

Certificate in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (CertTESOL)

**Moderation scenarios:
guidance for moderators
and course providers**

from January 2011

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Trinity Level 5 Certificate in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages

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Introduction

This document has been produced in order to describe various moderation scenarios that have occurred during the last few years. These are based on my own experiences of moderation and the many issues that the Trinity panel of moderators and Trinity course providers have raised with me. It should be read in conjunction with the latest edition of the CertTESOL Validation Requirements. In some cases there is a single correct answer to the question in terms of Trinity policy. In other situations there may be more than one reasonable answer, but in order to simplify and clarify Trinity's regulations, and ensure consistency across moderation results, I have given the response that I would normally give when asked. We hope the document will prove useful in the further standardisation of good practice by our moderators and our course providers – and Trinity itself!

I have suggested some sample scenarios below and indicated what my current view would be, adding references to the Validation Requirements July 2006 where these may be useful. 'You/your' in this document refers to Trinity moderators.

Thank you to all of you for your help in thinking through these issues.

Jenny Pugsley
Head of TESOL, Trinity College London

Scenario 1: To support or not to support?

You moderate a course of trainees where all have clearly followed the provider's pro formas for completion of written assignments. These are virtually without errors of spelling, punctuation or grammar. The Unit 4 written work for several of the trainees, however, displays many significant errors that you would not expect from a teacher about to be awarded a certificate.

1.1 What questions do you ask the tutors and/or the trainees?

- How are written assignments produced – through word processing, with the help of spellcheckers, etc.?
- How much guidance and/or correction do tutors give trainees on their errors of spelling, punctuation and grammar?
- Are they made aware of the necessary levels of written English for English teachers?

1.2 What recommendation do you make to Trinity?

The course provider should be reminded of the points in the Validation Requirements below and ensure that they are supportive to trainees without actually 'doing their written work for them'. They should make clear to trainees where they can go for reference sources on these and other aspects of written English – not simply spellcheckers but also reference books etc. Trainees should be required to learn the process of correcting their own work.

Trainees may be referred on their work for Unit 4 if, in the moderator's opinion, the standard of written English is not sufficiently high.

See Validation Requirements 2006: D6 (pages 15-16), 2g (page 29) and J6 (page 36).

Scenario 2: Soft feedback on teaching practice

A trainee, Matthew Locke, has received the following grades:

Unit 1	Unit 2	Unit 3	Unit 4	Unit 5
Referred; individual sessions not graded	C	Incomplete	(6/14)	C
Final overall provisional grade: D				

The final grade reflects performance in the following areas:

- appropriateness of aims
- achievement of teaching objectives
- class rapport
- reflecting on teaching
- relationships with colleagues.

Your feeling is that the written feedback on teaching practice (TP) (admittedly seen without benefit of having heard the oral feedback) is rather 'soft' – developmental rather than of a 'warning' nature. The trainee is articulate and genuinely delighted with what he has achieved on the course, although you know from other trainees and tutors that this has been with considerable support from tutors – he realises this more than anyone. The tutors are adamant that they cannot support a pass mark for TP.

Scenarios 3-4

Your own feeling during the Unit 4 interview is that he has not really understood the strong and weak points in his lessons – that the pleasure of establishing a warm rapport with learners and being liked by them has overtaken his critical judgement. The tutors do not feel that he can be 'brought up to standard' in anything under a long time and with considerable further support. You give him the following marks on Unit 4:

Stage 1: Written work	P	BS	BS	P	BS	BS	
Stage 2: Interview	P	BS	BS	P	BS	BS	
Stage 3: Interview			BS	BS			(4 pass marks out of a possible 14)

2.1 What questions do you ask the tutors and/or the trainee?

- How does the written feedback tie in with the formal assessment criteria and descriptors? Do the latter need updating and strengthening?
- How is an overall final decision on TP reached if sessions are not marked or graded? What is the trainee told about how this decision is reached?
- How could tutors develop clearer ways of giving critical feedback without demotivating trainees?

