

# LSP4Employability

Language skills for employable graduates

A BOOKLET FOR TEACHERS



Erasmus+



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ULB Langues



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# LANGUAGE SKILLS FOR EMPLOYABLE GRADUATES

A BOOKLET FOR TEACHERS LECTURERS AND EDUCATORS



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### *LSP for employability*

*2019-1-PL01-KA203-065751*

*KA2 - Cooperation for innovation and the exchange of good practices*

The modern labour market is increasingly challenging, demanding, unpredictable and skill-intensive. Higher education institutions (HEIs) are expected to prepare graduates for the world of work. Knowledge of foreign languages is now viewed as a form of human capital that enhances an employee's performance and productivity in the workplace and, hence, contributes to value creation for an employer.

LSP (Language for Specific Purposes) is the approach to language teaching in which the decision as to content and method are based on the learner's reason for learning. University language courses are usually aimed at teaching the language connected to the students' field of study. However, the needs of future employers are usually not taken into consideration. Thus, the LSP curricula need to be modified to equip students with language skills that are sought on the job market.

#### Project objectives

The main goal of the LSP for Employability project is to enhance employability of students through implementing relevant teaching materials based on recommendations from employers and elements of cross-cultural awareness.

To achieve the main goal, the project team:

- developed digital skills language teachers participating in the project which enabled them to create eLearning materials on their own
- analysed the needs of employers concerning LSP skills of students of higher education institutions entering the 21st century labour market
- studied the elements cross-cultural awareness
- formulate recommendations for LSP teachers concerning skills facilitating student employability
- created, tested, and implement an English eLearning course composed of video clips, audio podcasts, reading comprehensions, glossaries and exercises
- created the teacher manual including recommendations and guidance concerning the course and LSP for employability

#### E-learning course

The main part of the project was creating an online course which is aimed at developing English language skills that will help enhance employability and cross-cultural awareness among students of higher education institutions. The course is based on recommendations concerning key language skills that the students need in order to successfully work in the international environment. The content includes soft skills, recruitment, cross-cultural awareness, teamwork, work-from-home and creativity aspects. The exact choice of teaching materials was accepted by the representatives of labour market. They pointed out the exact needs concerning language competences of students/candidates in a survey and during face-to-face meetings.

The course consists of three thematic modules. Each module has the following elements:

- video content with subtitles in English, Polish and Latvian

- audio with the script in English
- reading comprehension

Each element is accompanied with interactive exercises and tasks. The level of English taught through the course is CEFR B2, as it conforms to the standards of language education at universities.

The course is made available on Moodle platform on the project website: <https://lsp4employability.wsb.torun.pl/>

The innovativeness of this course lies in the fact that it was designed, produced and published by the teachers themselves, not IT specialists. Furthermore, the aspects taught in the course are based on recommendations outlined by the employers, so it is different from the standard teaching materials available to LSP teachers.

In addition to all the aspects mentioned above, COVID-19 pandemic, which started just before the launch of the project proved the growing need for online materials used both for synchronic and asynchronous online teaching. Although this had not been the project assumption but the project participants and participating institutions benefited greatly from not only digital skills that project participants developed but also materials produced as a result of the project.

#### The teacher manual

The teacher manual, in the form of an e-book, was being created simultaneously with the progress of the project. This publication includes the collection of insights, lessons learned and outputs which were the challenges and victories of the project team. Thus, the problems of designing, creating and implementing eLearning courses from the perspective of LSP teachers as independent creators of learning/teaching content can be found herein.

The e-book includes such issues as:

- description of potential implementation of eLearning materials containing unique content (not ready-made exercises available on the market) conforming to the specific teaching needs,
- the guide to exercises and methodology used in the eLearning course designed and produced as the project output, with answer keys, explanations and scripts,
- follow-up exercises, possible uses of the course materials as a part of a larger learning/teaching process or as a self-study material, used both in-class and online,
- the recommendations from the employers indicating the skills sought on labour market in partner countries and in EU.

The innovation standing behind the publication is that the problem of LSP in the context of employers' needs has not been presented before from practical perspective. Teachers are left alone with the choice of proper teaching materials that they need to deliver in a digital version to contemporary students, especially in pandemic situation and after. The publication serves as a practical guide outlining the process of choosing the right content for LSP, preparing it in the audio/video and interactive version and delivering it to LSP students.

#### PROJECT TEAM

The project team is composed of language teachers from universities based in Belgium, Latvia and Poland.



The Université libre de Bruxelles has 12 faculties that cover a wide range of disciplines, closely combining academic input and research. It offers approximately 40 undergraduate programmes and 250 graduate programmes (among them 23 Masters fully taught in English). It also partners 20 Doctoral schools, with almost 1,600 doctoral students.

ULB Langues is a language centre which comprised 46 teachers, both full-time and part-time, across three languages (English, Dutch & French as a Foreign Language). It provides Language for Specific Purposes for around 13,000 students in a range of faculties across the ULB. Within these courses, transversal themes such as communication, collaboration, creativity and critical thinking are central.

The working group is made up of four language teachers who have experience in blending language teaching and teach ESAP in the following faculties: Law; Languages, Translation and Communication; Economics and Business Engineering; and Philosophy and Social Sciences.

Latvia University of Life Sciences and Technologies is one of the four largest universities in Latvia. The history of the university dates back to 1863, and today its educational and research activities contribute to the development of many sectors of the national economy.

The Languages Centre of the university provides content-based courses in professional foreign Language studies, which are mostly implemented in English and German. The approach applied by the academic staff of the department emphasizes that the improvement of foreign language and academic skills at the university level should be based on the following pillars: a frequently updated analysis of the needs of students, recent graduates and employers; participation in the international projects, organising international students' conferences and extra-curriculum cultural events; a broad application of modern information technologies (IT), as well as blended learning.

The ERASMUS+ project "LSP4Employability" project team from Latvia consists of five members from the Language Centre. The project activities were very exciting, built a team spirit for effective collaboration in a friendly atmosphere to create the online learning materials for students within the project "LSP4Employability"



WSB University in Toruń is a part of the largest group of private universities in Poland with over 20 years of history. It provides a variety of degree programs focused on their practical value to enable the alumni to successfully develop on the labour market.

The WSB Foreign Language Centre is in charge of LSP education at all levels. It runs language courses based on blended-learning principles in both synchronous and asynchronous way. The extensive use of Moodle, MS Teams and other tools available online, teachers equip students with language competency focused not only on its linguistic layer but also employability skills. The online courses used by language teachers of English, German, Russian, Spanish and Polish for foreigners were created by the team of WSB University teachers in collaboration with e-learning specialists.

The motto of our LSP team is to provide language education for the future, compliant with the needs of job market and using technologies familiar to the contemporary students' generation.

## LANGUAGE TEACHING AND EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS

What are employability skills?

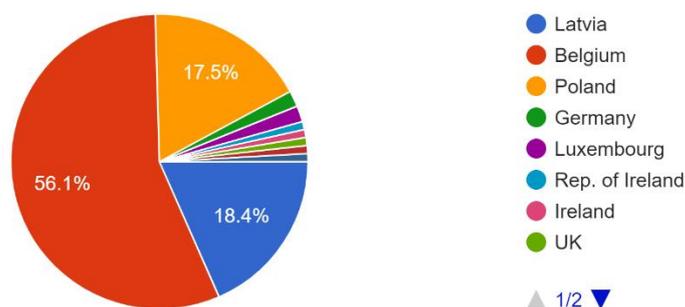
According to Cambridge Dictionary, the term 'employability' means 'the skills and abilities that allow you to be employed'<sup>1</sup>. Thus, employability skills in the context of language teaching are those which enable students to be employed on completion of the language course. As a higher education teacher, whose aim is to educate students in such a way that, having obtained a degree, they successfully progress in their careers, the question emerged what exactly employability skills are. In other words, what exactly should we teach at LSP classes to help our students get their dream jobs? Or even more precisely, what do the employers want from the candidates in the context of language skills?

In search for an answer, since November 2020 a survey has been conducted among employers in European countries, which so far has collected 114 responses. The employers from various sectors were invited by the team of LSP teachers from Belgium, Latvia and Poland to answer questions connected with their expectations towards candidates, language education and cross-cultural elements.

The respondents were based in 9 different countries, with the largest number from Belgium, Latvia and Poland.

Which country do you currently work in?

114 responses



As far as the language used in the workplace is concerned, the vast majority of respondents chose English (82%). Among other languages, the most common answers pointed at Russian, German, French, Dutch and Irish.

Regarding the positions in the company where linguistic skills are required in a different than a native language, the respondents indicated management (31), all positions (22) and sales (12).

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<sup>1</sup> <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/employability>

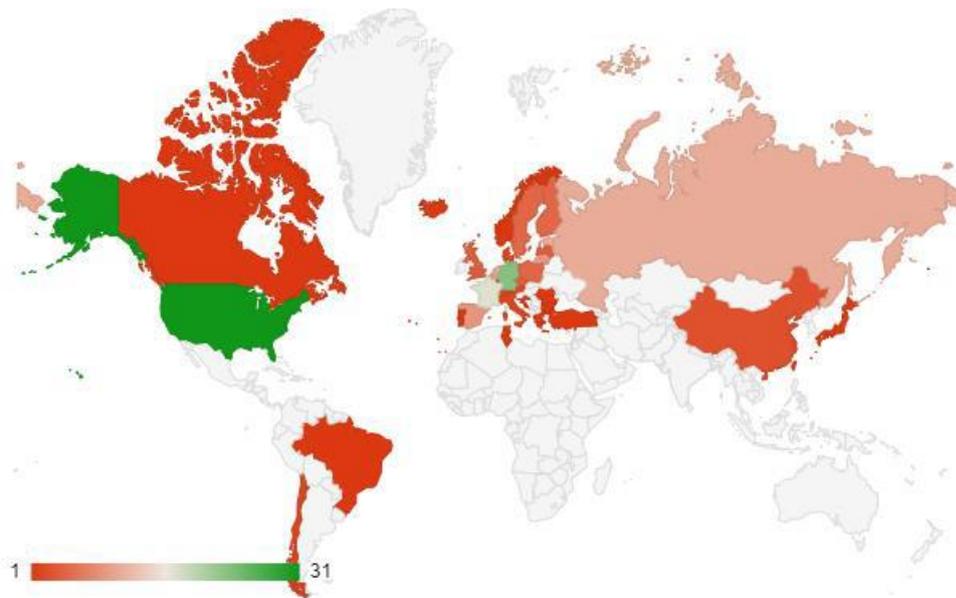
The next question concerned the exact situations when linguistic skills in more than one language are necessary. The findings show that over 72% of respondents believe that they are either “very important” or ‘important’. The Table below shows the answers to the question ‘How often do you do the following in more than one language?’



On the basis of collected data the conclusion for LSP teachers can be drawn, that language education should focus on:

- **authentic texts and finding information** (read specialist texts, gather information, carry out research)
- **interpersonal communication by various means** (deal with customers / clients, write correspondence, talk on the phone, networking)
- **teamwork in face-to-face and remote mode** (collaborate online - video meetings, collaborate with co-workers, participate in meetings)

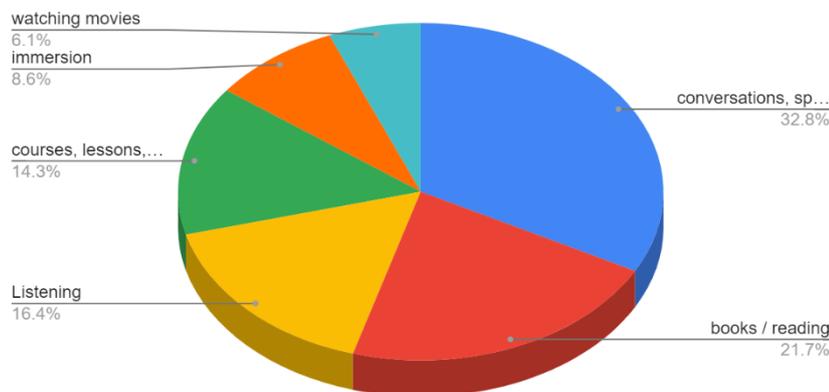
The survey also looked at the elements of cross-cultural communication, since the ability to speak more than one language opens doors to collaboration with other cultures. The map below shows the counties which the respondents have professional contacts with.



The respondents also pointed out cultural differences they saw in their daily duties and how cross-cultural issues are addressed. The conclusion from the answers can be drawn that the knowledge of habits of other countries is needed and is seldom managed with organizations or at schools. The importance of cross-cultural awareness is described in the section “Cross-cultural communication and LSP”.

The respondents were also asked about their language education and their insights. 63 respondents stated that they continue attending courses and lessons, 22 improve their skills on their own.

The chart below show the favourite methods of learning languages:



A subsequent part of the survey was addressed to those respondents who participate in recruitment process. The methods used to evaluate language proficiency of candidates are similar and include a conversation or/and a test. Only 10 out of 46 respondents stated that they accept international languages certificates.

The employers were also asked about soft skills they look for in candidates apart from language proficiency. The example answers are (the original spelling has been kept):

- *ability to articulate yourself clearly, ability to adapt quickly in a difficult (i.e. either confusing or aggressive) conversation*
- *Professional skills, creativity, communication skills*
- *do on time, be flexible, be aware of tax law, analytical thinking, be exact*
- *communication (including oral, written/drafting skills, presentation, facilitation, representation), prioritising and organising, service orientation, working with others,*
- *interpersonal skills, multicultural experience, team work capabilities. Highly professional, calm and approachable.*
- *assertiveness, flexibility, open-minded (not taking things personally), time management, teamwork*
- *Foreign language curiosity*
- *Listening*
- *Cross border team spirit (even if you work in a subsidiary abroad, we're part of the same team)*
- *respect of cultural diversity*

Another question concerned communication skills gaps that exist when graduates/new recruits enter the workplace. From an LSP teacher's perspective, the following are worth mentioning:

- *New hires are often very focused on formal communication, which is appropriate --but it is also important to try to connect with people above in the hierarchy on a more personal level as it aids communication.*
- *The ability to write in a concise and structured manner*
- *Using their language skills (on-the-spot-training) and often refining their language skills also to reflect the culture of that language. Speaking a language is not just words, but also a culture. True language skills is when the native feels that you, when speaking their language, also speak their culture.*

The final question serves as a ready-made recipe for LSP teachers, educators and lecturers. The respondents were asked to advise universities to address the skills gaps in students more effectively.

*Question: How do you think universities could help to address these skills gaps more effectively?*

- *Set up social or other networking type events with employers in the community in which multiple languages will be used*
- *A more intensive teaching and courses in English or Dutch as an option*
- *By teaching Big Five personality framework, at least for them personally that has helped to reflect on myself and others.*
- *Partnering with businesses, inviting speakers from private sector, more involving students (e.g. methodology applied at Maastricht University and inspired from the USA)*
- *Working more closely with employers, encouraging exchange, eg internships*
- *Obviously, yes. Native or near native language teachers with profound cultural understanding of the country(ies) of the language they teach. Exchange student programs. Cultural events and study trips.*

The answers suggest that the HEIs and employers should and in most cases are ready to collaborate to their mutual advantage. Their recommendations are serving as a bridge connecting education and professional reality with a view to give students/candidates the best career opportunities and provide employers with competent (and employable) workforce.

## ABOUT EMPLOYABILITY – REFERENCES

To learn more about employability, employability skills, cross-cultural communication and LSP, the following sources were explored and served as foundation for the work on teaching materials:

### ACADEMIC LITERATURE AND GOOD PRACTICE CONCERNING NEEDS ANALYSIS

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- Nigel Reeves, Colin Wright, *Linguistic Auditing: A Guide to Identifying Foreign Language Communication Needs in Corporations* (1996)  
[https://books.google.be/books/about/Linguistic\\_Auditing.html?id=CsV70jjoXqkC&redir\\_esc=y](https://books.google.be/books/about/Linguistic_Auditing.html?id=CsV70jjoXqkC&redir_esc=y)
- Michael H. Long, *Second Language Needs Analysis* (Cambridge Applied Linguistics) (2005)  
<https://www.amazon.com/Language-Analysis-Cambridge-Applied-Linguistics/dp/0521618215>
- Richard West, “Needs analysis in language teaching”, Published online by Cambridge University Press: 23 December 2008 <https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/language-teaching/article/needs-analysis-in-language-teaching/3A0AA342947388957E960EBD31B17FBD>
- Ana Bocanegra-Valle, Needs analysis for curriculum design. In K.Hyland & P. Shaw (Eds.) *Handbook of English for Academic Purposes*. Abington, Oxford. Routledge, pp. 562-578, 2016 [https://www.academia.edu/20625397/Needs\\_analysis\\_for\\_curriculum\\_design](https://www.academia.edu/20625397/Needs_analysis_for_curriculum_design)
- James Dean Brown, Foreign and Second Language Needs Analysis. In M.H.Long & C.J.Doughty (Eds.) *The Handbook of Language teaching*, West-Sussex: Wiley-Blackwell. pp 269-293, 2009  
<https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/9781444315783.ch16>
- Lynne Flowerdew, Needs Analysis and Curriculum Development. In . Paltridge & S. Starfield (Eds.), *The Handbook of English for Specific Purposes*, West-Sussex: Wiley-Blackwell, pp. 325-346, 2013.

