

Minor English Language and Culture Course Guide 2025-2026

Programme Code:	OA-MINTCENG-13
Semester:	Fall (AB) / Spring (CD)
Number of ECTS:	30
Language of Instruction:	English



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1 Introduction

We live in a globalized community where borders between countries no longer exist when it comes to the economy, communication and tourism. In many professional contexts, therefore, excellent command of a first language is no longer enough and effective communication in an international language has become essential. English is world language number one and a good command of this language will enhance your professional chances. During this minor you will develop both your English language skills and your understanding of British and American culture.

There are two courses specifically targeting the development of your productive language skills, namely *Speaking Skills* and *Writing Skills*. Both these courses are spread over the duration of the minor to allow you as much time for development as possible. These courses start by improving your confidence, fluency and flexibility. You will practice using the language in conversations and semi-formal writing assignments and progress to formal assignments, which also increase in complexity and sophistication as you learn more. The skills courses will cover a variety of topics within your field of interest, experience, and expertise, but will also challenge you to tackle less familiar, abstract topics and current events. You will receive feedback throughout the courses to identify areas for improvement and guide your development. Whilst actively working on writing and speaking you will also hone your reading and listening skills.

Alongside the language skills courses students also take *Grammar and Basics*, a course in period one which is aimed at supporting students to become better speakers and writers by teaching them spelling, grammar and pronunciation. It also provides a space to work in a targeted manner on the feedback you received during your speaking and writing classes. By taking a diagnostic test at the beginning of the block students can identify areas that need work and personalize their learning process by attending relevant learning pods. The course is finalized with a summative test which allows students to exhibit their mastery of English grammar.

There are also two culture courses. These are CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning) courses where you will improve your English while learning about British and American culture. This also means that you are more prepared to communicate in an international context because you are more familiar with other cultures that you are likely to encounter. In period one students will learn about American history, politics and people. In period two students focus on contemporary British culture by conducting research on a key aspect of British culture. Moreover, this course gives students the opportunity to visit Britain for a week to research their chosen aspect of British culture (please note that this will not be financed by the Hogeschool Utrecht but the students themselves).

For the final 5EC students can choose a course that best suits their ambitions and development. We offer *Business English*, *Short Stories* and *Cambridge Exam Training* (please note that this is a training course for the Cambridge exam. Should you wish to take the official Cambridge exam you will need to pay for this yourself at an external institute). There are limited places available per elective module!

The minor caters for students with a variety of language levels, from B1 to C1. Your level of English is the starting point for the minor. Before you start taking classes your language level is assessed which allows us to allocate students to a group suited to their needs. Moreover, the course assignments have been designed to ensure that everyone who starts the minor will be challenged to improve their English language skills and give students the opportunity to design parts of their own learning process.

Your teachers are native speakers or have spent a longer period of time in an English speaking country. All classes are taught in English and while there are no formal entry requirements, you are assumed to have at least a CEFR B1 level of English (HAVO English).

This minor is interesting to any student who:

- loves English and wants to immerse themselves in the culture and language during their minor;
- needs English for their future studies or work and wants to take this opportunity to improve their language skills;
- wants proof of their English language abilities to include on their CV.

Kate Cousins & Fatima Kajouj (Minor Coordinators)

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1.1 Course Overview

Period A or C	Period B or D				
Speaking Skills OA-MINTCENG1-20 5 EC					
Writing Skills OA-MINTCENG2-20 5 EC					
American Culture OA-MINTCENG4-20 5 EC	British Culture OA-MINTCENG5-20 5 EC				
Grammar and Basics OA-MINTCENG3-12 5 EC	Elective Course* 5 EC	<table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td data-bbox="977 777 1471 867" style="text-align: center;"> Business English OA-MINTCENG6A-20 </td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="977 869 1471 947" style="text-align: center;"> Cambridge Exam Training OA-MINTCENG6B-20 </td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="977 949 1471 1024" style="text-align: center;"> Short Stories OA-MINTCENG6C-24 </td> </tr> </table>	Business English OA-MINTCENG6A-20	Cambridge Exam Training OA-MINTCENG6B-20	Short Stories OA-MINTCENG6C-24
Business English OA-MINTCENG6A-20					
Cambridge Exam Training OA-MINTCENG6B-20					
Short Stories OA-MINTCENG6C-24					

* NOTE: You may only choose ONE elective course to follow. Each elective course is limited to 30 spaces.

