

Consulting English

Instructor guide for advanced ESL learners working in consulting

Audience: management consultants, strategy consultants, implementation consultants, analysts, engagement managers, client partners, internal consultants, and advisory teams

Focus: A consulting English curriculum for discovery, hypotheses, stakeholder management, scope, executive recommendations, slide narratives, implementation risk, and client pushback.

Designed for advanced ESL learners who already use professional English and need industry-specific terminology, realistic meetings, role-play pressure, careful pushback, and polished workplace outputs.

Teaching stance: this is language and workplace-communication training, not legal, medical, financial, safety, or regulatory advice. Instructors should connect every scenario to the learner's current company policies, local rules, and approved procedures.

Purpose and Course Logic

A consulting English curriculum for discovery, hypotheses, stakeholder management, scope, executive recommendations, slide narratives, implementation risk, and client pushback.

Core language challenge

Advanced learners do not only need vocabulary. They need the ability to ask which standard applies, who owns the decision, what evidence is sufficient, what risk is being accepted, and how to disagree without sounding vague, defensive, or reckless.

Each module trains a realistic workplace pressure point with role-specific terms, decision language, pushback practice, and a written output learners can adapt to their own work.

Course objectives

- Use consulting terminology accurately in meetings, written updates, handoffs, escalations, reviews, and client or stakeholder conversations.
- Turn vague requests into specific questions about evidence, owner, deadline, constraint, risk, and decision rights.
- Push back on unsafe, unsupported, noncompliant, unrealistic, or poorly scoped proposals while preserving professional trust.
- Handle realistic dialogues from the field, including conflict, uncertainty, documentation gaps, customer or stakeholder pressure, and cross-functional disagreement.
- Produce concise workplace outputs: briefing notes, escalation updates, meeting scripts, risk memos, decision records, and follow-up messages.

Instructor Module Plans

Module 1. Client Discovery and Problem Definition (90 minutes)

Clarify the real problem before proposing work.

Learners should be able to

- Use these terms accurately: discovery, problem statement, decision question, stakeholder.
- Explain the workplace tension: Decision question, stakeholders, constraints, and expected use of analysis need clarification.
- Respond professionally when a stakeholder says: Sell the requested benchmark.
- Draft a usable discovery question guide with facts, caveats, owner, and next step.

Customized scenario

Workplace pressure

A client asks for a benchmark study but describes a decision problem.

Sell the requested benchmark.

Decision question, stakeholders, constraints, and expected use of analysis need clarification.

Classroom sequence

1. Terminology drill: define each term, then use it in one sentence from the learner's own role.
2. Risk map: identify the stakeholder, the decision, the evidence gap, the operating constraint, and the cost of being wrong.
3. Pushback ladder: move from clarifying question to evidence-based objection to consequence to decision request.

- Output lab: draft and revise a discovery question guide.

Module 2. Hypotheses and Issue Trees (90 minutes)

Structure analysis without pretending certainty.

Learners should be able to

- Use these terms accurately: hypothesis, issue tree, workstream, evidence plan.
- Explain the workplace tension: Hypotheses, issue tree, prioritization, and evidence plan should focus effort.
- Respond professionally when a stakeholder says: Analyze everything.
- Draft a usable issue-tree workplan with facts, caveats, owner, and next step.

Customized scenario

Workplace pressure

The team has limited data but needs a workplan.

Analyze everything.

Hypotheses, issue tree, prioritization, and evidence plan should focus effort.

Classroom sequence

- Terminology drill: define each term, then use it in one sentence from the learner's own role.
- Risk map: identify the stakeholder, the decision, the evidence gap, the operating constraint, and the cost of being wrong.
- Pushback ladder: move from clarifying question to evidence-based objection to consequence to decision request.
- Output lab: draft and revise a issue-tree workplan.

Module 3. Data Requests and Client Burden (90 minutes)

Ask for information efficiently and respectfully.

Learners should be able to

- Use these terms accurately: data request, confidentiality, owner, deadline.
- Explain the workplace tension: Data relevance, owner, confidentiality, deadline, and burden need management.
- Respond professionally when a stakeholder says: Ask for everything just in case.
- Draft a usable data request prioritization with facts, caveats, owner, and next step.

Customized scenario

Workplace pressure

The consulting team sends a long data request to a busy client.

Ask for everything just in case.