### THE TERM “EMPLOYABILITY” – DEFINITION

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- <https://www.eurofound.europa.eu/observatories/eurwork/industrial-relations-dictionary/employability>

“Employability is a combination of factors (such as job-specific skills and soft skills) which enable individuals to progress towards or enter into employment, stay in employment and progress during their careers.”

- <https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/events-and-projects/projects/validation-non-formal-and-informal-learning/european-inventory/european-inventory-glossary>

“Employability by the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (Cedefop) in its “Skills Panorama Glossary” is defined as “a combination of factors (such as job-specific skills and soft skills) which enable individuals to progress towards or enter into employment, stay in employment and progress during their careers”

## LSP CURRICULUM AND EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS

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- Jamie Rinder, Teresa Sweeney Geslin, David Tual KTH Language and Communication, KTH Royal Institute of Technology; Didalang, Institut Mines Télécom; Language Unit, Department of Engineering, University of Cambridge *A Framework For Language And Communication In The CDIO Syllabus*, 2016 <https://www.clic.eng.cam.ac.uk/pdf1/AframeworkCDIO>

## EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS

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- *The top 5 employability skills valued by employers* <https://www.inspira.org.uk/blog/top-5-employability-skills>
- Anna Davies, Devin Fidler, Marina Gorbis, *Future Work Skills 2020*, Institute for the Future for University of Phoenix Research Institute [https://www.iftf.org/uploads/media/SR-1382A\\_UPRI\\_future\\_work\\_skills\\_sm.pdf](https://www.iftf.org/uploads/media/SR-1382A_UPRI_future_work_skills_sm.pdf)
- *What are the top 10 skills that'll get you a job when you graduate?* <https://targetjobs.co.uk/careers-advice/skills-for-getting-a-job/what-are-top-10-skills-thatll-get-you-job-when-you-graduate>
- McKinsey Global Institute. *Skill Shift. Automation and the Future of the Workforce*. May 2018. [https://www.mckinsey.com/~media/McKinsey/Featured Insights/Future of Organizations/Skill shift Automation and the future of the workforce/MGI-Skill-Shift-Automation-and-future-of-the-workforce-May-2018.ashx](https://www.mckinsey.com/~media/McKinsey/Featured%20Insights/Future%20of%20Organizations/Skill%20Shift%20Automation%20and%20the%20future%20of%20the%20workforce/MGI-Skill-Shift-Automation-and-future-of-the-workforce-May-2018.ashx)

McKinsey Global Institute workforce skills model of 25 skills presents workforce in five skill categories:

- physical and manual skills (general equipment operation, navigation, repair, etc. skills)
- basic cognitive skills (basic literacy, numeracy, communication)
- higher cognitive skills\*,
- social and emotional skills\*\*,
- technological skills (basic and advanced IT skills, programming, advanced data analysis and mathematical skills).

\*Higher cognitive skills include:

- critical thinking,
- decision making,
- creativity.

\*\*Social and emotional skills include:

- interpersonal skills,
- empathy,
- adaptability,
- continuous learning.

McKinsey Global Institute claims that skill shift will accelerate and until 2030 there will be a dramatic rise by 26% in hours worked requiring social and emotional skills, and by 60% in hours worked requiring technological skills.

- I. Ozola, D.Grasmane, “*Enhancing Students' Employability Skills Through International Project IWBLabs*”, INTED2019 Proceedings, Valencia, Spain, pp. 9367-9374., 2019

In 2017 the analysis of interviews with forty (40) company managers from four countries in the framework of the ERASMUS+ IWBLabs project (<https://iwblabs.pixel-online.org/>) revealed that they expected a wide range of skills from graduates apart from professional knowledge or the knowledge of a product. The most often mentioned skills in the order of priority were: team work, creativity, foreign language skills, IT skills, interpersonal communication skills, and problem solving skills. It was interesting to note that job-specific skills were not prevailing, but the so-called **soft skills**, such as problem solving skills, creativity, and teamwork dominated in the interviews. These results revealed the global tendency of the current trend in the labour market. Company managers also mentioned personal qualities such as: responsibility, honesty, loyalty, motivation, determination and active attitude.

Vital Skills and Personal Qualities of Employees: Opinions of Company Managers.

Ran k	Skill	Ran k	Personal quality
1	Teamwork	1	Responsibility
2	Creativity	2	Honesty
3	Foreign language skills	3	Loyalty
4	IT skills	4	Motivation
5	Interpersonal communication	5	Determination
6	Problem solving	6	Active attitude
7	Decision making	7	Initiative

## CROSS-CULTURAL COMMUNICATION

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- Online cross cultural training course <https://www.udemy.com/course/breaking-barriers-working-across-cultures/>

### I. How to structure your online course?

At first, you should start with ADDIE model. That involves a few important phases:

- a) Analysing
- b) Designing
- c) Developing
- d) Implementing
- e) Evaluating

When it comes to the first phase, the work involves analysing and gathering information about learners who will use the online course. It is good to start with analysing the target audience. It is essential to ask such questions as:

- Who is the target audience of an online course?
- What are the desired learning outcomes?
- What is the timeline for the project completion?

The second phase involves the process of designing. It is crucial to think about the following issues: time the learners will be able to devote to doing the course, the tools that are available for course development and if the course will contain audio and visual elements.

The next phase is the development phase. During that part of the project, you should put the design into action. In the process of creation it may happen that some modifications should be implemented. Then, other steps are to be taken such as building out the design and doing user testing.

Implementation phase involves publishing the course, inviting learners to start using it and tracking their progress and results.

The final phase requires evaluating process. This mainly involves analysing the collected data.

### II. Scenarios- what to consider?

Before building scenarios for e-learning courses it is advisable to consider the following issues:

- The length of the course (how many modules as well as their length)
- The content and desired outcomes
- Modules arrangement (from the easiest to the most difficult or in a thematic way)

Each module should contain: learning outcomes, curricular content, teaching methods, methods of evaluation and module duration.

### III. Nine principles of well-designed course.

1. Motivate learners- gain their attention by animations or graphics
2. Inform of the objectives – what they should expect from the training
3. Stimulate recall of prior learning – relate to the similar experience
4. Present the stimulus – present the new content

5. Provide learning guidance – help them to fill in any knowledge gaps
6. Elicit performance – learners demonstrate their knowledge
7. Provide feedback – inform learners how well they performed
8. Assess performance – talk about retention
9. Enhance retention and transfer- behaviour change

#### IV. Five types of e-learning materials.

E-learning materials can be divided into five types:

1. Informative - the way the course is organised and its purpose
2. Teaching – lectures, curricular content and wordlists
3. Revision – in the form of projects or presentations
4. Activities – self-test, online games or even blogs
5. Evaluation – case studies, projects or standard tests

#### V. CCAF Model

The CCAF Model (Dr. Michael Allen) is to be taken into account when creating a single module. There are four parts of the model:

1. Context – A meaningful framework need to be provided. It should identify the relevance of the tasks to the real world of the learner.
2. Challenge – A stimulus to act. We establish meaningful risks, significant outcomes and the potential for success.
3. Activity – Use gestures that correspond and evoke the real-life activities.
4. Feedback – reflect back to the learners correctness as well as to intrinsic and extrinsic indicators of how they can improve.

### ONLINE TOOLS FOR CREATING LEARNING MATERIALS

In order to create teaching materials the following tools were used:

Moodle	An open-source platform for creating online courses ( a course management system CMS) with multimedia and variety of exercises, providing flexibility and customization, which can be used by both learners and teachers on any device.
Canva	Platform for designing graphics presentations and short animations.
DaVinci	An all-in-one program for editing films and videos.
Audacity	An audio recorder and editor.
Miro	The online whiteboard platform for collaboration, brainstorming, notes taking and visualizing ideas.
Final Cut Pro X	An app for creating, editing, and producing the highest-quality video
Open Broadcaster Software	Open source software for video recording and live streaming
Kdenlive	An open source video editor
Animaker	An online video making software (it must be purchased) designed to help businesses/teachers to create animated videos

## LSP FOR EMPLOYABILITY – TEACHING MATERIALS

LSP education and a great variety of needs of both students and employers demand personalized approach. Although the abundance of teaching materials available on the market cover multiple fields of linguistic study, the recommendations expressed by the employers highlight the need to use authentic materials, collaboration, specialized vocabulary, following current job market trends during LSP classes. On top of that, the covid-19 pandemic, lockdowns and a growing popularity of online teaching show that textbooks become obsolete. All these mean that, in practice, LSP teachers end up creating their own teaching materials using tools and sources available online.

The course presented below was created by LSP teachers from three universities based on recommendations collected from employers. The materials can be used as an online course, separately during online and on-site classes.

**SEE THE COURSE ONLINE: [LSP4EMPLOYABILITY COURSE](#)**



## WHAT IS LSP FOR EMPLOYABILITY

Amidst the backdrop of a modern labour market that is increasingly demanding, unpredictable and skill-intensive, foreign language knowledge, especially English as a language of new technologies and international corporations, is now viewed as a key form of human capital that significantly enhances an employee's future employability prospects. Moreover, as ULB is situated in the very international and multi-lingual city of Brussels, graduates need to be well equipped with language and associated soft skills that are highly sought after in this particular labour market.

However, University language courses are usually aimed at teaching the language connected to the students' field of study which does not usually focus on future employer's needs. Thus, LSP curricula need to be modified to equip students with language and associated soft skills that are highly sought after in the labour market. Our LSP 4 Employability project aims to help bridge this very skills gap which disadvantages many graduates when they come to finding their first graduate job.

The ULB has a considerable amount of early-stage experience in teaching with eLearning platforms such as the development of gamification tools, running cross-border student project e-collaborations, generation of quiz and survey material, training sessions given/taken in this area and years of experience of teaching ESP to a wide range of cross-faculty audiences. The LSP teachers also have a deep understanding of blending language with content-specific material.

The project's practical, real-life exercises are designed to develop these students' skills as follows: soft skills are highlighted together with example language in order to practice applying for a job with a covering letter; examples are given of how to analyse a job advert and successfully communicate the soft and hard skills that each student possesses in order to apply for that job.

Subsequent exercises consist of practicing writing and peer reviewing a covering letter for a real job advert, an audio-visual task with tips and tricks based on a round-table discussion that involved professionals from the Brussels private market recruitment sector, and finally listening to a mock interview interactive podcast thereby enabling the students to assess the strengths and weaknesses of the candidate's answers, give feedback and propose their own improved answers to the questions.

# GETTING THAT FIRST GRADUATE JOB

## PART ONE – VIDEO



Written and produced by Hugh Murphy

Watch the [video](#) and answer the questions below:

### What's Aly Markant's job?

- She's a marketing manager.
- She's a headhunter.
- She's a report writer.
- She's a graphic designer.

Fill in the missing words to describe what *Transpod Ltd.* is looking for in their job advertisement.

- work with \_\_\_\_\_ marketing agencies
- to plan and design targeted marketing \_\_\_\_\_ across the business
- measure the effectiveness of \_\_\_\_\_ campaigns by reports

What are the two points that Aly suggests spending most time on?

- your CV and your covering letter
- your covering letter and your language skills
- your CV and your job-specific skills
- your CV and the interview

Which of the following aspects of the application process does Aly focus on in this video?

- your job-specific skills
- the interview itself
- your CV
- your covering letter/letter of application
- your language skills

### Dos and Don'ts for your CV

#### **deadlines:**

While the deadline might be on Friday at 17h, many headhunters and recruiters may start their selection process in advance, so get your CV in early, don't wait until the last minute.

#### **spelling and grammatical errors:**

Change the language to EN (or the appropriate language) on your computer. Use the spelling checker, revise and re-read your CV several times and give it to someone else to read it for you.

#### **copy/paste:**

Be careful! Employers will quickly spot this. Make sure you personalise each CV and tailor it specifically to the particular job application.

#### **ideal length for a CV:**

1 page is perfect!

2 pages maximum.

6 pages much too long!

#### **Euro-Pass CV:**

Get creative with infographic tools such as those you can find on [venngage.com](#).

TEAMWORK, CRITICAL THINKING, TIME MANAGEMENT  
- THESE ARE ALL SUCH IMPORTANT SOFT SKILLS THAT ARE SO HARD TO DEFINE BUT IN THE HIRING PROCESS ARE WHAT EVERY EMPLOYER IS LOOKING FOR. WHAT EXACTLY ARE THESE SOFT SKILLS AND HOW CAN WE IMPROVE THEM TO BECOME BETTER CANDIDATES FOR A JOB? IN THIS UNIT WE'LL FIND OUT EXACTLY HOW.

**Who are you?**

Make sure the recruiter learns about YOU! They want to hear details and information which set you apart from other candidates and potential employees. Highlight the characteristics which make you stand out from the others.

**Skills and experience:**

Don't worry if you don't have a lot of work experience. Focus on the skills you have learned: working in teams, communication skills, problem solving, project management, scientific writing, leading teams, organising events, etc.

**Discuss the following questions:**

Why is it important to make a distinction between hobbies and interests and skills? (choose a correct option)

- Hobbies are more important than skills and other interests.
- Hobbies and interests show you have an active life outside of work, but skills are what an employer is looking for in the workplace. Highlight hobbies that have allowed you to develop useful skills.
- Employers will be really interested in hearing about unusual hobbies.
- It's not useful to include information about hobbies and interests in your CV, employers are not interested in this.

Listen carefully to what Aly Markant has to say about LinkedIN and summarise her advice here.

Do some research on the internet. Find out about the MBTI. Are there any similar/equivalent tests?

What did you do during the COVID 19 pandemic which could indicate that you are a flexible and resilient person?

How does the candidate show that she is investing in continuous professional development?

Spend some time brainstorming ideas about who you are and why a particular employer should choose you over other candidates at a job interview.

Write down a set of keywords that you want to ensure will appear in your CV and/or in your covering letter. Watch the video again and pick out the key words which apply to you.

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**PART TWO - READING**

## WHAT ARE SOFT SKILLS?

Soft skills are the skills that enable you to fit in at a workplace. They include your personality, attitude, flexibility, motivation, and manners. Soft skills are so important that they are often the reason employers decide whether to keep or promote an employee.<sup>1</sup>

Soft skills are different from hard skills (also known as technical skills), which are directly relevant to the job to which you are applying.<sup>1</sup> These are often more quantifiable, and easier to learn than soft skills.

In order to succeed at work, you must get along well with all the people with whom you interact, including managers, co-workers, clients, vendors, customers, and anyone else you communicate with while on the job. These are the types of skills all employers value.

Look at the 5 categories of soft skills below and match the subskills to each of the headings:

**Communication:**

How well do you communicate? [Communication skills](#) are important in almost every job. You will also likely need to be a [good listener](#). Employers want employees who can not only communicate their own ideas, but who

**Critical Thinking:**

Employers want candidates who can analyze situations and make [informed decisions](#). Whether you are working with data or teaching students, you need to be able to understand problems, think critically, and devise

also listen empathetically to others.

Look at the following examples of communications skills below and match the ideas with ideas with a similar meaning:

Listening	<i>Persuasion</i>
Verbal communication	
Visual communication	<i>Reading body language</i>
Writing reports and proposals	
Negotiation _____	<i>Public speaking</i>
Nonverbal communication ____	
Presentation _____	<i>Social skills</i>
	<i>Storytelling</i>
	<i>Writing skills</i>

solutions.