2 English Language Level Before and After the Minor

2.1 Your level of English <u>BEFORE</u> the minor (B1 minimum)	2.2 Your level of English <u>AFTER</u> the minor (B2 minimum)	2.3 Your level of English <u>AFTER</u> the minor (C1 target)
<p>Listening I can understand the main points of clear standard speech on familiar matters regularly encountered in work, school, leisure, etc. I can understand the main point of many radio or TV programmes on current affairs or topics of personal or professional interest when the delivery is relatively slow and clear.</p> <p>Reading I can understand texts that consist mainly of high frequency every day or job-related language. I can understand the description of events, feelings and wishes in personal letters.</p> <p>Speaking I can deal with most situations likely to arise whilst travelling in an area where the language is spoken. I can enter unprepared into conversation on topics that are familiar, of personal interest or pertinent to everyday life (e.g. family, hobbies, work, travel and current events). I can connect phrases in a simple way in order to describe experiences and events, my dreams, hopes & ambitions. I can briefly give reasons and explanations for opinions and plans. I can narrate a story or relate the plot of a book or film and describe my reactions.</p> <p>Writing I can write simple connected text on topics which are familiar or of personal interest. I can write personal letters describing experiences and impressions. I can write straightforward connected text on topics, which are familiar, or of personal interest.</p>	<p>Listening I can understand extended speech and lectures and follow even complex lines of argument provided the topic is reasonably familiar. I can understand most TV news and current affairs programmes. I can understand the majority of films in standard dialect.</p> <p>Reading I can read articles and reports concerned with contemporary problems in which the writers adopt particular attitudes or viewpoints. I can understand contemporary literary prose.</p> <p>Speaking I can interact with a degree of fluency and spontaneity that makes regular interaction with native speakers quite possible. I can take an active part in discussion in familiar contexts, accounting for and sustaining my views. I can present clear, detailed descriptions on a wide range of subjects related to my field of interest. I can explain a viewpoint on a topical issue giving the advantages and disadvantages of various options.</p> <p>Writing I can write clear, detailed text on a wide range of subjects related to my interests. I can write an essay or report, passing on information or giving reasons in support of or against a particular points of view. I can write letters highlighting the personal significance of events and experiences.</p>	<p>Listening I can understand extended speech even when it is not clearly structured and when relationships are only implied and not signalled explicitly. I can understand television programmes and films without too much effort.</p> <p>Reading I can understand long and complex factual and literary texts, appreciating distinctions of style. I can understand specialised articles and longer technical instructions, even when they do not relate to my field.</p> <p>Speaking I can express myself fluently and spontaneously without much obvious searching for expressions. I can use language flexibly and effectively for social and professional purposes. I can formulate ideas and opinions with precision and relate my contribution skillfully to those of other speakers. I can present clear, detailed descriptions of complex subjects integrating sub-themes, developing particular points and rounding off with an appropriate conclusion.</p> <p>Writing I can express myself in clear, well-structured text, expressing points of view at some length. I can write detailed expositions of complex subjects in an essay or a report, underlining what I consider to be the salient issues. I can write different kinds of texts in a style appropriate to the reader in mind. I can express myself with clarity and precision, relating to the addressee flexibly and effectively in an assured, personal, style.</p>

3 Course Descriptions

3.1 Speaking Skills

3.1.1 General Information

Dutch Name	Spreekvaardigheid
Course Code	OA-MINTCENG1-20
ECTS	5
Format	Lint (this course is taught over two periods)
Periods	AB or CD
Resit Period	C or E
Contact time	1 session of 120 minutes per week
Contact person	Kate Cousins

3.1.2 Course Description

The speaking course will start by assessing your current strengths and weaknesses. This will provide you with feedback which will give you a clear idea of the areas in which you can improve. You will learn how to improve the accuracy of your spoken English such as your pronunciation, through a variety of challenging yet fun assignments. In the first period we will focus on your confidence and fluency while improvising in a variety of informal to semi-formal scenarios. As the minor progresses the formality of the scenarios and speaking tasks will increase, pushing you to use more advanced English. We will look at conversation, negotiation, presentation and debating skills. You will learn how to fluently and persuasively describe and justify your opinions about various topics, respond to other's ideas and weigh the advantages and disadvantages of various options.

