

# Frances Gilligan, LL.M.

## Academic Writing and Skills training

### Modular Course Information 2015

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**Course title:** Academic Writing and Skills training for Ph.D.

**Course Objective:**

The course is written to meet the needs of scholars for whom English is not their native language. It is the object of the course to enable participants to write academic text directly in English, in a manner which will enhance the chances of publication.

**Target group :** 1. Academics for whom English is not their native language. 2. Ph.D. candidates

**Course duration :** PH.D duration- 3 years

**Course design:** Modular – workshops, written assignment, coaching

**Credits:** 6 credits (to be earned over the entire PhD period of each candidate)

**Occurrence:** 3 Workshops (each carry in total 3 credits) offered October, February and May. Other assignments etc. to be determined.

**Minimum course requirement over 3 year period: successful participation in at least one workshop over the 3 year period.**

**Course material:** see Blackboard

**Type of training:** Group training and/or individual coaching

**Type of teaching:** classical instruction, written exercises, group feedback, individual coaching

**Aim:** Improved writing skills and publication of texts:

- Avoidance of common Dutch to English language errors
- Application of linkage words and structure to language
- Construction of a successful abstract
- Knowledge of the structure and integral parts of the thesis and article

**Course philosophy:**

This course is designed to help those who can help themselves. It is Socratic rather than authoritative, practical rather than theoretical and training rather than teaching. The author assumes that the students possess the ability to complete the task of academic writing without instruction but hopes to show that following the course helps to keep them on the right path.

A second but no less important feature of the course is the use of the “group thought” The teacher uses the group dynamic to stimulate and enhance individual performance. For this purpose, a considerable amount of class time will be spent on practical group exercises with a strong element of self-assessment and peer-assessment. In other words: “judge and let yourself be judged”.

One disadvantage of academic study can be the isolation in which it often occurs. Isolation may be necessary to pursue a thought but it is disadvantageous when it comes to learning a practical skill such as writing. Pinning down your new thoughts with language is a separate process requiring separate skills.

### **Method:**

This course follows the students rather than the students following the course.

In order to achieve maximum flexibility of learning for Ph.D. candidate, this course has been deconstructed into separate elements which better follows the needs of the student over a their 3 year period of research. Skill training may be may be taken in group but also individual format depending on the subject. Black board is used as an learning platform which the student can refer to for all questions regarding academic writing with a chat room where students can leave messages, share ideas and ask questions to the trainer. In addition, blackboard will contain legal translations, vocabulary lists, links to other language sites and reference material. It is hoped that the Ph.D. candidate will use the site as an everyday reference point.

Participants can fit the training to their needs on an ad hoc basis. Course participants may choose from a number of modules carrying a different level of credits. The minimum requirement is at least one workshop – maximum two. On the benefit side, successful participation in the workshops carries an entitlement to 1 hour of individual coaching. Inadequate participation in the workshop can lead to the offer of re- participation in the workshop at a later date or an alternative assignment. After achieving 6 credits the student will have passed the course.

### **1 Day Workshops: (9am – 5pm) Lunch 12:30 – 13:00.**

Each workshop and assignment deals with a particular aspect of academic writing that is crucial to improving readability and publishability and social interaction: the avoidance of language errors, structural organization of language and an effective oral presentation. After a brief instruction, participants prepare exercises both individually and in group format under guidance of the course trainer. The course is designed around encouraging the participants to take an active role in their own skill development and assist others in the development of theirs. The workshop demands a high commitment level of the participants. The highly interactive element of the course has, as an ulterior aim, stimulation of the non-native speaker’s active English (since all lessons will be in English). Moreover, it is hoped that the student will psychologically take ownership of their own learning.

### **Workshop One - English language**

N.B. this workshop has two parts and candidates can elect to follow one part only

**Part 1 (am)** *English language revision (1,5 credit )*

**Part 2 (pm)** *Common Dutch to English language errors (1,5 credit )*

### **Workshop Two – Structuring language**

*The PhD as object ;Parts of the PhD thesis ; 5 scientific questions ; BPMRI ;Composing an abstract*

### **Workshop Three - Presentation technique**

Using English for presentation – theory and practice

**Assignments: Each worth 1,5 credit point – you may chose a max of 2 assignments of the following:**

1. Writing

**Write** a 5,000 word text describing your research in simple terms using **5 questions** - scientific writing - as format.

2. Summarizing

Write a 1000 word **summary of your research** so far, incorporating the trainer and peer feedback from assignment 2 while using **language pointers such as linkage words and BPMRI format.**

3. Abstract

Write a 350 word classical abstract of your completed research with key words in the correct BPMRI format.

4. Article

Write a 1,000 word text **introduction** of an article based on your research -send to trainer and **peer reviewer** to be marked with commentary.

### **Example combinations:**

- 1. Fara is under confident about her English – she takes part one of workshop 1 in her first year (1,5 credits) and in year two she goes abroad. In year three she does the presentation workshop and the second part of workshop 1 after receiving one hour of coaching about the structure of her introduction for her PhD.**
- 2. Vincent is good at English and presentation – he wants to learn how to organize the written material of his work better and choses workshop two in year three, along with two assignments. He receives coaching about the differences between written and spoken English**
- 3. Sian takes presentation course in year two and performs two assignments – one in the first and third year**