Look at the following examples of critical thinking skills below and match the ideas with ideas with a similar meaning:

Adaptability _____	<i>Finding solutions to difficulties</i>
Creativity	
Critical observation	
Design aptitude	<i>Willingness to learn</i>
Desire to learn _____	<i>Reasoning Skills</i>
Innovation _____	
Logical thinking _____	<i>Thinking Laterally</i>
Problem solving	<i>Flexibility</i>
Research	
Thinking outside the box ____	<i>Resourcefulness</i>
Troubleshooting _____	

### Leadership:

While not every job opening is a [leadership](#) role, most employers will want to know that you have the ability to make decisions, and can manage situations and people. The ability to react in a difficult situation and help resolve it is something employers look for in prospective employees.

Look at the following examples of leadership skills below and match the ideas with ideas with a similar meaning:

Conflict management _____	<i>Dispute resolution</i>
Decision making	<i>Successful coaching</i>
Delegation	<i>Giving clear feedback</i>
Giving clear feedback	<i>Facilitation</i>
Inspiration _____	<i>Motivation</i>
Mentoring _____	
Project management	<i>Talent management</i>
Supervision	

### Teamwork:

Hiring managers look for job candidates who can work well with others. You need to be able to work with people even if you do not always agree.

Look at the following examples of teamwork below and match the ideas with ideas with a similar meaning:

Accepting feedback	<i>Persuasion</i>
Collaboration	<i>Team building</i>
Emotional intelligence	<i>Understanding</i>
Empathy _____	<i>Diversity awareness</i>
Establishing interpersonal relationships _____	<i>Interpersonal skills</i>
Dealing with difficult personalities	<i>Dealing with office politics</i>
Intercultural competence	
Influence _____	
Networking	
Self-awareness	

### Work Ethic

Employers look for job candidates with a strong work ethic. While they can work independently, people with a strong work ethic can also follow instructions.

Look at the following examples of work ethic below and match the ideas with ideas with a similar meaning:

Dedication	<i>Competitiveness</i>
Dependability _____	
Independence	<i>Reliability</i>
Meeting deadlines	<i>Working well under pressure</i>
Multitasking	<i>Staying on task</i>
Organization _____	<i>Time Management</i>
Planning	
Punctuality	<i>Following direction</i>
Resilience _____	
Results-oriented	
_____	
Following direction	
Trainability	

### Positive Attitude

Employers are always seeking people who will bring a positive attitude to the office. They want employees who will be friendly to others, eager to work, and generally a pleasure to be around. Being able to keep things positive is especially important if you're working in a fast-paced, high-stress work environment.

Look at the following personality traits below and match the ideas with ideas with a similar meaning:

Confidence _____	<i>Self-assuredness</i>
Cooperation	<i>Politeness</i>
Courtesy _____	<i>Eagerness</i>
Energy	<i>Warmth</i>
Enthusiasm _____	<i>Respectability</i>
Friendliness _____	
Honesty blank	
Humorous	
Patience	
Respectfulness	

Put the missing words into the text.

**BEST CANDIDATE  
CONSENSUS**

**DUPLICATE**

**SHORTER THE BETTER**

**JOB ADVERT**

**GENERAL**

*one A4 page*

*personal introduction*

*relevant skills*

*application*

*complement*

A cover letter is a document sent with your cv when applying for jobs. It acts as a \_\_\_\_\_ and helps to sell your \_\_\_\_\_. A cover letter is necessary as it gives you the chance to explain to an employer why you're the \_\_\_\_\_ for the job. You do this by highlighting \_\_\_\_\_ and experience; therefore you should always write your cover letter with the position you're applying for in mind. Not to be confused with personal statements for your cv, cover letters should \_\_\_\_\_ your cv but not \_\_\_\_\_ it. When it comes to the length of these documents, the \_\_\_\_\_ among recruiters is the \_\_\_\_\_. Typically, three to five short paragraphs; cover letters should not exceed \_\_\_\_\_. Applications should always include a cover letter unless the \_\_\_\_\_ instructs you differently.

*Adapted from: <https://www.prospects.ac.uk/careers-advice/cvs-and-cover-letters/cover-letters>*

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#### READ CAREFULLY

Read the vacancy notice attentively and highlight the skills that relate to the requirement of the position in your covering letter.

#### USE KEYWORDS

Use keywords (or synonyms) when you list your soft skills as mentioned on the vacancy notice (punctual / organised / team player, etc.)

#### BE BRIEF

Have short clear paragraphs that show different aspects clearly.

#### GET TO KNOW THE EMPLOYER

Take time to research the employer to gain valuable insight into the culture of the organisation and make references to one of two points in your cover letter.

#### KEEP IT SHORT

Your cover letter should not be longer than one page. It should include:

Why you are motivated to apply for the position;

How you are the most suitable candidate for the position, and

Why the company is a good match for you.

You should begin and end with appropriate formulae.

#### USE FORMAL TONE

Use a formal, polite tone and make sure there are no spelling mistakes (put the spell check on your computer in English).

#### USE SIMPLE FONTS

Use non-decorative font styles, normal font sizes (11-12), and optimal spacing (1-1.5)

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Referring to the [job description](#) and the [covering letter](#), answer the following questions:

TRANSBORD LTD.

**Who are we?**

Transbord Ltd is one of the most trusted plant and site equipment providers in the country, with 270+ employees across 5 locations, we're passionate about what we do and how we treat people. We value our colleagues and customers and believe that every aspect of their experience with us is important. We have ambitious growth plans, so this is a great time to join our business and be a part of our success story.

**What will you be doing?**

- Managing all social media campaigns and working with external agencies to delivery • media plans
- Working closely with the Marketing Manager and Marketing Graphic Designer to plan
- and design targeted marketing campaigns across the business
- Measuring effectiveness of campaigns by producing reports

**What can we offer you?**

- A salary of £24,000 per annum + bonus
- Flexible working options. Mix of Home and Office working
- Development opportunities (this is a new role so you can come in and make it your • own!)
- Ability to increase holiday days with length of service
- Cycle to Work Scheme
- Birthday and Christmas Leave

**What are we looking for?**

- Ideally a graduate from marketing degree background, business degree background with modules in marketing or equivalent experience
- A graduate comfortable working with social media platforms
- Good attention to detail and time management

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Re: Application for post of Media Manager at Transbord Ltd.

Dear 1. *Mr Smith /Madam or Sir /Mr or Mrs*

I 2. *'m writing/ am writing / write* to apply for the post of Media Manager at your company as seen on The Guardian Jobs website. As 3. *you can see / you see / you will see* from my CV, I 4. *am currently studying / am studying currently / currently am studying* for a Master's degree in Business Engineering, with a 5 *speciality / focus/ major* in Marketing, at the Solvay Brussels School of Economics and Management, Université Libre de Bruxelles. Academically, I 6. *think that I am / would describe myself as / I believe to be* a highly mature individual, who is hard-working and conscientious. 7. *Referring / Concerning / With regard to* language skills, I am a native French speaker, 8. *am fluent in / know fluently / speak fluently* Dutch and have a B2 level of English. I have also recently begun online classes in Mandarin Chinese.

Throughout my time at university, 9. *I have developed/I developed/I develop* excellent oral and written communication skills in the three working languages through my coursework and work experience in the professional services sector. For university courses, I have presented reports 10. *for field research on/ on field research into /in field research to* current and potential markets for the pharmaceutical and building sectors, using techniques learned in Applied Marketing. 11. *Therefore,/However,/Similarly,* for the Solvay Business

Game, I am currently part of a team focusing on the pharmaceutical sector to present an integrated communications campaign for a fictitious company, using the 12. *mentioned information/the above/stated information* obtained on the real and potential markets during last year's module.

For the last two years, I have worked as an academic assistant whose job it is to mentor BA students who have difficulties in marketing and finance courses, and I recently set up an online support group for those struggling with distance learning. 13. *During/For/In the summer*, I worked for FinProp International as an assistant in their marketing department as a part of their summer 14. *work/ internship /student* programme. This gave me 15. *an expertise in / insight into /a knowledge of* working in a multi-cultural environment in a foreign country. With this experience, I then co-launched an online jewellery start-up for which I 16. *am charged with/am accountable for/ am responsible for* social media and general online marketing, with a focus on raising the profile of the business and attracting new clients. These valuable opportunities have given me a chance to meet and work with people from many different walks of life.

Transbord Ltd 17. *would offer me/ will offer me/offers* the opportunity to work in industrial marketing where I can make use of my knowledge in a commercial setting. From the company website, I see that you are heavily invested not only in your employees and your clients, but also in the wider community through your participation in the Giving Something Back scheme. The fact that Transbord Ltd is a company looking to grow and that I would be personally involved in shaping the role are key factors in my being able to put the skills gained during my university experience at the service of the company.

I 18. *am looking forward to/cannot wait for / look forward to* the opportunity to discuss my suitability for the post at interview.

If you 19. *need / require / would like* any further information, please do not hesitate to contact me.

20. *Yours sincerely,/Yours faithfully,/Best regards,*

Nina Milan

---

### Answer the following questions:

1. Look at the section entitled 'What we are looking for?' on the job description.

What information in Nina Milan's covering letter is relevant to these points?

2. How does Nina demonstrate evidence of the following soft skills:

Being a team player;

Communication;

Leadership;

Proactiveness;

Report Writing;

Research?

*HINT: Go back and have a look at some of the soft skills and sub-skills in the ['What are soft Skills?'](#) activity. They might help you make the link between Nina's activities and the soft skills mentioned above.*

- How does Nina demonstrate research into the company?
- How does Nina suggest that the company is a good match for her?

Read the following job description and mark the words or phrases that refer to soft skills and personality traits.

---

### Graduate Team Assistant - Finance - West London - £25,000-£30,000

Excellent opportunity for a bright, enthusiastic and professional graduate to join this successful international finance company in West London as a Team Assistant. Based in the Operations team of (currently) 3, this person will work to support the smooth running of their London office (100 staff) and gain exposure to business operations and administration. This is a well-established, boutique finance company whose clients are High Net Worth Individuals and you will work as part of a busy team so training will be provided.

#### The role

This is a varied Team Assistant role and duties will include:

- Diary management - liaising with clients, scheduling meetings and interviews
- Carrying out administrative tasks - uploading candidate / interview details, maintaining company databases
- Office management including ordering supplies and liaising with suppliers for company events Finance tasks - collating expenses, preparing and logging invoices
- General office administrative to support Directors, Partners and colleagues
- Providing ad hoc front of house duties as required

#### The candidate

This is a great opportunity for a graduate to gain exposure to the logistics and business functions of a fast-paced, successful working environment. Must have excellent communication skills, good attention to detail, be organised and have a proactive approach. Previous experience within an administrative capacity is beneficial.

Office-based role with a degree of flexibility for homeworking (3:2 days) in time. A young, social yet professional team environment.

Salary: £25,000-£30,000 depending on experience, plus great benefits including bonus and annual company ski trip!

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## DISCUSS

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Look at the job description that you have seen in the previous activity. You have identified the soft skills and personality traits that are mentioned explicitly in the job description. Focus now on the role.

#### Questions:

1. Add any soft skills that you think are relevant to the tasks that are mentioned.
  2. Think about what experience you have either at university or elsewhere (summer jobs, activities, volunteering, etc.) and how they relate to the soft skills required. Add your thoughts to the discussion.
  3. Comment on another student's ideas.
- 

## PART THREE - LISTENING

Written and produced by Alexander Tabor



Listen to the interactive podcast and answer the questions: [PODCAST](#)

- 1) Rate the candidate's answer between 1 (lowest) and 10 (highest).
- 2) How would you describe the candidate's answer to the question?
- 3) How exactly could the candidate's answer be improved?

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## TEACHER NOTES:

Activity 1: LSP for Employability, CV and covering letter, tips from the experts.

### Teachers Notes:

- 1) Go to the relevant UV page and click on the H5P exercise entitled "LSP for Employability: animated video; CV and covering letter, tips from the experts."
- 2) You can play this video with subtitles (you can replace the subtitles in another language of your choice) from YouTube at this link <https://youtu.be/eGzS7nuhKAM>.
- 3) Ask students to play the video and answer the questions as they go along.
- 4) The video can be paused as needed and replayed if necessary.
- 5) The answers (below) can be used as a basis for class discussion.
- 6) Please note, this animated video was made using software which requires a subscription (the free version is very limited), which can be found at <https://www.animaker.com/>

### Answer Key to the Animated VIDEO Exercises

- 1) **What is Aly Markant's job?**  
She's a headhunter for an international recruitment agency.
- 2) Fill in the missing words to describe what **Transpod Ltd.** is looking for in their job advertisement:  
work with **\*external\*** marketing agencies to plan and design targeted marketing **\*campaigns\*** across the business measure the effectiveness of campaigns by **\*producing\*** reports
- 3) **What are the two points that Aly suggests spending most time on?**  
your CV and your covering letter.
- 4) **Which of the following aspects of the application process (CV, job-specific skills, language skills, the interview, covering letter/letter of application) does Aly focus on in this video?**  
your CV
- 5) **Dos and Don'ts for your CV deadlines:**  
While the deadline might be on Friday at 17h, many headhunters and recruiters may start their selection process in advance, so get your CV in early, don't wait until the last minute.  
**spelling and grammatical errors:**  
Change the language to EN (or the appropriate language) on your computer. Use the spelling checker, revise and re-read your CV several times and give it to someone else to read it for you.

### copy/paste:

Be careful! Employers will quickly spot this. Make sure you personalise each CV and tailor it specifically to the particular job application.

### ideal length for a CV:

1 page is perfect!  
2 pages maximum.  
6 pages much too long!

### Euro-Pass CV:

Get creative with infographic tools such as those you can find on [venngage.com](http://venngage.com).

### Who are you?

Make sure the recruiter learns about YOU! They want to hear details and information which set you apart from other candidates and potential employees. Highlight the characteristics which make you stand out from the others.

### Skills and experience:

Don't worry if you don't have a lot of work experience. Focus on the skills you have learned: working in teams, communication skills, problem solving, project management, scientific writing, leading teams, organising events, etc.

- 6) **Why is it important to make a distinction between hobbies and interests and skills?**  
Hobbies and interests show you have an active life outside of work, but skills are what an employer is looking for in the workplace. Highlight hobbies that have allowed you to develop useful skills.
- 7) **Why is LinkedIn important according to the speaker?**  
Some recruiters are using software to search through LinkedIn profiles, so be very careful here, there must be an exact match between your CV/Covering Letter and your LinkedIn profile as any discrepancy looks bad. Employers check your contacts on LinkedIn and see if they know someone you know. If it's the case, they will quickly ask that person about you. It's important to maintain a very professional attitude on LinkedIn at all times. It's not the extent of your network that matters when you're a newly qualified graduate, it's the professionalism you show. In addition, watch what you're putting on Facebook!!! That can cost you a job as employers are also very likely to check your Facebook profile. And don't forget, when you get called to an interview, LinkedIn might be exactly the place where you can go to find someone who can help you to prepare for that interview, don't underestimate the importance of the people you know in your immediate circle.
- 8) **Do some research on the internet. Find out about the MBTI. Are there any similar/equivalent tests?**

<https://www.myersbriggs.org/my-mbti-personality-type/mbti-basics/>  
<https://imeetcentral.com/top-5-alternatives-to-the-myers-briggs-test>  
<https://www.bustle.com/p/11-personality-tests-similar-to-myers-briggs-perfect-for-people-who-are-obsessed-with-mbti-2949167>

- 9) **What did you do during the COVID 19 pandemic which could indicate that you are a flexible and resilient person?**  
 open question with a focus on **flexibility** and **resilience**

- 10) **How does the candidate show that she is investing in continuous professional development?**

She's participating in seminars, clubs and networking. She has registered for upcoming recruitment and coaching events, she is doing ongoing courses in languages and IT and she has launched her own jewellery making start-up business.

- 11) **Spend some time brainstorming ideas about who you are and why a particular employer should choose you over other candidates at a job interview. Record a 2-minute speech about yourself here.**

open question with a focus on what makes the candidate stand out from the others

- 12) **Write down a set of keywords that you want to ensure will appear in your CV and/or in your covering letter. Watch the video again and pick out the key words which apply to you.**

open question with an **emphasis on soft skills** which might include aspects of personality, attitude, flexibility, motivation, and manners in addition to communication skills, critical thinking, leadership, teamwork, work ethic and a positive attitude. For further discussion on this topic, see earlier activity 1.1 What are soft skills?

### Animated VIDEO Transcript

Scene 01 (6s)

Hello, my name is Aly Markant and I've got my own recruitment business.