2.2 What recommendation do you make to Trinity?

Real case: The trainee was referred on Unit 1 (two further hours of TP with minimal support), and on Unit 3, to be completed with minimal support, and on Unit 4, the same.

See Validation Requirements 2006: Feedback (page 20) and J11 (page 38).

Scenario 3: Teaching skills – poor guided observation notes

A trainee, Linda Lacey, has obtained a grade B (comfortable pass) for her TP and teaching practice journal (TPJ) overall, but her guided observation notes are thin and not very helpful (to her or to her tutors). There is no mention of a separate mark or feedback on them.

3.1 What questions do you ask the tutors and/or the trainee?

- How are the marks or grades for Unit 1 awarded?
- If there is no mark for the guided observation journal (GOJ), what sort of feedback is given? If there is none, how do trainees know how effectively they have carried it out?

3.2 What recommendation do you make to Trinity?

A mark, grade or other meaningful assessment should be allocated to each of the three components of Unit 1 – TP, TPJ and GOJ. It is possible for trainees to be referred on Unit 1 as a whole but to have to only re-do one or two of the three components, i.e. they might be required to re-write the TPJ or GOJ only.

See Validation Requirements 2006: Guided observation journal (page 21) and J1-J2 (page 34).

Scenario 4: Teaching skills – marking scheme

A trainee, Nadia Kandinsky, has received the following marks:

Unit 1	Unit 2	Unit 3	Unit 4	Unit 5
C C D D C- C+	50/100 (just pass)	C- (just pass)	7/14	B

There is no mark for the TPJ, although there is written (and evidence of oral) feedback, and no mark for the GOJ.

The tutors are anxious to fail Nadia.

4.1 What questions do you ask the tutors and/or the trainee?

- What is the assessment system?
- Why are there no separate marks or grades for the TPJ and the GOJ?
- What sort of feedback has been given to date?
- Why do the tutors wish to fail Nadia rather than refer her? Why is she not considered worth referring?

4.2 What recommendation do you make to Trinity?

Nadia should be referred on Units 1 and 4, with a recommendation of a further two hours of observed and assessed TP.

The course provider should ensure that its assessment systems and criteria are entirely clear and that there is a clear-cut boundary between pass and fail grades.

They should also ensure that some form of grade or mark is given for the TPJ and GOJ.

See **Validation Requirements 2006: Guided observation journal (page 21) and J1-J2 (page 34)**.

Scenario 5: Peer feedback

A school has required all of its 12 trainees to observe and comment on all TP sessions for each trainee in their TP groups – i.e. five other trainees. This is the normal practice on this school's five-week courses. Some trainees report that they found this, in total, rather a waste of their valuable time and they got bored. They were required to give some general feedback, positive and negative, but found themselves running out of things to say and wishing they could be elsewhere, preparing their own assignments. Sometimes they did, in fact, work on their own assignments while (in theory) observing other trainees' lessons.

5.1 What questions do you ask the tutors and/or the trainees?

To the trainees:

- Can they confirm how many peer sessions they had to observe with or without giving feedback?
- What were they required to do while observing? Take notes? Complete a pro forma?
- How were they trained to give feedback? How much would they have found helpful?
- Were there other aspects of the syllabus that they would have liked to spend more time on in lieu of so much peer observation?
- What would make this a more stimulating activity?

To the tutors:

Repeat the questions above, plus:

- What is the rationale for this volume of peer feedback?

5.2 What recommendation do you make to Trinity?

The course provider should review the amount of peer observation and feedback being given. It may be that some adjustments in the way it is carried out can improve the experience for trainees. However, if 10 or more trainees are observing all or most of their peers' teaching, this is too much. If they are observing their peers' teaching in a group of, say, four, this still involves 18 hours of observation and should be reviewed to see if it is genuinely useful; it may or may not be.

