



Hints and tips for preparing candidates for work-related tasks in Trinity's Skills for Life (QCF) examinations

Introduction

All Trinity Skills for Life examinations at Entry 1 to Level 2 include some tasks that are focused on work-related situations. This reflects the increasing demand for ESOL programmes to include employability skills. However, Trinity recognises that, especially at lower levels, Skills for Life candidates may have little or no experience of the workplace. For this reason, questions that have a work-related context will be framed in such a way as to draw on candidates' experience of everyday life, rather than assuming that the candidate has ever had a job. So for example, a question about working in a supermarket will draw on the candidate's experience of using a supermarket as a customer rather than as an employee.

At higher levels, tasks will assume a wider knowledge of workplace practices. Questions will still be of a generic nature, though. They will not assume specialised understanding of particular jobs.

Tips for preparing candidates

Tutors should ensure that candidates are familiar with vocabulary relating to the workplace and workplace procedures. At lower levels, this will mean simple words, most of which candidates would also meet in other contexts. The following are examples, not a comprehensive list:

apply / application	boss	colleague	complaint	contract
customer	CV	department	emergency contact	experience
form	interview	job description	job title	meeting
overtime	payslip	position	qualifications	reception/ receptionist
reference/ referee	salary	staff	supervisor / manager	temporary / permanent / part- time / full-time / shift work
uniform	wage			

At higher levels, the vocabulary will be increasingly focused on general work situations. Examples would include, but are not limited to, words such as:

ambition	appraisal	apprentice	bonus	flexitime
holiday entitlement	human resources	invoice	job titles, e.g. chief executive, human resources director, maintenance manager, etc.	leadership
maternity leave	notice period	payslip	pension	person specification
placement	promotion	redundant / redundancy	resign / resignation	retirement / retirement age
switchboard	teamwork	to be off sick	trade union	trainee
vacancy	working conditions			

Reading papers

For reading papers, candidates will need to be familiar with the kind of documents encountered in the workplace, such as forms, emails, health and safety rules, telephone messages, job adverts, etc. Again, at lower levels questions will not assume specialised knowledge of the workplace: a job application form, for example, will only ask for the kind of information candidates might have to give in other contexts, such as when they register with a GP.

At higher levels, the texts will be more obviously work-related but still of a generic nature, for example company procedures, appraisal forms, requests for extra expenses, etc.

The following list gives more examples of the types of texts candidates might encounter:

action points from meetings	agendas	contracts	descriptions of training courses
expense claims	first aid notices	minutes of meetings	notices from around the office, such as what to do in the event of a fire
policy documents	post-its	programme for a staff development day	requests for training, annual leave, etc.
satisfaction surveys	text messages	wage slips	

The work-focused task on the Entry 2 to Level 2 reading papers always features five texts that relate to each other. It was felt that having more, shorter texts (rather than one long one), would be fairer for people who were not yet in the workplace. In addition, the fact that they are linked to each other makes them easier to read than five disparate texts would be.

Resources

A number of useful teaching materials are available online. The generic teaching and learning materials that were developed in conjunction with the Core Curriculum are available at <http://rwp.excellencegateway.org.uk/ESOL/> and include work-related units at every level from Entry 1 to Level 1.

In addition, the ESOL for Citizenship materials developed by NIACE and updated in 2010 include a unit on 'Working in the United Kingdom' with useful suggestions for topics to study, sources of material, and an outline syllabus with activities. It covers Entry 1-Entry 3 and the ideas are also adaptable for higher levels. The unit can be found at

http://www.niace.org.uk/projects/esolcitizenship/docs/07_Working%20in%20the%20United%20Kingdom.pdf

The British Council website has a range of resources for delivering work-related learning, including units based around working in a charity shop. They can be found at <https://esol.britishcouncil.org/content/teachers/teaching-english-for-work> and are mainly suitable for E3 and above. There are also three units on 'Going to work' aimed at E1 learners, which can be found here:

<https://esol.britishcouncil.org/content/teachers/lessons-and-activities/teaching-beginners/going-work>.

The Talent website at <http://www.talent.ac.uk/> has a range of resources created by teachers. Click on the 'Resources' tab, then 'teacher resources' and search for 'jobs' and/ or 'employment'.

For more information and support, please email ukesol@trinitycollege.co.uk.