Scene 02 (21s)

I'm a headhunter for a number of different international companies, and I specialize in recruiting newly qualified graduates. If you are a newly qualified graduate, or about to graduate from university and enter the workforce then you've come to the right place! Let me share some of my experience with you in this short video.

Scene 03 (36s)

Today, I'm going through CVs for the post of Media Manager at Transpord Ltd. Transpord Ltd is one of the most trusted plant and site equipment providers in the UK, with 270+ employees across 5 locations. They are looking for a Media Manager who can

work with external marketing agencies

work closely with the Marketing Manager and Marketing Graphic Designer to plan and design targeted marketing campaigns across the business

measure the effectiveness of campaigns by producing reports

Scene 04 (1m 05s)

Applying for your first job can be a daunting experience but there are many ways in which you can prepare. I've interviewed hundreds of graduates for a huge variety of different jobs in the last number of years and let me tell you, there are huge differences in the ways candidates prepare. There are many things you need to take into consideration in your preparation:

Your covering letter or letter of application

Your job-specific skills

Your language skills including spoken and written communication

The interview itself

Your CV

Today, I'm going to focus on the CV. Let me put your mind at rest at the very beginning. You might be much more worried about the interview or you might think, hey, I'm great at speaking in an interview, but if your CV and covering letter are not of a very high standard, you won't get invited to many interviews. The bottom line is, put a lot of time, effort and energy into your CV and your covering letter.

Scene 05 (1m 25s)

Let's look at some of the CVs I've received for the Transpord post:

This CV arrived just before the deadline of 17h on 29th May. While it arrived before the deadline, I had already started my selection process some days ago, so don't leave your application until the very last minute, best to get it in early. (25s)

This CV contains a number of very obvious spelling and grammatical errors. This does not make a good impression and as a result, this CV will not be considered. (12s)

Here the company name is wrong! It's obvious that this applicant is just using "copy/paste" in all job applications and not taking care to personalise each one. Your future employer would not like to think that they were being confused with another company, which could possibly be a competitor. (22s)

Wow, this CV is 6 pages long, I don't think I'm going to have time to read all that, sorry! 1 page is ideal, but 2 pages is an absolute maximum! I'm a busy headhunter, I've got to get through many CVs in a very short period of time, under quite a lot of time pressure. (23s)

Scene 06 (1m 55s)

5. Oh dear, here's a EuroPass CV. It seems to me that this candidate didn't think very creatively about their job application. The EuroPass is a great database and a great place for you to store all of your certificates, diplomas and reference letters from previous employers or student jobs that you've had, but it doesn't fit the purpose when it comes to applying for a specific job. Employers and headhunters will be much more impressed by a one-page CV that you created using an infographic format (for example using a tool such as Venngage.com) rather than using a standard template that shows a lack of imagination. Create a CV that will get you through the door and into an interview, that's what you want! (1:03)

This CV doesn't tell me anything about who the candidate is! I want to know just who you are before I invite you to an interview. Make sure your CV and covering letter get you out of your head and into your heart to communicate who you are exactly to your potential employer. (20s)

This candidate has attached every certificate and diploma awarded during the last 6 years. That's all very well, but as a recruiter, I can check the content of the courses you studied on the Internet. Remember, it's your experience which will get you invited to an interview and which may get you the job, not just the degrees or diplomas you have.

Time for me to have a break I think! (27s)

Scene 07: Coffee Break (1m 05s)

Recruiters are much more interested in your skills and experience than in your certificates. If you have done project management, scientific writing or collaboration

with other universities in an international environment during your university years then mention this.

If you had the opportunity to do some work experience at Rolls Royce, then showcase that in your CV, it's really going to make you stand out from the other applicants. Perhaps you developed some interpersonal skills such as clear communication or conflict management and resolution skills while in holiday jobs, internships or perhaps during an Erasmus exchange programme. Highlight your IT skills, but that's a tough market... everyone is good at IT nowadays, so perhaps set yourself apart from the others by giving a practical example of how you used your IT skills to solve a particular problem in a practical context. Be sure to list the specific skills you can bring to this particular position.

Scene 08: Lunch room (1m 05s)

It's always a good idea to add some information about your hobbies and your interests apart from work and study. However, make a distinction between hobbies and interests (such as running, reading, playing the piano or watching movies) and activities which allow you to underline your skills (for example leading a group of scouts, captaining a sports team, acting, playing in a band, public speaking, organising student events) and so on. These activities demonstrate leadership skills and teamwork which is what a potential employer is looking for. Point out any activities (whether paid or unpaid) which show that you took part in a committee or an organisation, that you organised and led meetings or that you showed leadership skills as part of a hierarchy, as these are skills that can be used in the workplace.

Right, let's get back to shortlisting candidates for the Transpod job.

Scene 09: (2m 01s)

Ah, now we're getting somewhere! The next candidate has referenced her LinkedIn profile and it's really impressive and up to date. Some recruiters are using software to search through LinkedIn profiles, so be very careful here, there must be an exact match between your CV/Covering Letter and your LinkedIn profile as any discrepancy looks bad. Employers check your contacts on LinkedIn and see if they know someone you know. If it's the case, they will quickly ask that person about you. It's important to maintain a very professional attitude on LinkedIn at all times. It's not the extent of your network that matters when you're a newly qualified graduate, it's the professionalism you show. In addition, watch what you're putting on Facebook!!! That can cost you a job

as employers are also very likely to check your Facebook profile. And don't forget, when you get called to an interview, LinkedIn might be exactly the place where you can go to find someone who can help you to prepare for that **interview, don't underestimate the importance of the people you know in your immediate circle.** (1m13s)

Not only does this candidate have a very impressive LinkedIn profile, she also took the time to get to know her own strengths and weaknesses by doing the Myers-Briggs personality indicator test. Self-awareness is a very important interpersonal skill, it's a great idea to show that you know yourself, that you have a very clear idea of your strengths and weaknesses. This is a real plus for any company or employer. They can see straight away what skills you already have and what on-the-job training might be necessary should you be recruited. (35s)

I'm really struck by the way this candidate has used her CV to focus on the three requirements of the job description in the advertisement for the post. It's clear that she knows what we're looking for and she's targeting exactly those requirements in the skills and experience she has mentioned. (12s)

Scene 10 (55s)

13. She has also given some practical examples of how she stayed on top of things during the COVID-19 pandemic, she developed some soft skills in terms of physical and mental health, time management, upskilling her additional languages and creating a network to help classmates to stay focused on their studies in the exceptional context of the global pandemic. This is certainly the kind of leadership and initiative that Transpod is looking for in the post they have advertised. (33s)

14. And finally, this candidate shows that she's investing in continuous professional development, seminars, clubs and networking. She has registered for upcoming recruitment and coaching events, she is doing ongoing courses in languages and IT and she has launched her own jewellery making start-up business. (22s)

Scene 11 (11s)

This certainly sounds like the right candidate for me, let's get her invited to an interview and see how she performs there.

(end of audio script)

## Activity 2: Writing a Covering Letter

### Overview of the didactic sequence 2

The following didactic sequence using the Lesson feature in Moodle aims to introduce and familiarize students with the following element of job applications:

- 2.1 What are Soft Skills?
- 2.2 The Purpose of a Covering Letter
- 2.3 Tips for writing a covering letter
- 2.4 The Job Advertisement
- 2.4 Language for a Covering Letter, including formulaic expressions, cohesive devices and specific vocabulary.
- 2.5 Analyzing an example covering letter for a job advertisement to see how the elements in the advert are included in the letter.
- 2.6 Analysis of a job advertisement to understand the soft skills and personality traits the job requires.
- 2.7 Matching company demands and personal skills: group reflection how one can apply one's own experience to the aforementioned traits and skills.
- 2.8 Writing a cover letter to apply to the job, using the prior analysis of the job ad, personal experience and language from the covering letter.
- 2.8 A peer-2-peer review of covering letters to make students aware of how others deal with the writing process.

### Rationale behind the sequence and the activities

The final task requires learners to write a covering letter and comment on the production of two of their peers. To this end, the preceding tasks are either enabling tasks or tasks focused on aspects of language that the student will need in order to write the covering letter.

Activity 2.1 provides an introduction to common soft skills that employers look for when recruiting. The activity requires learners to pair similar ideas, using the 'Drag and Drop into Text' question available in the 'Test' feature of Moodle, under the headings of Communication, Critical Thinking, Leadership, Teamwork, Work Ethic and Positive Attitude.

Activity 2.2 provides input for the learner on the purpose and certain features of a covering letter. Rather than providing a simple text to read, understanding of the co-text and context is required in order to drag and drop language elements into the gap-fill text. This uses H5P 'Drag the Words' feature.

Activity 2.3 provides tips for writing a covering letter. The purpose of this activity is purely informative and uses the H5P Accordion feature to add a degree of interactivity.

Activity 2.4 provides learners with a real job advertisement taken from the UK and an example covering letter from an avatar, Nina Milan, who features throughout the module. Language input is provided via the multiple-choice gap-fills using the Embedded Answers feature in Test feature in Moodle.

Feedback on each answer is also provided once the learner has completed and sent the activity.

Activity 2.5 aims to raise the learners' awareness of the need to tailor a covering letter to requirement/aspects of the job advertisement by using the Essay feature in Test in Moodle to allow learners to answer open-ended questions on how applicant specific aspects from the job advertisement to the covering letter.

Activity 2.6 provides learners with a fresh job advertisement which will provide the input on which they will base their covering letter for the final task. At this stage, learners are asked to identify the soft skills and personality traits that the job advert refers to by using the H5P Mark the Words feature.

Activity 2.7 focuses on the specific role that applicants will be asked to fulfil in the job advertisement. It requires learners to consider the soft skills that they will need in order to carry out the task described in the role and use the Forum feature in Moodle to post on how their experience, university or otherwise, can be related to the job description.

Activity 2.8 requires learners to write and upload a covering letter based on the job description in activity 2.6 and using the insights reflected upon during the Forum discussion in activity 2.7. They must also comment on the covering letter of two of their peers using certain criteria to analyse the content similar to the questions that feature in Moodle in activity 2.5. For this, the Workshop feature has been used. Nina Milan's covering letter to Transbord Ltd (activity 2.4) is used as an example text for the workshop and example answers, using this input are used to guide the learners in their analysis of their peers' covering letters. These questions are similar to those asked in Activity 2.5 The Workshop has two sequential phases: the submission of the covering letter followed by the peer review stage. For more detail on how to use workshop, please see: [Using Workshop - MoodleDocs](#).

### What are soft skills?

Correct answers to drag and drop exercises in [] in the test below

Communication:

- Persuasion
- Reading body language
- Public speaking

Critical Thinking:

- Flexibility
- Willingness to learn
- Resourcefulness
- Reasoning Skills
- Thinking Laterally
- Finding Solutions to difficulties

Leadership

- Dispute resolution
- Motivation

Successful coaching

Teamwork

- Understanding
- Interpersonal Skills
- Persuasion

Work Ethic:

- Reliability
- Time Management
- Working well under pressure
- Staying on task

Positive Attitude

- Self-Assuredness
- Politeness
- Eagerness
- Warmth
- Respectability

### 1.2 What is a cover letter?

Correct answers in bold in the text below.

Drag and drop the missing words and phrases into the text.

A cover letter is a document sent with your CV when applying for jobs. It acts as a **personal introduction** and helps to sell your **application**. A cover letter is necessary as it gives you the chance to explain to an employer why you're the **best candidate** for the job. You do this by highlighting **relevant skills** and experience; therefore you should always write your cover letter with the position you're applying for in mind.

Not to be confused with personal statements for your CV, cover letters should **complement** your CV but not **duplicate** it. When it comes to the length of these documents, the **general consensus** among recruiters is the **shorter the better**. Typically, three to five short paragraphs; cover letters should not exceed **one A4 page**.

Applications should always include a cover letter unless the **job advert** instructs you differently.<sup>2</sup>

### 1.3 Tips for writing a cover letter

(See the exercises)<sup>3</sup>

### 1.4 Covering Letter Language Activity

Job Description (see the exercises)

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.prospects.ac.uk/careers-advice/cvs-and-cover-letters/cover-letters>

<sup>3</sup> [Create your Europass Cover Letter | Europass](#)

**Multiple Choice Fill in the Blanks Activity aims at testing formulaic language, discourse markers, specific vocabulary and tense use. Correct Answers in Bold**

Re: Application for post of Media Manager at Transbord Ltd.

Dear **Mr Smith**,

I **am writing** to apply for the post of Media Manager at your company as seen on The Guardian Jobs website. As **you will see** from my CV, I **am currently studying** for a Master's degree in Business Engineering, with a **major** in Marketing, at the Solvay Brussels School of Economics and Management, *Université Libre de Bruxelles*. Academically, I **would describe myself as** a highly mature individual, who is hard-working and conscientious. **With regard to** language skills, I am a native French speaker, **am fluent in** Dutch and have a B2 level of English. I have also recently begun online classes in Mandarin Chinese.

Throughout my time at university, I **have developed** excellent oral and written communication skills in the three working languages through my coursework and work experience in the professional services sector. For university courses, I have presented reports **on field research into** current and potential markets for the pharmaceutical and building sectors, using techniques learned in Applied Marketing. **Similarly**, for the Solvay Business Game, I am currently part of a team focusing on the pharmaceutical sector to present an integrated communications campaign for a fictitious company, using the **aforementioned information** obtained on the real and potential markets during last year's module.

For the last two years, I have worked as an academic assistant whose job it is to mentor BA students who have difficulties in marketing and finance courses, and I recently set up an online support group for those struggling with distance learning. **During** the summer, I worked for FinProp International as an assistant in their marketing department as a part of their summer **internship** programme. This gave me **an insight into** working in a multi-cultural environment in a foreign country. With this experience, I then co-launched an online jewellery start-up for which I **am responsible for** social media and general online marketing, with a focus on raising the profile of the business and attracting new clients. These valuable opportunities have given me a chance to meet and work with people from many different walks of life.

Transbord Ltd **would offer me** the opportunity to work in industrial marketing where I can make use of my knowledge in a commercial setting. From the company website, I see that you are heavily invested not only in your employees and your clients, but also in the wider community through your participation in the Giving Something Back scheme. The fact that Transbord Ltd is a company looking to grow and that I

would be personally involved in shaping the role are key factors in my being able to put the skills gained during my university experience at the service of the company.

I **look forward to** the opportunity to discuss my suitability for the post at interview.

If you **require** any further information, please do not hesitate to contact me.

**Yours sincerely,**

Nina Milan

**Covering Letter Language Activity: Feedback and Clarification.**

1) **Mr Smith** Madam/Sir  
Mr/Mrs

"Mr Smith" is the correct answer. It is always a good idea to find out who you are writing to when you are applying for a job, even if that means contacting the company to ask them for the name of the person who you will be writing to.

If you cannot find that person's name, "Dear Sir/Madam" would be an appropriate way to address the recipient, not "Dear Madam/Sir".

"Mr/Mrs" should always be followed by the person's family name, so it is incorrect.

2) write 'm  
writing **am writing**

"Am writing" is correct formula. Even though you are not writing at that very moment, we use the present continuous tense to introduce the reason for writing and to differentiate it from the factual present simple: "I write". N.B. Always avoid the use of contractions in formal writing; they are fine for Whatsapp messages and emails to friends, but do not look good in a covering letter.

3) you see **you will see**  
you can see

We assume that the recipient of your application will read your covering letter first and then move on to your CV and therefore use the future time with "will". This is more formal than the alternative 'you can see', which is also grammatically correct. We do not use the present tense in this case.

4) **am currently studying** am studying  
currently currently am studying

The correct position of the advert of time is after the auxiliary verb "to be" and before the main verb.

- 5) **major** speciality focus

When your degree programme (undergraduate/post-graduate) has a general title with the possibility to specialise in a specific field with the area of study, we refer to a “major in + marketing”

- 6) think that I am **would describe myself as** I believe to be

Again, “I would describe myself as + adjective(s)” is a piece of formulaic language used to highlight the most positive sides of your character. “I think that I am” is also perfectly grammatically correct but is not used in a covering letter. The third option, “I believe to be” is grammatically incorrect; “I believe myself to be” could be used as an alternative to “I would describe myself as + adjective(s)” in an interview situation.

- 7) **With regard to** Referring to Concerning

The correct answer is “with regards to”. “Concerning” can be used to mean the same, but is generally used within a sentence rather than as a stand-alone clause: *Complaints have been made with regard to your behaviour in the office.*<sup>4</sup> “Refer to” is generally used as the main verb in a sentence; it could be used to talk about something that has already been mentioned, which is not the case here.