Data relevance, owner, confidentiality, deadline, and burden need management.

Classroom sequence

- Terminology drill: define each term, then use it in one sentence from the learner's own role.
- Risk map: identify the stakeholder, the decision, the evidence gap, the operating constraint, and the cost of being wrong.
- Pushback ladder: move from clarifying question to evidence-based objection to consequence to decision request.

4. Output lab: draft and revise a data request prioritization.

Module 4. Slide Storylines and Executive Synthesis (90 minutes)

Turn analysis into a clear recommendation.

Learners should be able to

- Use these terms accurately: storyline, so what, recommendation, decision ask.
- Explain the workplace tension: So-what, implication, recommendation, and decision ask must be explicit.
- Respond professionally when a stakeholder says: Add more detail.
- Draft a usable executive storyline with facts, caveats, owner, and next step.

Customized scenario

Workplace pressure

A deck has many charts but no decision narrative.

Add more detail.

So-what, implication, recommendation, and decision ask must be explicit.

Classroom sequence

1. Terminology drill: define each term, then use it in one sentence from the learner's own role.
2. Risk map: identify the stakeholder, the decision, the evidence gap, the operating constraint, and the cost of being wrong.
3. Pushback ladder: move from clarifying question to evidence-based objection to consequence to decision request.
4. Output lab: draft and revise a executive storyline.

Module 5. Scope Management and Change Requests (90 minutes)

Protect scope while staying client-service oriented.

Learners should be able to

- Use these terms accurately: scope, change request, tradeoff, statement of work.
- Explain the workplace tension: Scope, timeline, budget, value, and tradeoff need a formal conversation.
- Respond professionally when a stakeholder says: Do it to keep the client happy.
- Draft a usable scope-change response with facts, caveats, owner, and next step.

Customized scenario

Workplace pressure

A client asks for an additional market study mid-project.

Do it to keep the client happy.

Scope, timeline, budget, value, and tradeoff need a formal conversation.

Classroom sequence

1. Terminology drill: define each term, then use it in one sentence from the learner's own role.
2. Risk map: identify the stakeholder, the decision, the evidence gap, the operating constraint, and the cost of being wrong.
3. Pushback ladder: move from clarifying question to evidence-based objection to consequence to decision request.

4. Output lab: draft and revise a scope-change response.

Module 6. Difficult Client Feedback (90 minutes)

Receive criticism without losing authority.

Learners should be able to

- Use these terms accurately: assumption, implementation constraint, stakeholder buy-in, iteration.
- Explain the workplace tension: Implementation constraints, assumptions, and client knowledge should be integrated.
- Respond professionally when a stakeholder says: Defend the model.
- Draft a usable feedback recovery plan with facts, caveats, owner, and next step.

Customized scenario

Workplace pressure

A client says the recommendation is not practical.

Defend the model.

Implementation constraints, assumptions, and client knowledge should be integrated.

Classroom sequence

1. Terminology drill: define each term, then use it in one sentence from the learner's own role.
2. Risk map: identify the stakeholder, the decision, the evidence gap, the operating constraint, and the cost of being wrong.
3. Pushback ladder: move from clarifying question to evidence-based objection to consequence to decision request.
4. Output lab: draft and revise a feedback recovery plan.

Module 7. Implementation and Change Management (90 minutes)

Move from recommendation to adoption risk.

Learners should be able to

- Use these terms accurately: operating model, change management, adoption, decision rights.
- Explain the workplace tension: Change story, incentives, decision rights, training, and adoption metrics matter.
- Respond professionally when a stakeholder says: Tell managers the decision is final.
- Draft a usable implementation risk brief with facts, caveats, owner, and next step.

Customized scenario

Workplace pressure

Leadership approves a new operating model but managers resist.

Tell managers the decision is final.

Change story, incentives, decision rights, training, and adoption metrics matter.

Classroom sequence

1. Terminology drill: define each term, then use it in one sentence from the learner's own role.
2. Risk map: identify the stakeholder, the decision, the evidence gap, the operating constraint, and the cost of being wrong.
3. Pushback ladder: move from clarifying question to evidence-based objection to consequence to decision request.

4. Output lab: draft and revise a implementation risk brief.

Module 8. Steering Committees and Final Readouts (90 minutes)

Manage executive decisions and unresolved disagreement.

