Who this leaflet is for
This leaflet is for anyone studying or working in the Science or Engineering fields who needs to write papers, proposals, reports etc.

The aim of this leaflet
The aim of this leaflet is to provide you with information on learning materials and tips for improving your technical writing.

Useful materials in the Language Commons

Books
The books on Technical Writing are located on the Writing Shelf. If you have time, flip through the books on the shelf that you like and then decide which book(s) you find most useful. The next step is to mark out the chapters in those books and plan realistically how you are going to use the books.

Do not attempt to finish the whole book no matter how good it is – only select the most useful chapters for yourself. Remember, you are in charge of your learning so you decide what you want to learn, and how to do it.

Comprehensive and general

♦ Technical Writing & Professional Communication [Writing Shelf]
Very comprehensive and thorough — probably one of the best in this area. There are writing exercises at the end of each chapter. Answers are provided at the back of the book. Highly recommended to anyone who is serious about learning technical communication. Those who want to have a review of grammar, style and vocabulary will find Part Six of this book particularly useful.

Report Writing

♦ Technical Writing & Professional Communication [Writing Shelf]
Part Four of this book teaches different types of report: short informal reports, progress reports, feasibility reports, proposals, long reports. It contains explanations, writing exercises and sample reports.

♦ Business Writing for Hong Kong, Part 2, pp.259-282 [Writing Shelf]
♦ Writing: Upper Intermediate, Unit 9 [Writing Shelf]
♦ Writing (Advanced), Unit 11 [Writing Shelf]

Materials on the Web

General technical writing

♦ Professional Writing
http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/section/4/16/
From this website you can get very useful and comprehensive information on technical writing. Recommended links include:
- Writing positive, negative and neutral messages
- Sales letters: four point action closing

♦ 10 ways to Improve your Technical Writing  
http://www.smartbiz.com/article/view/1345/1/3

Technical reports

♦ Short Technical/Business Reports  
This website gives you useful tips on technical reports. Want to learn how to write abstracts, introductions, conclusions and recommendations? Visit this website and see if you find it useful.

♦ Outlining a Technical Report  
http://www.ccc.commnet.edu/mla/index.shtml  
Shows you how to outline a research paper.

♦ Abstracts  
http://www.writing.utoronto.ca/advice/specific-types-of-writing/abstract  
Shows you why abstracts are important and how to write them.

♦ Proposals: stages and strategies  
http://grants.cla.umn.edu/services/proposal.html  
You will find worksheets for proposal preparation, and strategies for writing winning proposals.

♦ Laboratory Reports  
http://www.engineering.utoronto.ca/directory/student_resources/engineering_communication_program/online_handbook/types_of_documents/lab_reports.htm  
This website gives very comprehensive instruction on writing the different parts of a lab report.

Writing Style & language

♦ Wordiness: Danger Signals and Ways to React  
http://www.writing.utoronto.ca/advice/style-and-editing/wordiness  
Visit this website to learn how to write concisely.

♦ Unbiased Language  
http://www.writing.utoronto.ca/advice/style-and-editing/unbiased-language  
Recent changes in social awareness have made people think about how some vocabulary and expressions may downgrade certain groups. Common sense and some specific strategies can help you raise your awareness and avoid using words and expressions that may offend your readers.

♦ Correct spelling  
[University of Ottawa]  
http://www.uottawa.ca/academic/arts/writcent/hypergrammar/spelling.html  
If spelling worries you, visit this website.

♦ Grammar  
[Purdue University]  
http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/section/1/5/  
One of the best sites for grammar — almost all aspects of grammar are covered.
Learning tips

- Read the Writing Advice Sheet **Developing your own Writing Program (W2)** and get tips on how to start to plan your learning.
- For an introduction to styles and basic structures of technical writing, read Chapters 1 and 2 of *Technical Writing & Professional Communication*.
- Sometimes it is difficult to distinguish between Technical Writing and Business Writing, especially when they involve work and business. The advice that you’re looking for in Technical Writing might be covered in the Writing Advice Sheet on **Business Writing (W4)**. Read **W4** and check if there is any information useful for you.
- Want to have a better understand of your writing ability? Do a diagnostic test (please read **W2 and G3** for information on writing diagnostic tests), find out your weaknesses in writing and then decide what practice you need in your self-learning.
- Another effective way to evaluate your writing skills is to make an appointment with a Writing Adviser and ask him/her to comment on your writing.
- When you write in English, do you often feel that you lack the vocabulary you need? If this is the case, read the Vocabulary Advice Sheet **Learning Vocabulary for Speaking and Writing (V8)**.
- Do you have problems with grammar and sentence structures? If so, read the Grammar Advice Sheets **Grammar For Writing (G4) and Improving Sentence Structure & Style (G5)**.
- Remember that the essence of good writing is not so much format but style and content. Always write in your own language and construct the appropriate message in such a way that you will achieve the goal of the communication. Read about the ‘style’ and ‘tone’ of technical writing from different materials and make sure that you have got the style and tone right.
- Last but not least, remember, read more! If you want to improve the skills of technical writing, not only do you need to learn the writing skills, you also need to read a large amount of technical writing. The more input you get, the more confident you will be about writing.

And now…

If you would like any help or advice, or just a chat about your progress, please get in touch - we are here to support your independent learning! To contact us:

- make an appointment to see an adviser. For details of advisers and their availability, please go to [http://ilang.cle.ust.hk/writing-adviser-timetables/](http://ilang.cle.ust.hk/writing-adviser-timetables/).
- e-mail your questions to iLANG (ilang@ust.hk).
- ask at the reception counter of the Language Commons — if the receptionist cannot help you directly, s/he will pass your query on to one of the advisers.

What else can you do?

- browse the many physical and online materials for Writing.
- join a Writing activity or short course.

*Last Updated: February 2012*