressing conditions and hypotheses
- Describing a problem, solutions and evaluation
- Expressing opinion, agreement and disagreement
- Professional communication: correspondence, articles and reports.

### **Topics**

1. The earth
2. Climate, weather and climate change
3. Biology basics and ecosystems
4. Chemistry and cycles in nature
5. Endangered ecosystems
6. Waste and recycling
7. Energy sources and sustainability.

### **4.4.Course planning and calendar**

The dates and schedules for the oral presentations (assessment type A) and for the interviews (assessment type B) will be published on Moodle, as well as the assignment / homework submission deadlines. The dates of the final written exams (both sittings: June and September) can be checked on the EPSH website.

#### 4.5. Bibliography and recommended resources

Students will need to purchase their own coursebook (see reference list). Additional materials including handouts with activities for the classroom, as well as notes and resources for individual homework, are downloadable from Moodle. However, no copies will be given to students of books or resources featuring in the list of recommended references, which are all available from the University library.

- BB** Evans, Virginia, Dooley, Jenny, Blum, Ellen (2014): Environmental Science. Newbury: Express Publishing
- BB** Harrison, Richard. Better writing : a step-by-step approach to improving writing skills / Richard Harrison . 1st. ed., 1st. rep. Reading : Garnet Publishing, 2015 (rep. 2014)
- BC** Bell, Douglas. Passport to Academic Presentations. Student's Book / Douglas Bell . 1st ed. Reading, UK : Garnet, 2008
- BC** Burton, Graham. Presenting: deliver presentations with confidence / Graham Burton . London : HarperCollins, cop. 2013

#### LISTADO DE URLs:

Cambridge Dictionary Online  
[<https://dictionary.cambridge.org/es>]

The updated recommended bibliography can be consulted in:  
<http://psfunizar10.unizar.es/br13/egAsignaturas.php?codigo=25269>