Learners should be able to

- Use these terms accurately: steering committee, option set, risk, next step.
- Explain the workplace tension: Decision rights, options, risks, and next-step ownership need facilitation.
- Respond professionally when a stakeholder says: Keep presenting the slides.
- Draft a usable steering committee close with facts, caveats, owner, and next step.

Customized scenario

Workplace pressure

Executives disagree during the final readout.

Keep presenting the slides.

Decision rights, options, risks, and next-step ownership need facilitation.

Classroom sequence

1. Terminology drill: define each term, then use it in one sentence from the learner's own role.
2. Risk map: identify the stakeholder, the decision, the evidence gap, the operating constraint, and the cost of being wrong.
3. Pushback ladder: move from clarifying question to evidence-based objection to consequence to decision request.
4. Output lab: draft and revise a steering committee close.

Nomenclature and Jargon

These are classroom working definitions. Learners should adapt wording to their organization's policies, systems, and local regulatory environment.

Client Discovery and Problem Definition

Term	Working meaning
discovery	Working consulting term used in client discovery and problem definition; define the owner, evidence source, governing document, risk, and decision impact before using it in a meeting.
problem statement	Working consulting term used in client discovery and problem definition; define the owner, evidence source, governing document, risk, and decision impact before using it in a meeting.
decision question	Working consulting term used in client discovery and problem definition; define the owner, evidence source, governing document, risk, and decision impact before using it in a meeting.
stakeholder	Person or group with an interest, risk, authority, or dependency in the work.

Hypotheses and Issue Trees

Term	Working meaning
hypothesis	Working consulting term used in hypotheses and issue trees; define the owner, evidence source, governing document, risk, and decision impact before using it in a meeting.

Term	Working meaning
issue tree	Working consulting term used in hypotheses and issue trees; define the owner, evidence source, governing document, risk, and decision impact before using it in a meeting.
workstream	Working consulting term used in hypotheses and issue trees; define the owner, evidence source, governing document, risk, and decision impact before using it in a meeting.
evidence plan	Working consulting term used in hypotheses and issue trees; define the owner, evidence source, governing document, risk, and decision impact before using it in a meeting.

Data Requests and Client Burden

Term	Working meaning
data request	Working consulting term used in data requests and client burden; define the owner, evidence source, governing document, risk, and decision impact before using it in a meeting.
confidentiality	Working consulting term used in data requests and client burden; define the owner, evidence source, governing document, risk, and decision impact before using it in a meeting.
owner	Named person or role accountable for a decision, action, deliverable, or risk.
deadline	Working consulting term used in data requests and client burden; define the owner, evidence source, governing document, risk, and decision impact before using it in a meeting.

Slide Storylines and Executive Synthesis

Term	Working meaning
storyline	Working consulting term used in slide storylines and executive synthesis; define the owner, evidence source, governing document, risk, and decision impact before using it in a meeting.
so what	Working consulting term used in slide storylines and executive synthesis; define the owner, evidence source, governing document, risk, and decision impact before using it in a meeting.
recommendation	Working consulting term used in slide storylines and executive synthesis; define the owner, evidence source, governing document, risk, and decision impact before using it in a meeting.
decision ask	Working consulting term used in slide storylines and executive synthesis; define the owner, evidence source, governing document, risk, and decision impact before using it in a meeting.

Scope Management and Change Requests

Term	Working meaning
scope	Defined boundary of work, responsibility, deliverables, assumptions, and exclusions.
change request	Working consulting term used in scope management and change requests; define the owner, evidence source, governing document, risk, and decision impact before using it in a meeting.
tradeoff	Working consulting term used in scope management and change requests; define the owner, evidence source, governing document, risk, and decision impact before using it in a meeting.
statement of work	Working consulting term used in scope management and change requests; define the owner, evidence source, governing document, risk, and decision impact before using it in a meeting.

Difficult Client Feedback

Term	Working meaning
assumption	Working consulting term used in difficult client feedback; define the owner, evidence source, governing document, risk, and decision impact before using it in a meeting.

Term	Working meaning
implementation constraint	Working consulting term used in difficult client feedback; define the owner, evidence source, governing document, risk, and decision impact before using it in a meeting.
stakeholder buy-in	Working consulting term used in difficult client feedback; define the owner, evidence source, governing document, risk, and decision impact before using it in a meeting.
iteration	Working consulting term used in difficult client feedback; define the owner, evidence source, governing document, risk, and decision impact before using it in a meeting.