- 8) **am fluent in** know fluently speak fluently

“to be fluent in + a language” is a set phrase. The verb “know” is not used with languages and for “speak fluently”, the position of the adverb is incorrect; it should be after the object of the verb: *I speak English and Dutch fluently.*

- 9) **I have developed** I developed I develop

The applicant is still at university (see the phrase, “Throughout my time at university...” and “I am currently studying...”). Therefore, we have to use the present perfect simple to refer to a state which started in a past time frame and is still true: the student started university X years ago and they are still a student.

- 10) **on research into** for research on in research to

The use of prepositions: *to report on/produce a report on* & *research into/on*. However, here it is better to

avoid the repetition of the preposition “on”. “Produce a report for + the person/organisation that asked for the report”.

- 11) **Similarly,** Therefore, However,

“Similarly”, here is used to link the ideas in the sentence that follows to that in the previous sentence. They both refer to activities (even though they are for slightly different purposes) that the applicant has participated in at university.

- 12) the above **aforementioned information** stated information

This is a set phrase meaning “the information that I comes before”. “The above” could be used in a less formal written document, such as an email to a colleague, or in speech.

- 13) **During** In For

“During” places the emphasis on what happens within a time period; we use “for” when the emphasis is on the time period itself. See:

*I went to my grandmothers for the summer. During that time, I did a lot of swimming, fishing and cycling.*

- 14) **internship** student work

Here, it is more about using the precise word rather than whether it is correct or not. We could understand that a *summer work programme* or a *summer student programme* means employing a student for the time stated, but we use *internship*.

- 15) **an insight into** a knowledge of an expertise in

Look back at the input activity entitled “Tips for writing a covering letter”. You will see this phrase used there. It is a formal way to “obtain a clear, deep understanding of a situation or problem”.<sup>5</sup> As above “gain (a) knowledge of” is not necessarily grammatically correct; it conveys the idea, but it is not used in this phrase for stylistic reasons. “an expertise in” conveys a different meaning. Ask yourself whether an internship makes you an expert in a certain area. I

<sup>4</sup> [CONCERNING | meaning in the Cambridge English Dictionary](#)

<sup>5</sup> [INSIGHT | meaning in the Cambridge English Dictionary](#)

would argue that it gives you experience but does not make you an expert.

16) **am responsible for** am charged with **am accountable for**

“to be responsible + noun/ verb+ing” is the correct answer; “to be charged with” has a similar meaning but gives the idea that you have been ordered to do it: *He was charged with taking care of the guests.* “to be accountable for” again means to be responsible for something, but the nuance is that you must explain it (often when something goes wrong): *He knew he would be accountable for any problems with the finances.*

17) **would offer me** offers **will offer me**

*Will* and *would offer me...* can both be used here. *Will* is more certain, as though you were going to be offered the post, while *would* is more tentative: *If you offered me the post, it would offer the ...*

18) **look forward to** am looking forward to **cannot wait for**

The formal version of ‘look forward to + noun/verb+ing’ is the present simple. We use the present continuous form when writing to friends or someone we know. Similarly, I cannot wait is informal and used more in speech.

19) **require** need **would like**

Similar to the Q18 above, all three of the possibilities are grammatically correct. It is a question of usage. *If you require..* or even the more formal *Should you require...* are more frequently used than *would like* or *need*, the second of which is a little too direct.

20) **Yours sincerely,** **Yours faithfully,**  
**Best regards,**

You began your covering, or at least we hope you did, with *Dear Mr Smith*. When we refer to the person who we are writing to at the beginning of a covering letter, we use *Yours sincerely* (UK), or *Sincerely yours* (US). If we do not mention the person’s name, and put *Dear Sir/Madam* or *To whom it may concern*, we use *Yours faithfully*. *Best regards* is more often used in email communication as a substitute for the two previous options and not in covering letters.

### 1.5 Analyzing an example covering letter for a job advertisement to see how the elements in the advert are included in the letter.

Referring to the job description and the covering letter, answer the following questions:

Look at the section entitled ‘What we are looking for?’ on the job description.

- Ideally a graduate from marketing degree background, business degree background with modules in marketing or equivalent experience
- A graduate comfortable working with social media platforms
- Good attention to detail and time management

What information in Nina Milan’s covering letter is relevant to these points?

*She stated that she is on the way to obtaining an MSc in Business with a major in Marketing. This covers the requirement of ‘Ideally a graduate from marketing degree background, business degree background with modules in marketing or equivalent experience’*

*She also demonstrates experience of ‘working with social media platforms’ through her work on the jewellery start-up.*

*Although she doesn’t mention ‘attention to detail’ or ‘time management’ explicitly, the fact that she studies, mentors BA students, is involved in a start-up, and is studying an extra-curricula language course suggests that she is highly organised.*

How does Nina demonstrate evidence of the following soft skills:

Being a team player; Communication; Leadership; Proactiveness; Report Writing; Research?

**HINT:** Go back and have a look at some of the soft skills and sub-skills in the [‘What are soft Skills?’](#) activity. They might help you make the link between Nina’s activities and the soft skills mentioned above.

*To a certain extent. See point above on ‘attention to detail’ or ‘time management’.*

*She shows that she has ‘report writing skills’ through her work in the MSc Marketing module in which had to write a report and present it verbally. The ability to work with others is also suggested by her involvement in the Solvay Business Games, her co-launching of a start-up and her experience in a multi-cultural environment during her internship.*

*She also states that she is hard-working and conscientious.*

**How does Nina demonstrate research into the company?**

*In the last paragraph, she references their sector (industry), and mentions their participation in the Giving Something Back scheme.*

**How does Nina suggest that the company is a good match for her?**

*She references the fact that the company is growing and the possibility to shape the role in her own image.*

## 1.6 Marking the words

**The Marked Words appear in bold.**

Read the following job description and mark the words or phrases that refer to soft skills and personality traits.

### **Graduate Team Assistant - Finance - West London - £25,000-£30,000**

Excellent opportunity for a **bright, enthusiastic** and **professional** graduate to join this successful international finance company in West London as a Team Assistant. Based in the Operations team of (currently) 3, this person will work to support the smooth running of their London office (100 staff) and gain exposure to business operations and administration. This is a well-established, boutique finance company whose clients are High Net Worth Individuals and you will work as part of a busy team so training will be provided.

#### **The role**

This is a varied Team Assistant role and duties will include:

- Diary management - liaising with clients, scheduling meetings and interviews
- Carrying out administrative tasks - uploading candidate / interview details, maintaining company databases
- Office management including ordering supplies and liaising with suppliers for company events Finance tasks - collating expenses, preparing and logging invoices
- General office administrative to support Directors, Partners and colleagues
- Providing ad hoc front of house duties as required

#### **The candidate**

This is a great opportunity for a graduate to gain exposure to the logistics and business functions of a fast-paced, successful working environment. Must have excellent **communication skills, good attention to detail, be organised** and have a **proactive approach**.

Previous experience within an administrative capacity is beneficial.

Office-based role with a degree of flexibility for homeworking (3:2 days) in time. A young, social yet professional team environment.

Salary: £25,000-£30,000 depending on experience, plus great benefits including bonus and annual company ski trip! **1.7**

## **Matching Company demands and Personal Skills**

In our experience, it is often the case that students are unaware of how activities they perform at university, in student jobs, and in other activities can endow them with skills transferable to the workplace, often seeing them as purely academic, or unrelated, exercises. This exercise asks learners to reflect on their own experiences, share them and comment on those of others, thus aiming to enrich the reflective process and help those who are less able to find links of their own to find them in their collective experience. Prompts and global feedback from the teacher may help in this process of reflexion.

### **1.8 Applying for the Post of Graduate Team Assistant.**

As stated above, this is the final task in this didactic sequence. The use of the workshop enabled learners to read each other's covering letters, see how their peers have gone about the task of applying for the job and engage in a guided exchange of views on each other's work. This can be simplified but substituting the Workshop feature in Moodle for the Assessment feature.

#### **Teacher Notes for INTERACTIVE PODCAST:**

- 1) Go to the relevant UV page and click on the H5P exercise entitled "Graduate job interview podcast".
- 2) Ask students to play podcast. It will then pause automatically at the end of every interviewee answer. After each answer students will then be prompted to answer 3 questions themselves. Once completed, they will need to follow the link at the bottom of the page to take them back to the podcast.  
  
This process needs to be repeated for each of the 8 answers that are given by the interview candidate.
- 3) Once the student answers have been collected from Moodle, the teacher can discuss these responses both individually and/or as a group.
- 4) As a final exercise the teacher could divide the class into pairs and ask them to role play the interview, thereby putting into practice what the students have just learnt.

## ANSWER KEY FOR THE INTERACTIVE PODCAST

- 1) **Why are you applying for this position? (ie. What are your motivations?)**

I enjoy working with social media and communication, and I would really like to start my first graduate job in an ambitious, growing company like Transpod.

*(OK but add more specific info about the company and WHY you like it.)*

Also, my previous social media experience includes managing the Facebook page for an online jewellery start-up since last summer with a focus on raising the profile of the business and attracting new clients.

*(Careful! This is not directly answering the question! If including this info, state HOW that experience makes you well qualified for this PARTICULAR role at Transpod.)*

- 2) **What qualities would you bring to this position? (ie. Why should you get this job? Explain skills with examples!)**

I am hard working and a good team player. I'm good at working under pressure and I am able to meet deadlines due to my organisation skills. For example, despite a heavy workload this year at University and my commitment to the jewellery start up I was able to meet all my assessed work deadlines.

*(Ok, but enlarge on this! Show HOW that skill could benefit the company in the advertised role.)*

I'm also enthusiastic about helping your company grow and be successful in the long term and believe that I have the skills to do so.

*(OK but be more specific, demonstrate HOW your skills could help them grow from a business point of view and what else interests you about the business. Also, a big opportunity was missed as you did not explain how being multilingual means you have added value in terms of strong communication skills!)*

- 3) **What are your weaknesses? (Careful! Don't be too honest and don't use an exaggerated strength as a weakness ie. 'I'm a perfectionist')**

I have a tendency to be impatient at times and I get very frustrated when other people in a team do not pull their weight.

*(Good start: you show that you care and are a potential leader by example)*

I do not really enjoy doing administrative tasks which can be time consuming and boring. Like everyone I prefer to do the things that I enjoy!

*(Fair comment and your honesty is appreciated here. You could enlarge by identifying future training needs ie. knowledge gaps relating to the transport sector)*

- 4) **Ok so if you were leading a team in this company how would you deal with boring administrative tasks?**

I would delegate such tasks to an assistant thereby freeing up more time for me to be more productive.

*(Reasonable answer: shows you can prioritise and not micromanage BUT expand on this as the answer is too short!)*

- 5) **What about reports? In this role you will be required to produce reports which measure the effectiveness of marketing campaigns.**

I actually enjoy doing in-depth analysis and explanations so I would enjoy producing such reports. I also think it is important to regularly measure the effectiveness of such campaigns in order to not waste time and resources.

At University, I have previously presented reports on field research into current and potential markets for the pharmaceutical and building sectors, using techniques learned in applied marketing. Similarly, for the Solvay Business Game, I am currently part of a team focusing on the pharmaceutical sector to present an integrated communications campaign for a fictitious company.

*(Excellent answer! You recognize the importance of reports and give detailed examples of relevant experience)*

- 6) **Give some recent examples of how you made a valuable contribution to a team or group.**

Yes sure. Whilst working as an intern for FinProp International last summer I volunteered to lead a working group for a new marketing project which involved researching current and potential new clients.

I started by asking the group members what their strengths and weaknesses were to work out what tasks should be assigned to each member.

I also suggested and implemented regular meeting times and deadlines which enabled us to work more efficiently and productively.  
*(Good answer. Specific and recent workplace example given, and you led the group, both of which are exactly what the interviewers want to hear. However, expand on what exactly you ACHIEVED as a group!)*

7) **Give an example of how you helped deal with a conflict in a team or group.**

Yes. One conflict that we had in this group was to do with the amount of time the group members wanted to dedicate to the project. Due to busy timetables and different priorities tensions arose which led to conflict. So as leader I tried to stress the importance of group work experience for our own skill development and distributed the workload as evenly as possible. This did help to calm tensions but I had to keep communicating with the group

members to stop further conflict and it was pretty hard work to keep everyone happy!  
*(Good answer: another specific answer and you were honest – it is indeed difficult to keep everyone happy and conflict needs to be constantly managed)*

8) **Where do you see yourself 5 years from now?** *(A difficult question! Asked to see how ambitious you are/ what role you really want to do in the future)*

It's hard to be precise but I would like to take on more responsibility and lead a team in the future. I really enjoyed my internship this summer and leading a team would definitely be a challenge that would keep me motivated.

*(Ok but EXPAND much more on this! Mention your online jewellery start-up for example. Mention your enthusiasm for languages and how this could help the company potentially expand internationally.)*

## CROSS-CULTURAL COMMUNICATION

In international business environment people from different countries work side by side. There are many companies where employees represent different cultures, therefore misunderstandings can quickly arise, and these misunderstandings can seriously affect the performance of the company.

Many scientists agree that culture is a concept that refers to the values, beliefs, customs and other characteristics shared by an identifiable group of people or society. Intercultural communication occurs whenever a minimum of two persons from different cultures come together and exchange verbal and nonverbal symbols. It very important to be aware of culture differences and develop one's cross-cultural competence by enriching the knowledge with different theories of cross-cultural communication and information about countries.

Some of culture differences include the attitude towards time, space and the context of communication. Thus there are low context cultures and high context cultures which means that people of some countries need less background information to understand the message, while others need more background information and more answers to understand what was said.

The dimensions of time and place refer to the way different cultures perceive the punctuality and understand the distance between people. For some arriving at time would not be important while others will become angry if punctuality is not observed. As regards a personal space, some people are very careful of keeping distance during face-to-face conversations, but for some nations the personal space is almost non-existent.

Culture is very similar to an iceberg. It has some aspects that are visible and many others that can only be suspected, guessed, or learned as you grow to understand cultures. Like an iceberg, the visible part of culture is only a small part of a much larger whole. For example, visible cultural practices include the language, clothes, food choices, lifestyles, art. As regards the invisible part of an iceberg, it includes attitudes, values, beliefs and habits, for instance, attitude to the personal space, eye contact, facial expressions and hand gestures, the concept of what is fair and so on.

One of the aspect of cross-cultural communication refers to observance of social norms or social etiquette in another country, in other words, the established behavior patterns in certain social situations. Social etiquette includes the following aspects: ways of greeting people, punctuality, table manners, gift giving, dress code, rules of polite behavior, etc.

Thus, it is good if a person in the international environment is ready to represent his/her own culture and traditions, and at the same time respects other cultures and learns about their traditions, history and social etiquette.

### References

Hall E.T., Hall M.R. (1983) Understanding Culture Differences. Intercultural Press

## ONBOARDING TO AN INTERNATIONAL COMPANY

### PART ONE - VIDEO

#### CROSS-CULTURAL MISUNDERSTANDINGS – INTRODUCTION

*When receiving visitors or clients from other countries, visiting and meeting cooperation partners, working on an international team, presenting, giving feedback, negotiating or simply socialising, there is a need for effective cross-cultural communication. It means that:*

- 1. You should be able to understand your own culture and the target culture you are dealing with;*
- 2. You should be flexible in the way you communicate with people from other cultures.*
- 3. You should adapt your style of communication to fit the situation.*

*We communicate when we socialise, perform purposeful activities, give gifts and much more. Different cultures can have very different traditions and norms when it comes to issues such as:*

- Body language — could your posture, gestures, and facial expressions be interpreted in a way that you don't expect?*
- Clothing — what is considered acceptable to wear at the workplace?*
- Decision making — how are decisions traditionally made in the culture, and who is involved in the process?*
- Feedback and criticism — are these provided in a direct way, or are they implied via contextual clues?*
- Gift giving — which kinds of gifts, if any, are acceptable or expected in various situations?*
- Greeting one another — what are the polite and expected ways of greeting another person?*
- Interacting with people of a higher status — are there special ways to honour elders or more highly ranked staff?*
- Physical contact — how much is acceptable, and in which circumstances?*
- Punctuality and the perception of time — should time arrangements be strictly observed, or are they more of a suggestion?*
- Social etiquette — how you should behave at the table, whether to go out of your way to hold the door open for others, how to make eye contact, etc.*
- The role of humour — which kinds of jokes, if any, are acceptable when?*
- The role of small talk — when is it expected, and which topics are considered polite? In the following video, you will see nine different situations in which misunderstandings arise between people at a workplace, all because of cultural differences between their styles of communication.*

Link: [WATCH THE VIDEO](#)



ONBOARDING — THE PROCESS OF BRINGING A NEW EMPLOYEE INTO A COMPANY, CAN BE A TRICKY PROCESS, NO MATTER WHAT, BUT ESPECIALLY IN A MULTINATIONAL COMPANY IN A CROSS-CULTURAL CONTEXT. IN THIS UNIT WE'LL FIND OUT EXACTLY HOW TO AVOID MISUNDERSTANDINGS AND HOW TO BECOME MORE UNDERSTANDING OF OUR FRIENDS AND EMPLOYEES FROM OTHER CULTURES.