Validation Requirements 2006: Teaching practice (page 20)

N.B. Trinity does not formally require – or forbid – peer trainee feedback.

Scenario 6: Different teaching practice advice

Some 75% of the trainees you interview at one centre report that they feel the advice they have been given by tutors on their teaching is quite contradictory. They are being told that certain features of their teaching are, apparently, 'good' by one tutor and 'not good' by another. There is some evidence of this in their TPJs but, on the basis of these alone, it is difficult for you to reach a conclusion.

6.1 What questions do you ask the tutors and/or the trainees?

To the trainees:

- Can they give examples of contradictory advice from tutors (and preferably name the tutors)? (Do not mention trainees by name but indicate, if at all possible, which tutors are named by trainees. However, do not repeat 'vague complaints'; only name tutors if you can be specific about the alleged discrepancies in advice.)

To the tutors:

- Would they comment on the complaints? Were these complaints made explicitly during the course? How were they answered? Is there any written record of complaints of discrepancies and answers?
- How are tutors briefed on course requirements?
- How often do they meet to compare notes on assessment criteria and how they are assessing trainees? Do they ever peer shadow (each other)?
- Are there ways in which they could ensure that their feedback and assessment criteria are (clearly) closer? (It may be that the trainees are right or wrong in their perceptions but either way these are their perceptions.)

6.2 What recommendation do you make to Trinity?

See **Validation Requirements 2006: Feedback (page 20)** and **Tutor evaluation assessments (page 21)**. (We do not specify that feedback must be (reasonably) consistent between tutors but assume this is self-evident. The next edition of the Validation Requirements will make it explicit for those tutors in doubt.)

Scenario 7: Learner profile – the missing learner

Two trainees, Alexander Nubshall and Joan Turner, report that their learners for their learner profiles stopped attending school after the third week of the course and so they have been unable to write up their profiles and complete fresh assignments.

7.1 What questions do you ask the tutors and/or the trainees?

- How were learners allocated to trainees? Were trainees asked to find their own learners?
- What sort of arrangements were made to encourage learners to see this through?
- How did the trainees get on with their learners?
- Do the trainees have enough data to complete all or most of their assignments? If not, do they have the opportunity to repeat with other learners, perhaps by being referred and completing after the end of the course?

7.2 What recommendation do you make to Trinity?

If the trainees have not been able to complete all or most of their assignments to the moderator's satisfaction, the moderator may refer them (indicating no fault of their own) to repeat with other learners. The course provider should be encouraged to make some effort to persuade learners to see the exercise through, perhaps by offering a free class or two.

See **Validation Requirements 2006 (no specific requirements)**.

Scenario 8: Borderline marks

Larry Fairley has a clear pass mark (C+) for Units 2 and 5, and 7/14 on his Unit 4. He also has what are described in the assessment guidelines as borderline passes (C-) for Units 1 and 3. He has been given his (provisional) marks. His tutors are warning him that he is likely to be failed for insufficient progress on Units 1 and 3.

8.1 What questions do you ask the tutors and/or the trainee?

- What does the course provider mean by a 'borderline' pass?
- How do tutors decide when one or more borderlines constitute(s) a fail?
- What exactly has the trainee been told?

8.2 What recommendation do you make to Trinity?

Larry should be referred on Unit 4 (only).

The course provider should be asked to remove the term borderline pass from their assessment details and define pass marks clearly from refer or fail marks. The term borderline should not be used on its own unless it is made clear how borderline marks will be converted into overall pass or fail marks.

See Validation Requirements 2006: J4 (page 35).

Scenario 9: Poor English

Maria Taramay has obtained the following (provisional) marks for her assignments:

Unit 1	Unit 2	Unit 3	Unit 4	Unit 5
B	C	C	7/14	C

However, the quality of her writing skills (grammar, spelling, punctuation and choice of lexis) in all her written assignments, including her Unit 4 work, leaves you feeling that she should not be immediately passed and given a certificate. Her spoken English includes what you regard as some inaccurate grammar.