Implementation and Change Management

Term	Working meaning
operating model	How work is organized across people, process, technology, governance, and metrics.
change management	Working consulting term used in implementation and change management; define the owner, evidence source, governing document, risk, and decision impact before using it in a meeting.
adoption	Working consulting term used in implementation and change management; define the owner, evidence source, governing document, risk, and decision impact before using it in a meeting.
decision rights	Working consulting term used in implementation and change management; define the owner, evidence source, governing document, risk, and decision impact before using it in a meeting.

Steering Committees and Final Readouts

Term	Working meaning
steering committee	Working consulting term used in steering committees and final readouts; define the owner, evidence source, governing document, risk, and decision impact before using it in a meeting.
option set	Working consulting term used in steering committees and final readouts; define the owner, evidence source, governing document, risk, and decision impact before using it in a meeting.
risk	Working consulting term used in steering committees and final readouts; define the owner, evidence source, governing document, risk, and decision impact before using it in a meeting.
next step	Working consulting term used in steering committees and final readouts; define the owner, evidence source, governing document, risk, and decision impact before using it in a meeting.

Industry-Specific Meeting Moves

Situation	Useful language
Client Discovery and Problem Definition	Before we commit, I want to confirm discovery, problem statement, the owner, and the evidence behind the decision. If decision question, stakeholders, constraints, and expected use of analysis need clarification., I recommend we document the risk and agree on the next step.
Hypotheses and Issue Trees	Before we commit, I want to confirm hypothesis, issue tree, the owner, and the evidence behind the decision. If hypotheses, issue tree, prioritization, and evidence plan should focus effort., I recommend we document the risk and agree on the next step.
Data Requests and Client Burden	Before we commit, I want to confirm data request, confidentiality, the owner, and the evidence behind the decision. If data relevance, owner, confidentiality, deadline, and burden need management., I recommend we document the risk and agree on the next step.
Slide Storylines and Executive Synthesis	Before we commit, I want to confirm storyline, so what, the owner, and the evidence behind the decision. If so-what, implication, recommendation, and decision ask must be explicit., I recommend we document the risk and agree on the next step.

Situation	Useful language
Scope Management and Change Requests	Before we commit, I want to confirm scope, change request, the owner, and the evidence behind the decision. If scope, timeline, budget, value, and tradeoff need a formal conversation., I recommend we document the risk and agree on the next step.
Difficult Client Feedback	Before we commit, I want to confirm assumption, implementation constraint, the owner, and the evidence behind the decision. If implementation constraints, assumptions, and client knowledge should be integrated., I recommend we document the risk and agree on the next step.
Implementation and Change Management	Before we commit, I want to confirm operating model, change management, the owner, and the evidence behind the decision. If change story, incentives, decision rights, training, and adoption metrics matter., I recommend we document the risk and agree on the next step.
Steering Committees and Final Readouts	Before we commit, I want to confirm steering committee, option set, the owner, and the evidence behind the decision. If decision rights, options, risks, and next-step ownership need facilitation., I recommend we document the risk and agree on the next step.

High-pressure pushback frames

- I understand the urgency. The risk is that we move faster than the evidence or process supports.
- I am not blocking the goal. I am naming the condition we need before the decision is safe and credible.
- If we accept this risk, we should name the owner, document the assumption, and define the trigger for escalation.
- That may be possible, but not under the current scope, timeline, or approval path.
- Let's separate what we know, what we assume, and what still needs confirmation.

Assessment and Coaching

Performance rubric

Skill	Developing	Proficient	Strong
Terminology	Recognizes terms but uses them loosely.	Uses field terms accurately in context.	Defines terms, connects them to evidence, and explains decision impact.
Pushback	Disagrees vaguely or avoids disagreement.	Names concern with evidence and next step.	Balances urgency, relationship, risk, owner, and decision rights.
Scenario judgment	Focuses on one stakeholder's preference.	Identifies constraint, risk, and process.	Guides the group toward a documented, realistic decision.
Written output	Writes general summaries.	Produces clear notes with facts and owner.	Creates concise, decision-ready workplace communication.

Source orientation

- Statement of work and client confidentiality terms.
- Firm quality standards and slide-review practices.
- Client data-governance and decision-making protocols.
- The learner's own company policies, SOPs, contracts, systems, templates, and approved communication standards.