

## **Minor English Language and Culture Course Guide 2026-2027**

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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	
<b>Speaking Skills</b> OA-MINTCENG1-20 5 EC		
<b>Writing Skills</b> OA-MINTCENG2-26 5 EC		
<b>American Culture</b> OA-MINTCENG4-26 5 EC	<b>British Culture</b> OA-MINTCENG5-26 5 EC	
<b>Grammar and Basics</b> OA-MINTCENG3-12 5 EC	<b>Elective Course*</b> 5 EC	<b>Business English</b> OA-MINTCENG6A-20
		<b>Cambridge Exam Training</b> OA-MINTCENG6B-20
		<b>Short Stories</b> OA-MINTCENG6C-24

\* NOTE: You may only choose ONE elective course to follow. Each elective course is limited to 25 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><b>Listening</b> 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><b>Reading</b> 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><b>Speaking</b> 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 &amp; 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><b>Writing</b> 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><b>Listening</b> 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><b>Reading</b> 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><b>Speaking</b> 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><b>Writing</b> 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><b>Listening</b> 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><b>Reading</b> 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><b>Speaking</b> 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><b>Writing</b> 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

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

- You can identify areas of weakness in your spoken English and know a range of methods to actively work on improving the fluency and accuracy of your spoken English, including your pronunciation, grammar and vocabulary.
- You can introduce yourself and other people fluently and respond to questions about familiar topics spontaneously.
- You can solve a problem in an informal/semi-formal situation.
- You can ask questions to obtain information, provide relevant, detailed information, check for understanding and negotiate in English.
- You can speak informatively and/or persuasively, in a fluent, detailed, structured and engaging manner, about a topic you are familiar with.

- You can spontaneously answer audience questions about a topic you are familiar clearly and cohesively.
- You can hold a formal discussion about a controversial topic in which you adopt an appropriate register for the intended audience and use correct formal vocabulary.
- You can respond to opposing arguments spontaneously, cohesively and convincingly.
- You can summarise the main points of an argument clearly and persuasively.
- You 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

<b>Dutch Name</b>	Schrijfvaardigheid
<b>Course Code</b>	OA-MINTCENG2-26
<b>ECTS</b>	5
<b>Format</b>	Lint (this course is taught over two periods)
<b>Periods</b>	AB or CD
<b>Resit Period</b>	C or E
<b>Contact time</b>	1 session of 90 minutes per week
<b>Contact person</b>	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 point 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; 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. To complete the course, you will write both a creative piece, which you can work on over multiple weeks, and a timed essay under test conditions. The creative piece will allow you time to edit and hone your writing to develop your style and clarity. The timed test will demonstrate the end level of your written English and your ability to structure and communicate your ideas effectively. You must pass both tests to pass the course.

### 3.2.3 Learning Objectives

- You can communicate a clear, consistent message or thesis in a clearly structured, cohesive text.
- You can write descriptively and meaningfully about your own experiences and places you have visited to engage the reader.
- You can incorporate quotes and paraphrasing with APA referencing into a persuasive text in order to support your point and convince a reader.
- You can adapt your writing style to suit the conventions of different writing forms, genres, topics, objectives and audiences.
- You are aware of differences between spoken and written English and can adopt an appropriate register for the topic, genre and target audience.
- You can edit your work based on feedback to improve the accuracy and communicative success of the piece.
- You can write at minimum CEFR B2 level.

### 3.2.4 Testing

**Test 1** Creative piece (first draft with feedback, plus revised version)

**Test 2** Timed exam essay based on input texts

### 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

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

<b>Dutch Name</b>	Amerikaanse Cultuur
<b>Course Code</b>	OA-MINTCENG4-26
<b>ECTS</b>	5
<b>Format</b>	Block
<b>Period</b>	A or C
<b>Resit Period</b>	B or D
<b>Contact time</b>	2 sessions of 90 minutes per week
<b>Contact person</b>	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 choose a topic related to American culture for further research and give a group presentation on it once during the course. Through your creative assignment, you will also learn more about various significant events or figures from American history or culture.

### 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**            Board of Interest (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

<b>Dutch Name</b>	Britse Cultuur
<b>Course Code</b>	OA-MINTCENG5-26
<b>ECTS</b>	5
<b>Format</b>	Block
<b>Period</b>	B or D
<b>Resit Period</b>	C or E
<b>Contact time</b>	2 sessions of 90 minutes per week
<b>Contact person</b>	Fatima Kajouj

### 3.5.2 Course Description

During this course you will explore contemporary British culture through the lens of a particular locality or theme. To complete this course you are encouraged to travel to the UK with a group of your fellow students, though the trip is not mandatory. You will explore aspects of British culture through news reports, podcasts, TV shows, documentaries and films as a source of contemporary insight into British culture.

Each week you work on your final project and explore a theme relevant to British culture, such as history, geography or politics. 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 present your findings at the end of the course with the help of an interactive map, and then discuss your findings with your teacher and fellow students present.

### 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 Presentation: Exploration of British Culture (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

<b>Dutch name</b>	Business Engels
<b>Course Code</b>	OA-MINTCENG6A-20
<b>ECTS</b>	5
<b>Format</b>	Block
<b>Period</b>	B or D
<b>Resit Period</b>	C or E
<b>Contact time</b>	1 session of 180 minutes per week
<b>Contact person</b>	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

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

### 3.7.2 Course Description

This course is aimed at preparing you for either the FCE (B2 level), CAE (C1 level) or CPE (C2 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

<b>Dutch Name</b>	Korte Verhalen
<b>Course Code</b>	OA-MINTCENG6C-24
<b>ECTS</b>	5
<b>Format</b>	Block
<b>Period</b>	B or D
<b>Resit Period</b>	C or E
<b>Contact time</b>	1 session of 180 minutes per week
<b>Contact person</b>	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.