

Leading Difficult Conversations LEAD 6211

Course Outline

Description: Having difficult conversations is part of every leadership position. Learn to approach the toughest conversations with confidence by developing skills to move past emotion and deliver your message clearly and positively.

Topics:

- Why we need to have difficult conversations
- Contrasting assertive and non-assertive approaches using the Interpersonal Influencing Inventory
- When not to be assertive
- Assertive communication including 'I' statements
- Responding to others assertively
- Reducing defensiveness with open questions
- The focused conversation method (ORID)
- The power of a positive no

Course Goals:

To create greater comfort with initiating and engaging in difficult conversations, by learning how to structure the conversation, how to reduce defensiveness in others, and how to deliver one's own message.

Course Objectives: At the completion of this course, the student will be able to:

- Consider what makes a conversation difficult for you
- Choose when to speak up and when to be agreeable, skip it or temporarily defer
- Differentiate among assertive, aggressive and passive approaches
- Say what you know to be true but not more than you know to be true using 'I' statements
- Ask questions without causing defensiveness
- Structure conversations using findings from neuroscience
- Say 'no' when appropriate while remaining positive
- Approach difficult conversations with courage and humility

Evaluation: This is a graded course where a complete or incomplete will be issued. In order to receive a completion for this course, a student must:

- Attend 3 out of 4 Zoom sessions (and watch the Zoom video of the session they did not attend, if any).
- Submit 3 out of 4 assignments
- Participate weekly in at least three forums with a minimum of 9 posts over the course
- Complete all 4 weekly quizzes and score at least 75% in each

How often will the instructor communicate with me?

Questions posted in the general discussion forum or by message will receive a reply within two business days. In addition, the instructor will be available to answer students' questions immediately following the Zoom sessions each week.

This course outline is a sample only and is subject to change.

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When will I receive my grades?

Final grades will be available 2 weeks after the last scheduled day of the course. A grade report can be printed from myWCS.

Western Digital Badge

If you have met the course requirements for this Western approved [micro-credential](#), you will receive an email from [MyCreds](#) to claim your digital badge. Badges are embedded with data that verifies your skills and achievements. Share them with your employer, on LinkedIn and other social media sites.

How do I hand in assignments?

All assignments will be submitted electronically through OWL using the assignment tool. Assignments are due on the last day of the course but students are strongly recommended (and requested) to submit assignments weekly.

Policy on Cheating and Academic Misconduct:

Academic honesty is a cornerstone of conduct at Western University. We cannot have freedom of expression without integrity. Students are responsible for understanding the nature of and avoiding the occurrence of plagiarism and other academic offences; please refer to the section on “Scholastic Offences” in the current University Academic Calendar, or on the web at <http://www.westerncalendar.uwo.ca>. Such offences include plagiarism, cheating on an examination, submitting false or fraudulent assignments or credentials, impersonating a candidate, or submitting for credit in any course any academic work for which credit has previously been obtained or is being sought in another course in this University or elsewhere (without the knowledge and approval of the instructor to whom the work is submitted). Students enrolled in non-degree courses are expected to abide by the University’s code of conduct.

Code of Student Conduct:

The purpose of the Code of Student Conduct is to define the general standard of conduct expected of students registered at Western University, provide examples of behaviour that constitutes a breach of this standard of conduct, provide examples of sanctions that may be imposed, and set out the disciplinary procedures that the University will follow. For the complete Code of Student Conduct: <http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/board/code.pdf>.

Plagiarism:

All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system. Use of the service is subject to the licensing agreement, currently between Western University and Turnitin.com (<http://www.turnitin.com>)

Course Schedule:

Four consecutive weeks.:

- Attend 90 minute Zoom call on Wednesday mornings. Zoom calls will be recorded.
- Assignments and forum discussions are geared to weekly topics so students are expected to spend 90-120 minutes each week at times of their choosing each week.

Week 1

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- What factors make some conversations difficult and what constitutes a difficult conversation for you
- Interpersonal Influencing Inventory (online self-assessment)
- Contrasting Assertive Approaches to Non-Assertive Approaches
- Dare to Lead online self-assessment

Week 2

- When not to be assertive
- 'I' statements contrasted to common non-assertive communication approaches
- Discussion of Daring Greatly Leadership assessment
- The Power of a Positive No
- Other assertiveness tools
- Open versus closed questions

Week 3

- How to reduce defensiveness by either avoiding asking questions or asking open questions
- The four level discussion method (ORID). Structure conversations to avoid problems
- CHEAPVIN – questions that get to the heart of the issue
- Plan a difficult conversation that you will have next week

Week 4

- 'Clear is Kind'. Showing courage and generosity in difficult conversations
- Responding to other assertively
- Course Recap

Evaluation Method:

As part of the course/instructor evaluation, a survey will be sent to you electronically by Continuing Studies. You will be asked the following questions. Please consider these throughout the course.

1. How would you rate your overall learning experience?
2. How would you rate the instructor?
3. How relevant and valuable was the content in the session?