**Now, for each of the nine situations, try to identify exactly what went wrong and why the misunderstanding occurred.**

Scene 1: What misunderstanding occurred between the manager and her employee?

- A. The employee put a drink on her manager's desk without being invited to.
- B. The employee was not on time for the meeting.
- C. The employee didn't realise that everyone at the company is expected to exercise regularly.
- D. The employee was not wearing clothing considered acceptable for the workplace.

Scene 2: What misunderstanding took place between the host and the guest?

- A. The host and the guest used different forms of greeting.
- B. The host and the guest couldn't agree on a time to meet.
- C. The host and the guest did not speak the same language.
- D. The guest was expecting to meet someone who looked completely different.

Scene 3: Why is the employee at the computer surprised?

- A. The other employee is late for the meeting.
- B. The other employee is not making proper eye contact.
- C. The other employee has entered the room and sat down without being invited to do so.
- D. The other employee used hand gestures that were considered offensive.

Scene 4: Why did the manager seem unhappy with the employee?

- A. The employee came to work sick.
- B. The employee got herself coffee but did not bring any for her boss.
- C. The employee did not arrive punctually.
- D. The employee did not greet her boss in a respectful manner.

Scene 5: What caused the somewhat awkward situation?

- A. The presenter did not speak the same language as the audience.
- B. The presenter's use of humour was not considered to be tasteful.
- C. The presenter's tone and body language were considered inappropriate for the situation.
- D. The presenter's apology was not considered to be sincere.

Scene 6: Why was the manager surprised by the employee's response to the feedback?

- A. The employee got out of her chair without being specifically invited to do so.
- B. The employee used overly informal language.
- C. The employee seemed to interpret it as positive feedback
- D. The employee did not ask any follow-up questions regarding the feedback.

Scene 7: What led to the awkward moment at the end of the business deal?

- A. The visiting partners are worried about the environmental impact of flying a private jet.
- B. The visiting partners do not enjoy warm weather locations like the Bahamas.
- C. The visiting partners are worried that accepting the offer could be interpreted as taking a bribe.
- D. The visiting partners do not enjoy to travel by plane — only by rail.

Scene 8: Why did the employee feel uncomfortable in this situation?

- A. They realised that they were inappropriately dressed for the situation.
- B. The question about their family was inappropriate.
- C. They were not properly informed about the acquisition mentioned by the manager.
- D. They thought that the manager's style of communication was overly formal for the situation.

Scene 9: Why was the woman offended in this situation?

- A. The man did not properly bow to her as a sign of respect.
- B. She was shocked that the man didn't refer to her as "madam" or "maam".
- C. She thought it was rude for the man to look her in the eye.
- D. The woman interpreted the man holding the door for her as disrespectful and sexist.

### AVOIDING CROSS-CULTURAL CONFLICT

Talk with a partner or in a small group about each scene (9 scenes are included in the video). Try to answer the following questions for each situation:

- What have you noticed and heard in the scene?
- What is your opinion of each situation?
- What would people from your country do in these situations?
- Do you consider what you saw good manners, bad manners, or not important / not necessary? Why?

Then, after your discussion, write individual recommendations about how each of the nine awkward situations could be avoided in your future workplace.

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## PART TWO - READING

### CULTURAL KNOW-HOW:

#### Warm-up activity

Discuss in small groups:

- What other cultures and nationalities do you work/study with?
- What are the cultural differences in the habits and behaviour of the people you communicate, work or do business with?
- Have you ever had any difficulties during a meeting or trip abroad? How could you have been better prepared?

#### Task 1

Match the key words (1-10) to the definitions (A-J) below. Find and underline them in the article. Then read the article and note how they are used in context.

- |                  |  |
|------------------|--|
| 1. globalization | A. Something that blocks you so that going forward is prevented or made more difficult.          |
| 2. custom        | B. Behaviour in which one person copies another one in social interaction.                       |
| 3. observing     | C. Advice or information aimed at resolving a problem given by someone in authority.             |
| 4. stereotype    | D. Something that you accept as true without question or proof.                                  |
| 5. cliché        | E. A person that has the same purpose as another one in a different place or organization.       |
| 6. assumption    | F. A set idea that people have about what someone is like.                                       |
| 7. mirroring     | G. Something that you do for a long time.  |
| 8. guidance      | H. Watching carefully the way something happens in order to learn more about it.                 |
| 9. obstacle      | I. The process by which the world is becoming increasingly interconnected.                       |
| 10. counterpart  | J. A saying or remark that is very often made and is therefore not original and not interesting. |

## Task 2

Read the given text "Cultural Know-how". Fill in the gaps of the article with the words below, there are two extra words:

promote / characteristics / behaviour / interacting / benefit /  
overcoming / consideration / vital / relevant / noticing / influence / stereotype

### COMMUNICATING EFFECTIVELY IN BUSINESS: TIPS FOR INTERCULTURAL SUCCESS

Due to the 1) ..... of globalization, countries have become increasingly interdependent and interconnected. Communication is no longer limited to a local community, international business demands travelling abroad, communicating with foreign partners and customers in efforts to 2) ..... from the opportunities of culturally diverse markets. Thus, intercultural communication is now more 3) ..... than it ever was.

However, the effective communication among nations is not easy to achieve, more than just speaking English or any other common language fluently with partners is needed.

Effective intercultural communication includes 4) ..... cultural barriers and building constructive relationships with foreign partners for mutual benefit. This article presents some tips that should be taken into 5) ..... in order to succeed in intercultural communication in business context.

#### TIP # 1 DOING PRE-COMMUNICAION RESEARCH

The lack of knowledge about another culture is usually the main problem in business communication across nationalities. People in different countries have various ways to interpret events, their peculiar habits, values, customs, traditions and ways of relating to one another. When 6) ..... with counterparts of other cultures in a business context, it is important to be well-prepared and do some research about cultural differences in communication to avoid misunderstandings. A high-quality guidebook is often a good start to gain 7) ..... knowledge. Also, a great source of information can be local people who live in the target culture. Furthermore, it can be useful to ask colleagues with professional experience in working with foreign business partners for guidance.

#### TIP# 2 NOTICING AND MIRRORING BEHAVIOUR

In addition to doing pre-communication research, further promotion of positive intercultural business communication can be achieved by simply paying attention to how foreign colleagues conduct themselves in various situations and then following their lead. Listening to how people are speaking, 8) ..... how they dress and how they behave during meetings and presentations, watching their body language and gestures, taking note of levels of formality can help a lot. Every culture has its own communication nuances, observing these actions and then mirroring them, is the fastest and the most effective way to 9) ..... intercultural communication.

#### TIP # 3 AVOIDING STEREOTYPES

Finally, stereotypes should be avoided in pursue of positive intercultural communication. Putting people in categories and making assumptions about them based on such 10) ..... as race, religion, nationality, etc. is the most significant obstacle to effective cross-cultural communication. Relying on oversimplified clichés and generalizations about other cultures can help to understand common tendencies, however, it is a misleading approach, if stereotypes are inaccurate, it is impossible to make correct attributions about strangers' behaviour. Stereotypes should be questioned and doubted, otherwise the point where foreign business colleagues are known as individuals will never be reached.

People are unique, a person's behaviour can never be predicted based on his or her cultural background.

### Task 3

Write a summary of no more than ten words for each of the three tips in the article.

1. ....
2. ....
3. ....

### Task 4

What information would you give to business people from another country and culture in order to ease their first business trip to your country, region or company? Write a paragraph giving your own advice.

.....  
.....

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## PART THREE - LISTENING

Listen to the podcast:



**Task 1.** Match the terms (1-8) to the definitions (A-H) below:

1) culture, 2) cross-cultural communication, 3) international business, 4) cultural agility, 5) cross-cultural competence, 6) self-awareness, 7) social etiquette, 8) cultural iceberg

- A. represents employees' ability to use common cultural agility skills.
- B. an analogy with a nature object which have two parts – the smallest represents clothing, appearance, speech, grooming, greeting rituals, music, arts, or dances, but the biggest represents the ideas, preferences and priorities that comprise individual attitudes and values as well as accepted behaviour norms.
- C. a field of study that looks at how people from differing cultural backgrounds communicate, in similar and different ways among themselves.
- D. the arts, beliefs, customs, institutions, and other products of human work considered as a unit, especially with regard to a particular time or social group.
- E. refers to the ability of an organization and its members to understand, incorporate, and successfully work within and between multiple different cultural contexts and locations.
- F. norms a person follows in social situations when interacting with family, friends, co-workers or society in general.
- G. ability to tune in to your feelings, thoughts, to recognize how other people see you, as well as to perceive your strengths and challenges.
- H. refers to the trade of goods, services, technology, capital and/or knowledge across national borders and at a global or transnational scale.

**Task 2.** Fill in the gaps with the appropriate term:

punctuality, beliefs, small talk, attitude, addressing people, values, habits, give gifts

1. He has a very positive ..... about this international project we are dealing with.
2. The speech was directed towards common human ..... such as honesty, fairness, loyalty, and solidarity.
3. This group refuses to compete on Sundays due to their religious .....
4. Social activities, like seeing friends, and cultural ....., such as going to concerts, also differ between women and men.
5. .... has never been his strong point, he is always late for our meetings.
6. We often ..... to re-confirm or establish our connection with others, which means that they're a reflection of both the giver and the receiver.
7. .... is a light informal type of discourse that does not cover any functional topics of a conversation.
8. You can practice formal ways of ..... at an internship placement while taking English courses.

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## TEACHER NOTES:

### Video

#### Video Task 1 : Cross-Cultural Misunderstandings

##### Introduction

When receiving visitors or clients from other countries, visiting and meeting cooperation partners, working on an international team, presenting, giving feedback, negotiating or simply socialising, there is a need for effective cross-cultural communication. It means that:

1. You should be able to understand your own culture and the target culture you are dealing with;
2. You should be flexible in the way you communicate with people from other cultures.
3. You should adapt your style of communication to fit the situation.

We communicate when we socialise, perform purposeful activities, give gifts and much more. Different cultures can have very different traditions and norms when it comes to issues such as:

- Body language — could your posture, gestures, and facial expressions be interpreted in a way that you don't expect?
- Clothing — what is considered acceptable to wear at the workplace?
- Decision making — how are decisions traditionally made in the culture, and who is involved in the process?
- Feedback and criticism — are these provided in a direct way, or are they implied via contextual clues?
- Gift giving — which kinds of gifts, if any, are acceptable or expected in various situations?
- Greeting one another — what are the polite and expected ways of greeting another person?
- Interacting with people of a higher status — are there special ways to honour elders or more highly ranked staff?
- Physical contact — how much is acceptable, and in which circumstances?
- Punctuality and the perception of time — should time arrangements be strictly observed, or are they more of a suggestion?
- Social etiquette — how you should behave at the table, whether to go out of your way to hold the door open for others, how to make eye contact, etc.
- The role of humour — which kinds of jokes, if any, are acceptable when?

- The role of small talk — when is it expected, and which topics are considered polite?

In the following video, you will see nine different situations in which misunderstandings arise between people at a workplace, all because of cultural differences between their styles of communication.

Link:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J005FR474E0>

Now, for each of the nine situations, try to identify exactly what went wrong and why the misunderstanding occurred.

**Scene 1:** What misunderstanding occurred between the manager and her employee?

- A. The employee put a drink on her manager's desk without being invited to.
- B. The employee was not on time for the meeting.
- C. The employee didn't realise that everyone at the company is expected to exercise regularly.
- D. **The employee was not wearing clothing considered acceptable for the workplace.**

Explanation: Although in much of Europe and North America it has become more and more acceptable to come to work in whatever clothes are comfortable to wear, in business environments throughout most of the world people mostly wear conservative or formal outfits. Men should wear suits, shirts and ties, while women wear suits or dresses, relatively high-necked blouses and low heels. Casual dress and loud colours are not appropriate; colours should be as neutral as possible. This of course depends on business culture of the corporation.

**Scene 2:** What misunderstanding took place between the host and the guest?

- A. **The host and the guest used different forms of greeting.**
- B. The host and the guest couldn't agree on a time to meet.
- C. The host and the guest did not speak the same language.
- D. The guest was expecting to meet someone who looked completely different.

Explanation: There are many ways of greeting people – handshake, bow, embrace, "namaste", kiss, backslap, "high five", etc. It depends on your nationality, business culture, relative ages, gender and how well you know the person. It is sometimes safest to wait for your counterpart to initiate the greeting. The handshake – short and firm is the standard greeting in Western business environments.

**Scene 3:** Why is the employee at the computer surprised?

- A. The other employee is late for the meeting.
- B. The other employee is not making proper eye contact.
- C. The other employee has entered the room and sat down without being invited to do so.**
- D. The other employee used hand gestures that were considered offensive.

Explanation: Although in many places there is an increasingly relaxed attitude about entering and taking a seat, it is always better to be safe than accidentally rude. Knocking before you enter allows others to maintain control over their territory at the workplace. When a door is closed, it is generally polite to knock at the door and walk in after getting a reply. It is also polite to wait for an invitation to sit down. In doing so, people demonstrate respect to their colleague and the work they do.

**Scene 4:** Why did the manager seem unhappy with the employee?

- A. The employee came to work sick.
- B. The employee got herself coffee but did not bring any for her boss.
- C. The employee did not arrive punctually.**
- D. The employee did not greet her boss in a respectful manner.

Explanation: Cultures perceive time differently. Western cultures tend to [view time as linear](#), with a definitive beginning and end. You might have heard the saying "time is money" — time is viewed as limited in supply, so people structure their lives, especially business operations, around "milestones" and deadlines. Failure to meet them could be interpreted as having a poor work ethic or being incompetent, so punctuality is respected — business meetings and appointments should start and end on time. Other cultures perceive time as cyclical and endless. In this case, more importance is placed on doing things *right* and maintaining harmony, rather than worrying about getting things done "on time". In these cultures, punctuality is not traditionally considered a virtue.

**Scene 5:** What caused the somewhat [awkward](#) situation?

- A. The presenter did not speak the same language as the audience.
- B. The presenter's use of humour was not considered to be tasteful.**
- C. The presenter's tone and body language were considered inappropriate for the situation.

- D. The presenter's apology was not considered to be sincere.

Explanation: Humour can be a tricky thing, especially since what might be considered acceptable to joke about, let alone funny, can widely differ. Ironic humour is not always appreciated; however in some situations humour goes down well. Humour, to large extent, depends on the parties involved in extended communication (often interactive) dealing with some particular topic. It is important to note that every culture enjoys some form of humour, but humour has difficulty crossing cultural boundaries because what is humorous in one country is often not humorous in another. Be attentive with humour, as challenges should be understood when presenting to different audiences. Make your presentation focused, structured and logical to help an international audience understand quickly what you want to say. In general, a relatively formal and quite neutral communication style can be used.

**Scene 6:** Why was the manager surprised by the employee's response to the feedback?

- A. The employee got out of her chair without being specifically invited to do so.
- B. The employee used overly informal language.
- C. The employee seemed to interpret it as positive feedback**
- D. The employee did not ask any follow-up questions regarding the feedback.

Explanation: In cultures with more direct, low context forms of feedback, "it's fine" would be understood to mean that everything was done well enough and adequately. In other cultures, "it's fine" is a polite way of saying "it could have been much better."

**Scene 7:** What led to the [awkward](#) moment at the end of the business deal?

- A. The visiting partners are worried about the environmental impact of flying a private jet.
- B. The visiting partners do not enjoy warm weather locations like the Bahamas.
- C. The visiting partners are worried that accepting the offer could be interpreted as taking a bribe.**
- D. The visiting partners do not enjoy to travel by plane — only by rail.