During the course you will complete a number of formative assignments aimed to provide you with feedback on your progress and guide your future development. At the end of the course, you will participate in a TEDx style conference at which you will present on a controversial topic of contemporary interest and will participate in a formal discussion on that topic afterwards.

3.1.3 Learning Objectives

- Students can identify areas of weakness in their spoken English and formulate a realistic plan of action to improve their spoken English in a 14-week time frame.
- Students can implement their plan to improve the fluency and accuracy of their spoken English, including their pronunciation, grammar and vocabulary.
- Students can introduce themselves and other people fluently and respond to questions about familiar topics spontaneously.
- Students can solve a problem in an informal/semi-formal situation.
- Students can ask questions to obtain information, provide relevant, detailed information, check for understanding and negotiate in English.

- Students can speak informatively and/or persuasively, in a fluent, detailed, structured and engaging manner, about a topic they are familiar with.
- Students can spontaneously answer audience questions about the topic of their presentation with cohesion and clarity.
- Students can hold a formal discussion about a controversial topic in which they adopt an appropriate register for the intended audience and use correct formal vocabulary.
- Students can respond to opposing arguments spontaneously, cohesively and convincingly.
- Students can summarise the main points of an argument clearly and persuasively.
- Students can speak at minimum CEFR B2 level.

3.1.4 Testing

Test 1 TEDx style conference (100%): TED Talk and Panel Discussion

3.1.5 Materials

There are no compulsory books for this course. All necessary materials will be made available on the Canvas course site.

3.2 Writing Skills

3.2.1 General Information

Dutch Name	Schrijfvaardigheid
Course Code	OA-MINTCENG2-20
ECTS	5
Format	Lint (this course is taught over two periods)
Periods	AB or CD
Resit Period	C or E
Contact time	1 session of 90 minutes per week
Contact person	Kate Cousins

3.2.2 Course Description

Whether you are writing something informative, persuasive, creative or entertaining, your writing must communicate a cohesive message to the reader. During this course we will look at how to structure your writing to communicate your message clearly; how to adapt your writing style to suit the genre, format or target audience; how to write descriptively and metaphorically to paint a picture in your reader's mind, but also to develop your vocabulary and flexibility when writing; how to incorporate sources into your writing in order to support your opinion, but also how to analyse the relevance and credibility of a source; finally we will look at how to edit your writing effectively to encourage you to rewrite and improve your language and communication skills.

During the course you will complete a variety of tasks. Some will be peer reviewed and some will receive teacher feedback. At the end of the course, you will present a portfolio of work which shows your ability to write clearly and effectively in a range of formats for a range of purposes and in an engaging manner suited to your target audience.

3.2.3 Learning Objectives

- Students can write a range of structured pieces such as stories, blogs or essays with a beginning/introduction, middle/body and ending/conclusion, of between 250 and 750 words.
- Students can write cohesively on a range of topics for a variety of purposes to communicate a clear message to the reader.
- Students can edit their work based on feedback to improve the accuracy and communicative success of the piece.
- Students can write descriptively and meaningfully about their own experiences and places they have visited to engage the reader in their piece.
- Students are aware of differences between spoken and written English and can adopt an appropriate register for the topic, genre and target audience.
- Students can incorporate reliable sources supporting their argumentation into their writing accurately and according to APA guidelines.
- Students can write at minimum CEFR B2 level.

3.2.4 Testing

Test 1 Portfolio of written tasks (100%)

3.2.5 Materials

There are no compulsory books for this course. All necessary materials will be made available on the Canvas course site.

3.3 Grammar and Basics

3.3.1 General Information

Dutch Name	Grammatica en Basics
Course Code	OA-MINTCENG3-12
ECTS	5
Format	Block
Period	A or C
Resit Period	B or D
Contact time	2 sessions of 90 minutes per week
Contact person	Fatima Kajouj

3.3.2 Course Description

This course is aimed at giving you all the basics you need to be able to improve your speaking and writing skills during the Speaking Skills and Writing Skills courses. You will learn about English grammar, spelling and pronunciation. The course is very practical; you will work on the feedback you get from your speaking and writing teachers, allowing you to practice and improve your English as much as possible.