9.1 What questions do you ask the tutors and/or the trainee?

- Has Maria been penalised in any way on the course provider's marking systems for her written and/or spoken English? (Her marks would all suggest pass.) If not, why not?
- How have you allocated her Unit 4 marks? Are the BS marks uniquely for her written work, or do they cover oral as well? Have you withheld marks because of the standard of her written/spoken English or for other reasons?
- Is English her first language? Whether yes or no, would you say that the reasons for her poor English relate to issues that could be overcome with additional language training or is this unlikely over a period of, say, six months? (N.B. The usual period for re-submission of work following moderation is two months.)
- How was Maria recruited? Was she given a face-to-face or telephone interview? Was she asked to produce a piece of written English on the spot (in either case)? Did the interviewer make any notes at the time regarding her English?

9.2 What recommendation do you make to Trinity?

Ask Trinity to review the course provider's trainee recruitment procedures in respect of language competence.

Make an assessment as far as you can, together with Maria's tutors, of her principal areas of difficulty with English and how these might be helped or improved (if at all) over a period of six months. Refer her on Unit 4 (being clear as to the reasons for referral) and on the basis of the seriousness of the errors in her Units 2, 3 and 5, decide whether you wish to refer her on any or all of these units as well.

See Validation Requirements 2006: D6 (pages 15-16), 2g (page 29), J6 (page 36) and J11 (page 38).

Scenario 10: The night before moderation

John Glasier has full course attendance and completes all his assignments and TP. However, he telephones the school the morning of moderation to say he has injured his metatarsal during a squash game and is quite unable to attend moderation.

10.1 What questions do you ask the tutors and/or the trainee?

- Has John really completed the whole course and all assignments?
- Did he appear to have any major problems on the course or any particular anxiety about moderation?
- Is he going to send the school a doctor's note or report on his injury?

10.2 What recommendation do you make to Trinity?

If the answers to the above are all satisfactory, then John should be deferred and moderated either at this course provider or with another at a time to be agreed with Trinity's CertTESOL Co-ordinator.

See Validation Requirements 2006: p. 9, E2 and p. 38, J10 (deferral).

Scenario 11: Different recommendations from moderators

Two of the centres you have moderated have complained about what they perceive to be different and contradictory advice from moderators – to the extent that they are genuinely uncertain as to how to amend (or not) their approach to the teaching of certain units, and their assessment systems. Issues that have arisen include: appropriateness of the language awareness test; how many units a trainee may be referred on; the best timescale for giving feedback on TP.

11.1 What questions do you ask the tutors and/or the trainees?

- Can the tutors be explicit about what they see as contradictory advice and given by which moderator?
- Was the contradictory nature of the advice pointed out at the second (or subsequent) moderation?
- Does the advice relate to the factual interpretation of the Validation Requirements (e.g. what is to be produced for the Learner Profile) or a matter of personal opinion (e.g. whether trainees should remember [at moderation] any of the language learnt in the Unknown Language sessions) or a matter outside the Validation Requirements (e.g. the use of mime in class)?
- Could this be simply a difference of emphasis by different moderators, rather than radically different advice?

Do not explicitly condemn a fellow moderator orally or in writing for giving what you see as wrong advice. If you cannot say something constructive, say nothing, except to offer, if you can, an interpretation of the problem (perceived by both moderators) and a possible middle course (advice-wise) of your own.

11.2 What recommendation do you make to Trinity?

Report the tutors' perceptions in the moderation report, without comment or naming the moderators, (although this should be evident from the details you give) and refer the matter to Trinity to handle. Be clear but diplomatic in your description of the problem as your report will go to other moderators.

See Validation Requirements (in total) and Moderators' Handbook for some of the briefing advice given to moderators.