Explanation: In cross-cultural communication, gifts are used to build and maintain relationships, and to show respect and appreciation. An appropriate business gift is a symbol of the relationship. Avoid overly expensive gifts. Business corporations set limits on the value of what employees may accept in order to avoid the appearance of bribery. Different cultures have different customs regarding how the gift

should be offered - using only your right hand or using both hands. Others have strong traditions related to the appropriate way to accept a gift.

**Scene 8:** Why did the employee feel uncomfortable in this situation?

- A. They realised that they were inappropriately dressed for the situation.
- B. The question about their family was inappropriate.**
- C. They were not properly informed about the acquisition mentioned by the manager.
- D. They thought that the manager's style of communication was overly formal for the situation.

Explanation: In this situation, the employee felt that the small talk question about their family was too personal and inappropriate for this environment. Small talk is a gateway to the conversation. In cross-cultural communication it is:

- an ice breaking strategy;
- an essential stage of a casual conversation;
- a strategic component for cooperation.

Adapt your small talk style to the other person to make them feel comfortable. Never talk about something that the other person might consider to be too personal.

**Scene 9:** Why was the woman offended in this situation?

- A. The man did not properly bow to her as a sign of respect.
- B. She was shocked that the man didn't refer to her as "madam" or "maam".
- C. She thought it was rude for the man to look her in the eye.
- D. The woman interpreted the man holding the door for her as disrespectful and sexist.**

Explanation: According to the social etiquette of many cultures, waiting for the woman to go through the door first is the customary code of polite behaviour. However, the rules of etiquette are changing; in some cultures and business corporations, women want to show that they are independent and confident, and do not feel the need for such a gesture.

### Conclusion

There is no one-size-fits-all approach to addressing cross-cultural differences. When you work across multiple cultures, you must take on the role of a chameleon, changing colours depending on the environment. This is easier said than done, but achieving true intercultural [competence](#) comes not only from knowledge but also from continuous observation and adaptive practice.

The metaphor of peaches and coconuts is used to characterise the art of managing cross-cultural communication. People from coconut culture offer a thin layer of their private space; they are more reserved, and not much personal information is shared in the beginning. It is difficult to know a coconut fast. People from peach culture are more sociable. They like speaking with people they do not know. They like to share their personal space with others, and they are [enthusiastic](#) towards others. The metaphor of coconuts and peaches highlights important cultural differences. Coconuts could see peaches as too friendly and superficial as they ask personal questions. Peaches could see coconuts as cold and difficult to get to know, because they are reserved and do not engage much in socialising.

### **Video Task 2: Avoiding Cross-Cultural Conflict**

Talk with a partner or in a small group about each scene (9 scenes are included in the video). Try to answer the following questions for each situation:

- What have you noticed and heard in the scene?
- What is your opinion of each situation?
- What would people from your country do in these situations?
- Do you consider what you saw good manners, bad manners, or not important / not necessary? Why?

Then, after your discussion, **please write individual recommendations about how each of the nine awkward situations could be avoided in your future workplace.**

### **READING: CULTURAL KNOW-HOW:**

#### **Warm-up activity**

Student's own answers

#### **KEY to Task 1**

1. I
2. G
3. H
4. F
5. J
6. D
7. B
8. C
9. A
10. E

#### **KEY to Task 2**

1. influence
2. benefit
3. vital
4. overcoming
5. consideration
6. interacting
7. relevant
8. noticing
9. promote
10. characteristics

**Extra words:** behaviour, stereotype

## KEYS to Task 3 and 4

Students' answer

### 1.1 Listening: Cross-Cultural Communication

#### Tapescript of the listening recording

Welcome back to another episode of the "Business Brief". As the world gets smaller thanks to the modern communication technology and transportation, cross-cultural communication is becoming an everyday part of life for many workers in increasingly international business environments. This is a particular challenge for employers during the on-boarding process of integrating newly hired employees from different cultures all over the world into the company. Since characteristics often differ among various cultures, misunderstandings can quickly arise. These misunderstandings can seriously affect the company's performance.

But what exactly do we mean by "culture"? Well, in a lot of ways, culture is very similar to an iceberg. On the surface there is a small visible part: cultural practices such as language, clothes, food choices, lifestyles and art. Under the surface there is a larger invisible part that includes values, beliefs and habits, such as attitude towards the personal space, the concept of fairness, eye contact, facial expressions, hand gestures and much more.

In the world of business, cultural agility is the ability of an organization and its members to understand, incorporate and successfully work within and between multiple cultural contexts and locations. In practice, this means creating an atmosphere of understanding and respect for different cultures of employees. This helps the business thrive and make successful decisions in cross-cultural settings. For an employer to have a cross-cultural competence, they need some common cultural agility skills:

- being aware of their own strengths, weaknesses, behaviours, attitudes and how they affect themselves and those around them,
- representing their own culture and traditions, while simultaneously respecting other cultures and
- wanting to learn about traditions, history, social etiquette of other cultures.

For today's episode we talk with three people from different corners of the world about how social norms and etiquette can differ from culture to culture.

Masaki from Japan, Abraham from Israel and Gita from Latvia.

**Let's start with punctuality.** Being somewhere precisely on time.

According to Masaki this is a necessity in Japan:

"I would say Japanese people are very strict with the time. Regarding conferences, we have to go on time,

sometimes if we are even a few minutes late, a lot of people get angry."

Gita agreed that in Latvia it was rude to be late so much so that people often go of their way to make sure that doesn't happen to them:

"A lot of people actually try to be even like fifteen minutes or ten minutes earlier to set up their working space, to set up the meeting, to be sure that they are not being late."

Well Abraham agreed that punctuality was very important at the workplace, he said that elsewhere in Israeli culture things were a bit different:

"Social events such as dinners or weddings are a bit different because one doesn't want to come first when the place is empty nor too late, so usually to avoid this problem there is a gathering time where small appetizers and drinks are served before the beginning of events."

The next topic we asked about was the small talk. The small little polite conversations people have about less important topics.

Abraham said that in Israel there one simple question that you can pretty much always ask:

"Israel is a very small country so it turns out we always know someone like a friend of a friend, so we usually ask: "Did you study with this person? Did you go to army with that person?" And suddenly we discover a lot of very interesting and surprising connections through our friends."

In Japan small talk conversations are a bit different:

"Firstly, we talk about casual weather stuff or something and we say: "How are you doing?" And once we start to have our conversation on a business situation, it is very rare to put some small conversation, we just keep talking about business conversation till the end."

But according to Gita in Latvia small talk isn't even important at the beginning:

"In business, I don't know, I think mostly we tend to kind of already go to the matter at hand: "This is why we are here. This is what we are discussing." We just jump in right away."

The next topic was about how to greet somebody.

Gita said that in Latvia there is one thing you can always do regards if it's a formal or informal situation:

"I think handshakes are sort of like a universal thing across different social groups. In each social group they might mean a teeny, tiny bit something different, but all in all I think a handshake is sort of universal."

In Japan though handshaking hands doesn't seem nearly as universal:

"Japanese people actually don't have a lot of physical communication. We bow, we don't shake hands."

Abraham pointed out that in Israel the way you're address somebody when greeting them is important:

"If it's a formal meeting with an important person we'll be using sir or miss, and we will try to do it as much polite as possible. If it's less formal meetings we could address the person in his name or mister."

And finally, we talked about the topic of gift giving. Something that can be difficult even within your own culture, but can become very tricky across cultures.

Although all three agreed that giving gifts as a part of business deal was not acceptable, there were differences in terms of what gifts to buy among the people who are closer to each other.

Gita has an advice on what not to get in Latvia:

"Some people believe that giving gifts with pointy ends is not OK because such gifts mean that somewhere down the line the friendship or the relationship would be on the rocks you know."

Although flowers are one of the most popular gifts given in Latvia that's not the case in Japan:

"We don't have a lot of flower shops or like places we can buy flowers, but we usually buy some ...bath salt..."

Abraham also mentioned a few of the most common gifts to give at a birthday at Israel:

"A gift for a birthday could be a gift card for some activity or vacation, plants, wine, chocolates or gadgets, usually not a direct money."

And that does it for today's episode on cross-cultural communication. Thanks for listening, and we'll see you next time.

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**KEY to Task 1**

1. D
2. C
3. H
4. E
5. A
6. G
7. F
8. B

**KEY to Task 2**

1. attitude
2. values
3. beliefs
4. habits
5. punctuality
6. gifts
7. small talk
8. addressing people

**DESIGN THINKING – WHAT IS IN IT FOR YOU, TEACHER?**

*Agnieszka Chęć PhD, WSB University in Toruń*

Design Thinking refers to a process leading to creating a new product, service, or solution to a wicked problem. At each stage of the process, we can choose from various tools to achieve the outcomes required for a given stage. Those tools and technics are borrowed from many different fields, e.g., market research, design, project management, and anthropology; they can be helpful in diverse applications, not limited to the Design Thinking process.

Usage of those tools could be an element of English classes. The DT tools have two key characteristics in common: they require interactions with other human beings based on advanced communication skills and often take the form of visualizations. Design Thinking is based on a human-centered approach; therefore, using the DT tools is always an opportunity for practicing communication and comprehension and honest social sensitivity. The visual aspects of the tools add a playful element and encourage active engagement and involvement of different senses. As a result, it might be considered attractive and interesting to some groups of students, providing a pleasant learning experience.

The DT process starts with the first stage, often named “empathy,” “customer discovery,” or “what is?” At this stage, the team tries to find out about customers’ real needs, both functional and emotional. The goal is to put oneself in the customer’s shoes to understand them and see the world from their perspective. The best way to get to know people is through direct interactions: interviews and observations in their natural environment. An essential tool used for “customer discovery” is “ethnographic interview,” also often called a “semi-structured interview.” Team members put themselves in the role of researchers, talk to persons who may be future customers, and learn about the unmet needs from their stories, body language, and other observations. The purpose of the “customer discovery” stage is to learn about the unmet needs of real people and design for them rather than for an “average customer” whose profile is based on statistics. To conduct an ethnographic interview, it is necessary to prepare open-ended questions to encourage the interlocutor to elaborate on his/her experiences and needs in an open and honest conversation. Active listening skills are crucial to read the emotional needs and spot the moments in conversation when we can improvise more questions to find out even more about the customer’s unmet needs, wants and aspirations. “Empathy map” is a tool frequently used to represent the key findings from interviews and observations [follow the link to see a sample “empathy map” template].

[https://www.researchgate.net/figure/Empathy-Map-Template-14\\_fig3\\_333907572](https://www.researchgate.net/figure/Empathy-Map-Template-14_fig3_333907572)

It serves to organize the most relevant and revealing statements from the interview in the form of quotes. They are called insights and are chosen based on repetition patterns and the emotional load they express. This tool requires us to analyze what we researched objectively, without the self-referring criterion. It forces us to put ourselves in the shoes of the interlocutor and serves to increase and develop empathy.

Another example of a DT tool that could be used in English language classes is a brainstorming session. In the DT process brainstorming sessions can serve as idea generation discussions in the third stage. “The best way to have a good idea is to have lots of ideas.” This quote by a Noble prize winner, scientist Linus Pauling, is one of the main guidelines for idea generation. “Think outside the box” is another vital guideline. There are many different tools of idea generation and different types of brainstorming that you can teach and implement in classes for group exercises. They all are based on similar premises: we work in a diverse team, try to generate as many ideas as possible, and do not criticize or judge any idea. Even an outlandish thought that seems completely impractical may be helpful as an inspiration for someone or a complement to another idea. Another helpful suggestion is to create a safe and comfortable environment for everyone – both physically and psychologically. When a team feels they have exhausted all the good ideas and the brainstorming session loses its dynamics, it can be revived with different

techniques that boost creativity. One of them is based on using a dictionary: the team randomly chooses a word and discusses its meaning and all associations it evokes, then they try to use those thoughts and associations to generate new ideas for their brainstorming session.

An essential lesson from Design Thinking can be discussed before a brainstorming session kicks-offs: dedicate time and energy to first understand the problem you are trying to solve; only after that step is done, move to create solutions. This is against the nature of most people. We tend to be impatient and, once we hear about the problem, we want to begin brainstorming new ideas immediately. The core of the DT approach is to be user-driven: start with empathy and find the actual needs, understanding the root of the problem.

Design Thinking is also a mindset highly appreciated in start-ups and all kinds of entrepreneurial projects. One of the critical elements of this mindset is being action-driven, willing to experiment and test ideas in their early stages of development, being open to feedback, learning from mistakes and failures. The prototyping stage, also known as “what wows,” is when this mindset is needed most in the DT process.

When we find an idea that we believe will satisfy customers’ needs and desires, it is time to show that idea to our potential clients. *Is it really what they need? Will they be willing to pay for it? Is it a better solution than what they have used so far? Is it the right IT?* We want to have answered these and similar questions before we decide to launch the product in the market. In the “prototype” stage, we create a tangible representation of our idea that can be shown to some customers and give them a feeling of our product’s experience. This is how we can get the answers to our questions. The prototypes are “low-resolution”: prepared fast and representing the primary features of our solution. They often have a form of a storyboard, Lego construction, drawings, maquettes, or digital mockups. When we show a prototype to potential users, we want to learn how to improve the idea. A prototype is a solution in progress. We create a couple of versions most of the time, each of them more advanced and better adapted to address customers’ needs.

The idea of prototyping could inspire team exercises, e.g., creating a drawing or a maquette with a prototype of a students’ rest area at the university, gathering feedback from potential users, and drawing conclusions for further improvements of the prototyped idea. These kinds of activities may be a pretext for real-life communications, and at the same time, they help grow the Design Thinking mindset.

# HOME OFFICE PROBLEM

## PART ONE - READING

### INTRODUCTION:

*Have you ever worked or studied from home? The COVID-19 pandemic, which broke out in 2019 in Wuhan, China, meant that workers worldwide had to stay at home and adjust their lives to new work-from-home reality.*

*The same happened to IT Mente, a small IT company based in Poland that provides IT services and support to small and medium companies. Due to the dynamically changing pandemic situation, the employees of IT Mente had to transition from work-life to home-life and immediately adjust both their personal space and activities to a new reality. Furthermore, in order to eliminate any risk factor and reduce operational costs, the company board decided to continue remote work regardless of the pandemic situation.*

*Thus, the IT Mente staff needed to acknowledge this challenge. However, having encountered frustrations and hardships of remote of work, a growing number of workers started to express their dissatisfaction.*

### Discuss the following questions:

- Do you like working or studying from home?
- What are the advantages of remote education or work?
- What are the disadvantages of working or studying from home?
- If you had the choice, would you prefer to work from home or from office?

*Meet the characters:*

*Sara: She has been working with IT Mente for over 5 years as a Sales Manager. She has three children, and the husband she loves more than her friends.*

*Robert: He is 32 years old, single, living in a big city in a flat he rents from a friend. He works for IT Mente in the Marketing and PR department.*

*Having consulted the HR manager, the board of IT Mente decided to find all the sore points of remote work and solve the distressing matters by means of Design Thinking tools.*

### Write your answers to the questions:

- \* What are the advantages of remote education or work?
- \* What are the disadvantages of working or studying from home?

**NOWADAYS WE HEAR ALL ABOUT DESIGN THINKING, BUT WHAT EXACTLY IS IT, AND HOW DOES IT APPLY TO COMMUNICATING IN THE WORKPLACE? IN THIS UNIT WE'LL FIND OUT THE PRINCIPLES OF DESIGN THINKING AND HOW WE CAN APPLY IT TO BECOME MORE EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATORS.**

## DESIGN THINKING – WHAT IS IN IT FOR YOU?

How are innovations born? Is there a need for a genius with some inborn qualities? According to Design Thinking (DT), you can develop products that change peoples' lives when you use the DT process, working in a diverse team. Being innovative is not about the innate traits of a genius but the right mindset and tools.

In the first stage of a DT process, the team finds out about customers' real needs, both functional and emotional. It is often named "empathy", as the goal is to put oneself in customer's shoes. The best way is through direct interactions: interviews and observations in people's natural environment, listening to their stories. The important findings from those encounters are called insights.

In the next step, the insights serve us to define the challenge. A good challenge should not specify the solution itself and be broad enough to stir the imagination. We begin with "how might we ...?" as it opens the mind to possibilities and underscores the teamwork.