3.3.3 Learning Objectives

- Students can apply the most important grammar rules in their written English.
- Students can apply the most important spelling rules in their written English.
- Students are aware of the most common pronunciation errors for Dutch (and other non-native) speakers of English and practice correcting these.

3.3.4 Testing

Test 1 Exam (100%)

3.3.5 Materials

Book: Murphy, Raymond. (2012) *English Grammar in Use Fourth Edition* (with answers and CD-ROM)
ISBN 9780521189392

All supplementary materials will be made available on the Canvas course site.

3.4 American Culture

3.4.1 General Information

Dutch Name	Amerikaanse Cultuur
Course Code	OA-MINTCENG4-20
ECTS	5
Format	Block
Period	A or C
Resit Period	B or D
Contact time	2 sessions of 90 minutes per week
Contact person	Kate Cousins

3.4.2 Course Description

This course introduces you to the history, culture and people of the United States. You will learn about themes such as politics, history, religion and international relations. For this course you will listen to online radio and television broadcasts, read a book about American culture and watch relevant film material.

You will select a topic related to American culture for further research and give a presentation on this topic in the latter half of the course. Supplementary to the presentation is a handout with a summary of your key research. You will also reflect with further research on the presentation topics covered by your fellow students.

3.4.3 Learning Objectives

- Students are familiar with the most important themes regarding America's land and culture.
- Students gain insight into the important effects of key events in American history.
- Students understand the role of religion in American society.
- Students are introduced to America's political system.
- Students can research and give a presentation about a topic related to American culture in English using a variety of reliable sources.
- Students can critically reflect on the significance of a range of topics related to American culture.
- Students can meaningfully use all four skills (speaking, listening, reading & writing) to learn about and effectively express their ideas about American culture.

3.4.4 Testing

Test 1 Research presentation (50%)

Test 2 Research report (50%)

3.4.5 Materials

Book: TBC.

All supplementary materials will be made available on the Canvas course site.

3.5 British Culture

3.5.1 General Information

Dutch Name	Britse Cultuur
Course Code	OA-MINTCENG5-20
ECTS	5
Format	Block
Period	B or D
Resit Period	C or E
Contact time	2 sessions of 90 minutes per week
Contact person	Fatima Kajouj

3.5.2 Course Description

During this course you will immerse yourself in contemporary British culture, researching a central question and the key cultural factors affecting it. Each week will select a theme with which to explore the British culture, such as history, geography or politics. You will explore in the news, podcasts, TV shows, documentaries and films as a source of contemporary insight into these topics.

Moreover, you are free from classes for 1 week giving you the opportunity to travel to Britain and supplement your desk research with interviews, observations and personal experience (*NOTE: you have to organize and finance the research trip yourself*). You will report your research findings in writing and as an interactive (video) presentation to the class.

3.5.3 Learning Objectives

- Students become familiar with the land and culture of the United Kingdom.
- Students gain insight into the contemporary cultural and political developments in the UK.
- Students are familiar with important people and events in the UK's history.
- Students are introduced to the UK political system.
- Students can compare information about various aspects of UK culture from written and audio(-visual) sources, providing a synopsis and critical analysis of the information found.
- Students can plan and undertake a research project into UK culture and present their findings in English in a spoken and written format.
- Students can communicate meaningfully with native speakers of English about an aspect of UK culture.
- Students can meaningfully use all four skills (speaking, listening, reading & writing) to learn about and effectively express their ideas about UK culture.
- Students demonstrate that their English is at least CEFR B2 level.

3.5.4 Testing

Test 1 Research Project (100%)

3.5.5 Materials

There are no compulsory books for this course. All necessary materials will be made available on the Canvas course site.