Scenario 12: Appeals and complaints

During the group interviews it transpires that several trainees have what sound like quite serious complaints about the college's handling of various issues – for example, last-minute timetabling changes, cancellation of TP sessions, inadequate photocopying facilities.

12.1 What questions do you ask the tutors and/or the trainees?

To the trainees:

- Can they be clear as to the facts, e.g. on changes in timetabling, cancellation of sessions, etc.?
- Were they given any general warning about potential changes in the course?
- How many of them wish to register a complaint? (Do not mention them by name in your report.)

To the tutors:

- Would they comment on the complaints?
- Were these complaints made explicitly during the course? How were they answered?
- Is there any written record of complaints and answer?
- How do they feel trainees could have been disadvantaged because of the changes?
- Have they made any adjustments for trainees to reduce the ill effects of changes in the course?

12.2 What recommendation do you make to Trinity?

The course provider should submit to Trinity its published statements for trainees about timetable and other aspects of course delivery and how far these may (or may not) be changed once trainees have started the course.

They should account for why these particular changes were necessary and ensure that they will not happen as a matter of course – for example, it should be clear before the start of the course which tutors are available for which sessions, when sessions will be given (bar a few small changes), and in particular which days and parts of days (morning, afternoon or evening) trainees will be required to attend or do work (including TP).

All equipment necessary for the course (photocopies, computers, overhead projectors, etc) should be functioning properly before the course starts with adequate supplies of paper, transparencies, etc.

See Validation Requirements 2006: Appendix 4 (pages 51-53).

Scenario 13: Exported courses

You have (not purposely) moderated three centres (one in the UK, two in different overseas locations), all of which are part of a group and two of which are, in fact, technically 'exports' from the parent centre. You are mostly satisfied with the course delivery and tutor guidance at all three centres (in some respects more than satisfied) but you notice some moderately significant differences across the three centres, e.g. differences in how TP is assessed, differences in the amount of peer shadowing, not identical staffing teams.

13.1 What questions do you ask the tutors and/or the trainees?

- Are the 'subsidiary' or exported course providers aware of Trinity's requirements for exported courses?
- How have the different systems developed? In consultation with the main or 'parent' centre or independently?
- Have different systems been developed to respond to different groups of trainees (i.e. based in different countries) or in response to different moderators' requirements or simply as a result of different initiatives by different course directors?

13.2 What recommendation do you make to Trinity?

The principle of export is that all centres follow the same course design and delivery structure as the main course, barring small details. Trinity should follow up this apparent lack of conformity but it is not necessarily a 'bad thing'; there may be good professional reasons for differences of approach but these should be discussed between Trinity and the course directors. The parent provider should ensure that there is a system of briefing of all subsidiary centres so that they can all keep up to date with developments.

See Validation Requirements 2006: Appendix 5 (page 54).

Scenario 14: Complaints about Trinity staff, including Head of TESOL

You receive a complaint from one or more tutors about a member of Trinity staff. It might be a Co-ordinator, a member of the Finance department or the Head of TESOL.

14.1 What questions do you ask the tutors and/or the trainees?

Ask the tutors for explicit details on the issue in question and the name or post of the staff member. Make sure you are clear about the nature of the complaint.

14.2 What recommendation to you make to Trinity?

Report the course director or tutor's perceptions in a confidential letter to Trinity, separate to the Moderation Report – unless you feel the complaint is one which can reasonably be conveyed to the next moderator(s). Address your letter to the Head of TESOL who will forward it to other relevant staff as appropriate.

Obtaining more information

For further information on any aspect of Trinity's TESOL or ESOL qualifications, contact:

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For TESOL information, including a list of CertTESOL course providers, contact Trinity by email on tesol@trinitycollege.co.uk

For ESOL information, contact Trinity by email on esol@trinitycollege.co.uk

Information is also available on the Trinity website at www.trinitycollege.co.uk/tesol