

# **Specialization in**

## **"International Business Communication"**

scheduled to start in WS20/21

### **What are the main topics of the specialization?**

The specialization will provide students with the necessary understanding for the role and function of language and communication in business contexts, presented in particular within internal, external, and intercultural communication settings. A balanced mix of research-based teaching and practical implementation of the relevant concepts will help students not only to apply those concepts in practice, but also to analyze business communication with regard to its underlying intention and deal with it as appropriate.

### **What interests, strengths, and capabilities should applicants of the specialization have?**

Applicants should show a pronounced interest in how business communication works and the way in which language is used as a tool to achieve one's communicative goals. A certain degree of familiarity with basic linguistic models and concepts would therefore be helpful, while the willingness and ability to work with language is essential.

### **What career prospects do graduates of the specialization have?**

Graduates will be equipped with the skills and competences that will first and foremost be needed in the field of corporate communication as well as related areas, especially in international businesses and organizations. As is often stated by managers and leaders, communication is key to success, so this particular program also offers an excellent complement to a wide range of other specializations ranging from marketing to management and even more quantitative fields such as accounting and management control.

## Key Concepts in Language and Communication

### Course contents:

This course provides the foundation for the specialization, forming a bridge between the Introduction to Business Communication (IBC) course in the Common Body of Knowledge and the more profound examination of language and communication that is offered in our specialization. In this course, we will revise the key concepts discussed in the IBC and build on them to gain a deeper understanding of how language and communication work in international business contexts. Throughout the course, we will also deal with various questions of method which are relevant not only for the other courses in this specialization, but also in those offered by other departments. For example, we will discuss issues that arise when projects involve textual data, such as written documents, interviews or focus group discussions.

The “Key Concepts” course is divided into five main themes:

- 1) What resources do language systems offer us for exchanging information and developing social relationships?
- 2) How do we communicate identity?
- 3) How do we communicate power?
- 4) How do we use language and communication to persuade?
- 5) What is the role and significance of language and communication in international business?

## Intercultural Communication

### Course contents:

The course “Intercultural Business Communication” examines the complex relationship between language, communication and culture and equips students with a comprehensive understanding of how the cultural backgrounds of communication partners influence communication and interaction processes in business settings.

The course covers several topic areas. In the introductory part of the course, the concepts of culture and communication and their interdependence are discussed. Students are also introduced to various communication theories and models as well as some important issues in intercultural business communication, such as rapport management, linguistic and cultural diversity, impression management, multilingualism and language management. By drawing on authentic examples of communicative events and texts (e.g. advertisements, job interviews, job application documents), various aspects of cross-cultural advertising and recruitment practices will be examined. In addition, special emphasis is placed on multilingualism and multiculturalism in international organizations. In particular, students will discuss a range of diverse measures within a specific language management strategy (e.g. lingua franca, intercomprehension, receptive multilingualism, the use of interpreting and translation services). There is also a session devoted to intercultural training where students will gain valuable insights into its theoretical foundations and learn to evaluate the quality of various intercultural training offers.

After successful completion of the course, participants will be able to assess the impact of cultural and linguistic diversity on business communication. Additionally, students will acquire the skills needed to make informed decisions about language management strategies in various international business contexts. As a result, students will be better prepared for today’s increasingly diverse and complex globalized business communication environment.

## External Business Communication and Stakeholder Relations

### Course contents:

This module aims at introducing students to the different facets of communication between organizations and external stakeholders. It builds on applied research into diverse channels of communication, communication processes and formats that are used by organizations when addressing the general public but also other stakeholder groups, such as customers, investors, the media, government agencies as well as non-profit organizations.

The topics covered pertain to different levels of external business communication. Building on a general introduction to the role of communication in public relations, this module discusses interactions between corporations' managements and specific stakeholder groups in the form of, for example, annual reports, mission statements or press releases. Additionally, it explores topics such as persuasive communication, crisis communication, as well as sustainability and corporate social responsibility. By studying linguistic, stylistic and communicative theories and methods, students are granted detailed insights into the nature of text types and communication formats that are used in external business communication. The module focuses in particular on recent developments in business communication, such as digital business discourse and the strategic use of social media. It also creates awareness for the linguistic expectations of stakeholders from different cultural backgrounds and engages with the norms and differences in cross-cultural communication.

## Internal Business Communication and Leadership

### Course contents:

The course introduces students to a range of topics, concepts and methods relevant to understanding internal communication within organizations (including businesses, NGOs and public institutions). It explores key concepts in organizational studies from the perspective of language and communication and shows how these shape and constitute workplace processes, practices and decision-making. It takes a practice-oriented approach to familiarizing students with a variety of communication channels, processes and formats used in spoken and written interactions between people in a range of organizational roles: between managers and subordinates as well as between co-workers. As a first step, students are introduced to various ways of conceptualizing organizations and teams, for example as 'communities of practice' with a particular organizational culture linked to specific communicative practices, as well as to key issues in internal communication, such as power, diversity and identity, which play a central role throughout the course. Internal communication is viewed from both an employer and an employee perspective; that is, it considers not only how managers lead and engage their staff effectively, but also how employees negotiate in interactions with their superiors to achieve their own work and career objectives.

The course covers key topics which are central to successful communication in any organization in today's business environment, including leadership, recruitment, change management, decision-making and conflict management. While students may be familiar with some of these topics from other courses, the communication focus of the course will illuminate these from a new perspective. Research from business and management is combined with research from linguistics in order to provide a rich account of the communicative processes and strategies that are relevant to each of these topics. For example, a communicative account of leadership will explore the questions of how different leadership styles are expressed in written and spoken communication and what rhetorical strategies effective leaders use to motivate and engage their staff. In the case of decision-making and conflict management, learning what role language plays in the process of problem solving or how conflicts arise in communicative situations can lead to a better understanding of how conflicts can be resolved or avoided. As part of the specialization in International Business Communication, the course also deals with the topics of diversity and language management, which are of key relevance to international

organizations. Language management policies will be examined by considering such topics as corporate language and multilingualism, and by looking at case studies from a variety of organizations. Various forms of diversity, including cultural and gender diversity, will be explored with a focus on the role of language and communication (including non-verbal communication) in conveying and constructing different types of identity.

In order to engage with the course topics in a practical and concrete manner, students will explore a range of ‘genres’ (communicative events and texts) which are relevant to internal communication, including emails and other computer-mediated communication, mission statements, letters of application, internal meetings and performance review. Students will learn and apply a range of methods to analyze real examples of these written and spoken genres, including genre analysis, conversation analysis, rhetoric, metaphor analysis and frame analysis. Students will also develop their critical thinking skills by adopting a critical perspective of practices and current developments in internal communication, such as benchmarking and digitalization. After successful completion of the course, students will be familiar with, and be able to critically evaluate, a range of discourses and communicative practices in organizations, recognize and be able to engage with communication problems, and possess a range of communicative and strategic tools to perform key tasks in internal communication.

<b>Skills</b>
<b>Course contents:</b>
<p>Practical application of the concepts previously discussed and taught with regard to written and oral international business communication.</p> <p>This course will offer students the chance to analyze, examine, edit, and produce a wide range of written and spoken manifestations of business communication, including, but not limited to, meetings, negotiations, presentations, email correspondence, press releases, etc.</p> <p>In line with the other classes, links will be established to the setting of such communication (e.g., internal/external), and a strong focus will be placed on audience-specific communication in a range of fields such as investor relations or HR.</p> <p>To offer students as much hands-on experience as possible, class size will be kept lower than in the other courses of the specialization.</p>