3.6 Elective Course: Business English

3.6.1 General Information

Dutch name	Business Engels
Course Code	OA-MINTCENG6A-20
ECTS	5
Format	Block
Period	B or D
Resit Period	C or E
Contact time	1 session of 180 minutes per week
Contact person	Kate Cousins & Liz Steinstra

3.6.2 Course Description

In this course, students acquire the necessary skills to feel comfortable in and develop a positive attitude towards functioning within an English business environment. Students acquire knowledge of international business etiquette and develop their formal English writing and oral skills, through different writing assignments and presentations, resulting in a "Business Skills Portfolio".

3.6.3 Learning Objectives

- Students acquire the language skills necessary to conduct themselves in an English language business environment.
- Students develop a positive attitude with regard to all the aspects of the English language
- Students deepen their understanding of the English language and culture

3.6.4 Testing

Test 1 Business Skills Portfolio (100%)

3.6.5 Materials

There are no compulsory books for this course. All necessary materials will be made available on the Canvas course site.

3.7 Elective Course: Cambridge Exam Training

3.7.1 General Information

Dutch Name	Cambridge Examentraining
Course Code	OA-MINTCENG6B-20
ECTS	5
Format	Block
Period	B or D
Resit Period	C or E
Contact time	1 session of 180 minutes per week
Contact person	Kate Cousins & Rudo Kupeta

3.7.2 Course Description

This course is aimed at preparing you for either the FCE (B2 level) or CAE (C1 level) Cambridge exam. The Cambridge exams are known across the world and acknowledged by many organisations. During this course you will familiarise yourself with the design of the tests and work on the skills needed to pass the separate speaking, writing, listening, reading and use of English tests. At the end of the course you will do mock a Cambridge speaking and writing exam at your chosen level. (*NOTE: if you wish to obtain an official Cambridge certificate you are responsible for organising and financing this yourself.*)

3.7.3 Learning Objectives

- Students are familiar with the style of testing and grading used by Cambridge English.
- Students know how to correctly structure and formulate each of the writing assignments presented on the Cambridge tests.
- Students are familiar with the differences between different test levels.
- Students can identify their own test taking strengths and weaknesses.
- Students can pass a mock Cambridge speaking and writing test at a level suitable for them: First (B2), Advanced (C1) or Proficiency (C2).

3.7.4 Testing

Test 1 Speaking (50%)

Test 2 Writing (50%)

You must pass both tests to complete the course.

3.7.5 Materials

NOTE: You will buy ONE book for the level recommended by your Period A teachers and based on a pre-test result.

Book: May, P. (2014) *First Trainer Six Practice Tests with Answer with Audio (2)*. Cambridge University Press: Cambridge. ISBN: 9781107470187

Cambridge (2020) *C1 Advanced Trainer Six Practice Tests with Answers with Resources Download (2)*. Cambridge University Press: Cambridge. ISBN: 9781108716512

Cambridge ESOL (2012) *Cambridge English Proficiency 1 for Updated Exam Self-study Pack (student's Book with Answers and Audio CDs (2))*. Cambridge University Press: Cambridge. ISBN: 9781107691643

All supplementary materials will be made available on the Canvas course site.

3.8 Elective Course: Short Stories

3.8.1 General Information

Dutch Name	Korte Verhalen
Course Code	OA-MINTCENG6C-24
ECTS	5
Format	Block
Period	B or D
Resit Period	C or E
Contact time	1 session of 180 minutes per week
Contact person	Kate Cousins & Tomas Pollard

3.8.2 Course Description

The course gives you the chance to read and discuss a number of short stories by prominent American and British authors. Each week you will read 2 or 3 short stories. You will develop an understanding of how short stories are written by analysing the stories for elements of fiction such as plot, point of view and irony.

Students will complete the course with a written exam in which they will show their knowledge and understanding of the elements of fiction and stories studied.

3.8.3 Learning Objectives

Speaking:

- Students are familiar with the most important terms for literary analysis.
- Students can recognise and describe the effect of these literary features in short stories.
- Students are familiar with English language short stories.
- Students develop their English critical and analytical reading skills.
- *Optional:* Students can apply and analyse literary features in their own creative short story writing.

3.8.4 Testing

Test 1 Written Exam: Short Stories Analysis (100%)

3.8.5 Materials

There are no compulsory books for this course. All necessary materials will be made available on the Canvas course site.