Only in the third step do we move to create solutions. This is against the nature of most people. We tend to be impatient and, once we hear about the problem, we want to begin brainstorming immediately. There are many different tools of idea generation. However, they all are based on similar premises: work in a team, try to generate many ideas, do not criticize or judge them, dare to "think big" and "think outside the box". Even an outlandish thought, seemingly unfeasible, may inspire someone.

When we find a good idea we prototype it. We create a tangible representation that can be shown to customers so they can experience the product. *Is it really what they need? Will they be willing to pay for it? Is it the right IT?* We need the answers before we launch the product in the market. First prototypes are "low-resolution": prepared quickly, representing the primary features of our idea, in the form of a storyboard, drawings, or a digital mockup. A prototype is a solution in progress: when we show it to potential users, we want to learn how to make the idea better.

And what if customers are not excited about your idea? DT serves you to fail fast and cheap. You can start anew, and you will be better equipped for success with what you have learned along the way.

If you dream of being an entrepreneur, DT can help you work on your first product. If you wish to be employed in a company, with DT skills you can become an intrapreneur: human-centred design is needed in every growing organization.

### READING COMPREHENSION:

1. A Design Thinking process is most successful when:

- conducted by a diverse group of people
- led by a very gifted person – a genius
- conducted by one person who is a good researcher

2. A core characteristic of the Design Thinking approach is:

- being human-centred
- focus on finding a quick solution
- designing a product that will please customers' eyes

3. In DT, when we brainstorm, we are encouraged to:

- dare to create unusual ideas, even unthinkable ones
- use boxes to present our ideas
- use boxes to organize similar ideas into groups

4. According to the text, the primary purpose of a prototype in Design Thinking is:

- to present the idea to customers and get their feedback
- to make our ideas tangible so we can better understand them
- to present the idea to a boss/investor to get an approval

5. According to the text, outlandish ideas in a brainstorming session:

- are desired as they inspire to generate more daring ideas [correct]
- are useless as we can not put them into practice
- are useless as we waste time on them

#### GRAMMAR AND VOCABULARY

1. What is the meaning of “wicked problem”?

- a problem that is difficult to solve
- a problem that creates negative emotions
- a problem created by an ill-willed person

2. Which pair of words used in the text represents synonyms?

- inborn/innate
- approach/mindset
- intrapreneur/ entrepreneur

3. The expression “put oneself in someone's shoes” means:

- to empathize with someone's perspective and opinion
- to exchange shoes with someone for fun
- to substitute someone temporarily in their job

4. Which best defines the meaning of “insight”?

- a statement describing a true nature of something
- a philosophical reflection
- an important conclusion from research

5. Which word best describes the people who “want to begin brainstorming new ideas immediately, once they hear about the problem”:

- impatient
- user-driven
- empathetic

#### CASE STUDY

### Bank of America “Keep the change.”

Watch this short commercial of a banking product developed by Bank of America with the Design Thinking approach. The company that supported the Bank in this product development was IDEO. IDEO is among the global pioneers of Design Thinking and has been promoting the DT method since 1991, when it was founded.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4iFWP3VNxk&t=4s>

1. The need identified at the empathy stage by the IDEO researchers was related to:

- difficulties in putting money aside
- difficulties in using a credit card
- not remembering to pay money on charity on a regular basis

2. The new product quickly attracted:

- 1 million customers
- 200 000 customers
- 20% more new customers

3. Participants of the “Keep the change” program get the money into their saving accounts:

- for debit card purchases which are rounded up plus an incentive from the Bank
- for debit card purchases which are rounded up to the next dollar
- for debit card purchases after an additional authorization

4. The maximum annual amount of the incentive paid by the Bank under the “Keep the change” program is:

- 250 USD
- 150 USD
- 500 USD

### What is Design Thinking?

Below you can find resources for further study about design thinking:

- o What is Design Thinking? <https://youtu.be/Ee4CKIPkIik>
- o Why Design Thinking Works: <https://hbr.org/2018/09/why-design-thinking-works>
- o Good Kitchen Story <https://youtu.be/uyT0EdmYwMU>

**Based on materials above answer the following questions:**

1. In your opinion, what are the benefits and drawbacks of using Design Thinking methodology?
2. Is it suitable for solving all kinds of problems?
3. Would you be ready to participate in a Design Thinking process?

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## PART TWO – LISTENING

*Let's now come back to IT Mente. After a few months of working from home, and having encountered the accompanying frustrations and hardships, a growing number of workers started to express their dissatisfaction. Having consulted the HR manager, the board decided to find all the sore points of remote work and solve the distressing matters by means of Design Thinking tools.*

*The first step to do is to choose workers from IT Mente and conduct interviews with them to find out what exactly the problem is. The HR manager decided to survey two of its employees: Sara and Robert.*

**SARA:**

Sara has three children and a husband she loves more than her friends. She is a happy mother and wife. Her family lives in a detached house with a garden, which she cares for with great devotion. She loves flowers and walks in the forest that give her tranquillity and peace. Before the pandemic, her schedule was completely planned as she is always well organised. She knows that she needs to rely on herself because her husband works from morning till evening and he is at home only at weekends and additionally during the lockdown, the three children have online classes.

Sara works in Sales and has many responsibilities related to reaching the sales targets. Sara dreams of having a place for herself, especially when she works at the kitchen table, because that is the only place where she can talk online in peace with her clients. If the situation does not improve, Sara will have more and more backlogs and unfinished projects. Lately, she has been missing the time to relax. Usually on Fridays she would go out with her friends for coffee, shopping, to the cinema or for chats with her female friends.

**ROBERT:**

Robert is 32 years old, single, living in a big city in a flat he rents from a friend. He has his daily habits. He wakes up late. He doesn't eat breakfast but only drinks coffee, strong and black without sugar. He works in the Marketing and PR department which satisfies him. Before the pandemic, he could spend hours in the office with his colleagues. They would often meet after work and even spent their holidays together where they backpacked extensively in India, China, Asia, Africa. Robert is not a demanding type. The most important thing for him is that something is going on around him all the time. He likes crowds. Monotony burdens him a lot. During working from home, he cannot get himself together or mobilize himself to work effectively. Although he gets up quite early, he is not able to finish work before evening. He even works until midnight. Robert is unable to separate professional and personal life. He misses the pace, the people and getting out of the house.

HR Manager has decided to have a video call with Sara to find out more about her needs and frustrations and collect insights.

Listen to the interview with Sara and answer the following questions: [PODCAST](#) 

**COMPREHENSION:**

Choose the correct answer according to the information described in the interview.

How does Sara take care of her mental health during home office?

- a. She has a comfortable chair.
- b. She tries to work in one place.
- c. She eats healthy food.

How have Sarah's responsibilities changed?

- a. They have not changed.
- b. They have changed in an unnoticeable way.
- c. She has to combine work and family life.

What advice does Sarah have for working mums?

- a. Sara does not give any specific advice.
- b. Sara says to keep things the way they are.
- c. Sarah believes that it is important to have a good work and home schedule.

What is an important part of daily life for Sara when working in a home office?

- a. Attention to appropriate dress code.

- b. Fresh coffee at 8 a.m.
- c. A comfortable chair

**VOCABULARY:**

Complete the gaps by putting the correct word in the correct grammatical form.

1. I don't think we've ever been ..... with information and new reports from the world with as much frequency and intensity as we are now. I spend far too much time keeping ..... of them all, so sometimes I feel like the days are ..... before they have time to start for good.
2. I had to ..... my time between work and childcare responsibilities. It was difficult to explain to them that I didn't have time for them because I had to send an ..... report or answer an email. It was a real .....
3. A ..... outfit influences our mood, makes it easier to ..... for activities and to have the right ..... to them.

Read the interview with Robert and answer the questions:

*The coronavirus pandemic has forced us to experiment with a complete switch to remote working in many companies. How has the pandemic affected you and your work?*

ROBERT: Problems in remote working are often the result of certain habits and customs that so far have worked great in the office world, but not at all in remote working. This was the first noticeable problem that emerged quite quickly. It affected the quality of work. I started to transfer my habits from the office to home. I could not separate work from my personal life.

*What has emerged as the biggest problem of remote working?*

A problem with organisation. Often, it's only when we make the transition to remote working that we wonder if we even have a remote workspace at home. I know the story of a man who spent his last months working at a folding table and on a garden chair from his balcony. As a result, spine problems began. Only then did he appreciate what good working conditions he had at his office.

*Many managers are still convinced that a computer and the right software will cover the preparation for remote working. Was it enough in your case?*

Indeed, here we touch on another problem. Many companies have focused on the most obvious thing when suddenly transitioning to a new working model, namely tools. Companies have often bought new

technological tools, putting employees who are unprepared for remote working under pressure and insisting on learning to use them. Instead, it would be better to first gather the opinions of employees, ask them about new ways of communication, establish how various processes should take place, organise these processes in the company, even work through them in teams and only then select the best options, and not the other way round.

*How can the process of transitioning from contact to remote working best be structured, where to start? What is your opinion based on your experience over a year of remote working?*

If I were to give a certain sequence of actions, I would start by supporting managers so that they do not introduce bad habits and behaviours into the new working model. It is important to remember that leaders or managers also have some difficulty in finding their way in remote work. As a result, managers often introduce bad habits from the very beginning of remote working.

*What do these bad habits most often relate to?*

The worst was the phone call from work at 10 pm. If a manager calls a subordinate after working hours, they create a feeling in an employee that this is the norm. This inappropriate behaviour makes and employee feel that they have extended working hours. There is no moment of transition from office to home. In this situation, the employee cannot relax, cannot rest, cannot get out of work mode.

*Besides keeping an eye on working time limits, what other measures should companies take before they send employees to work from home?*

They should certainly give employees support on how to organise their work. The new role of managers would be to teach new ways of planning. The idea is that everyone should plan according to their own needs and capabilities. If someone can't concentrate in the morning because they have some extra work to do, then they should make it clear that they will do their key tasks, which are linked to the work of others, at a specific time. This should be clear to others.

*And what is the biggest enemy of efficiency in remote working?*

There is nothing worse when it comes to decreasing efficiency in remote working than being constantly distracted. It takes a huge amount of mental energy to return to the same tasks. People who work remotely and are constantly distracted by the phone, the baby, the instant messenger, after a whole day feel that they have not done anything, that they have become very tired because they have constantly shifted their attention and their work has not progressed any further. In this context, working in blocks of time is very important, because it is better to spend 1.5 hours on quality work than pretending to work for 3 hours, during which our attention is distracted.

*What did you miss the most while working remotely?*

What I missed the most was the contact with another human being, the direct contact. I am a sociable person, I like being among people, and remote work does not serve to maintain interpersonal ties. This is what I miss the most, other human beings close to me.

#### **COMPREHENSION**

Choose the correct answer according to the information described in the interview.

What did Robert find to be the biggest problem with remote working?

- a. a faulty computer
- b. a lack of space
- c. Problems with work organisation

What should be done as a first step to ensure good remote working conditions for employees?

- a. Employees should be given comfortable chairs.
- b. Basic processes should be defined and adapted to the changed situation.
- c. Each employee should get a therapist.

How should I start the process of introducing remote working?

- a. By gathering your employees and informing them about remote working
- b. by training your managers how to manage their teams in the new environment
- c. by purchasing new equipment

What are the disadvantages of remote working?

- a. uncomfortable chairs
- b. lack of free coffee
- c. difficulty in separating work from personal life

People who work remotely and are constantly distracted by the phone, the baby, the instant messenger, after a whole day feel that they have achieved a lot during the day.

- a. true
- b. false
- c. it depends

What do employees miss most when working remotely?

- a. Meetings with management
- b. Contact with the boss
- c. Contact with other employees

The transition to remote working should take place with as little change as possible in terms of the tools used.

- a. true
- b. false
- c. it depends

The change from office to home office is a very heavy burden on the employee. The company

should take care to limit other additional changes in the organisation.

- a. true
- b. false
- c. it depends

### VOCABULARY

Complete the gaps by putting the correct word in the correct grammatical form.

1. People who work remotely and are constantly ..... by the phone, the baby, the instant messenger, after a whole day feel that they have not done anything, that they have become very tired because they have constantly ..... their attention and their work has not ..... any further.

What I missed the most was the contact with another human being, the direct contact. I am a ..... person, I like being among people, and remote work does not serve to ..... interpersonal .....

3. The new role of managers would be to teach new ways of planning. The idea is that everyone should plan ..... to their own needs and ..... . If someone can't concentrate in the morning because they have some extra work to do, then they should make it clear that they will do their key tasks, which are ..... to the work of others, at a specific time.

### DISCUSS THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS:

Based on the interview with Robert, collect insights about him. What are the positive and negative trends experienced by Robert? What is his real need connected with working from home?

*One of the techniques used by Design Thinking is "How might we...?". Having identified the need of our persona (in this case Sara), we construct a question beginning "How might we...?" and paraphrasing the need into a challenging question. To learn more about this technique, see: <https://www.odellkeller.com/the-how-might-we-method/> Take a look at insights collected from Sara's and Robert's interviews. How would you start the "How might we...?" question to start finding solutions to their needs?*

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**PART THREE – VIDEO:**

Watch the video to find out what “How might we ...?” question the IT Mente team decided to ask and how they generated solutions to it: [VIDEO](#) 

**Comprehension:**

In the brainstorming method the number of ideas must be limited. T/F

The ideas should be always reasonable and feasible. T/F

In the brainstorming method the topic should be covered from every possible perspective. T/F

One of the key rules in brainstorming is that quality is more important quantity. T/F

There should be no room for criticism while generating ideas. T/F

Ideas not related to the topic are also acceptable. T/F

We are not limited when it comes to selecting the best ideas. T/F

At the end of the brainstorming process only one idea is selected to be prototyped. T/F

**Vocabulary:**

The synonym of the word “out-of-the-box” is:

Imaginative

Imagination

Innovational

The phrase “stray off topic” means:

To digress from the point

To wonder

To get to the point

We should ..... from criticism.

Refrain

Stay

Sustain

The phrase “vote for” means:

Indication of a choice

Refuse your choice

The activity of denying

The phrase “lateral thinking” means:

Viewing and solving a problem in a new and creative way

Tackling the problem head-on

Incomprehensible thinking

“Weird ideas” are:

Outlandish

Stupid

Funny

The synonym of the word “imaginative” is:

Creative

Fruitless

Unresourceful

The phrase “draw links between” means:

Make a connection between

Define a limit

Create boundaries

**DISCUSS:**

As you already know, the team decided to brainstorm ideas to answer the following question: “ How might we help Sara make her home office place more like a super office?” Watch the video again. Which idea do you think the team should choose for prototyping?

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## TEACHER NOTES

Introduction:

The materials have been designed as a story of two characters, Sara and Robert who experience hardships of working from home. IT Mente is a small imaginary IT company based in Poland that provides IT services and support to small and medium companies. Due to the dynamically changing pandemic situation, the employees had to transition from work-life to home-life and immediately adjust both their personal space and activities to a new reality. Furthermore, in order to eliminate risk factors and reduce operational costs, the company board decided to continue remote work regardless of the pandemic situation.

Thus, the IT Mente staff needed to acknowledge this challenge. However, having encountered the frustrations and hardships of remote work, a growing number of workers started to express their dissatisfaction.

Introduction questions: Ss own answers

## READING

### READING COMPREHENSION

1. A Design Thinking process is most successful when:

- **conducted by a diverse group of people**
- led by a very gifted person – a genius
- conducted by one person who is a good researcher

2. A core characteristic of the Design Thinking approach is:

- **being human-centred**
- focus on finding a quick solution
- designing a product that will please customers' eyes

3. In DT, when we brainstorm, we are encouraged to:

- **dare to create unusual ideas, even unthinkable ones**
- use boxes to present our ideas
- use boxes to organize similar ideas into groups

4. According to the text, the primary purpose of a prototype in Design Thinking is:

- **present the idea to customers and get their feedback**
- make our ideas tangible so we can better understand them
- present the idea to a boss/investor to get an approval

5. According to the text, outlandish ideas in a brainstorming session:

- **are desired as they inspire to generate more daring ideas**
- are useless as we can not put them into practice
- are useless as we waste time on them

## GRAMMAR AND VOCABULARY

1. What is the meaning of "wicked problem"?

- **a problem that is difficult to solve**
- a problem that creates negative emotions
- a problem created by an ill-willed person

2. Which pair of words used in the text represents synonyms?

- **inborn/innate**
- approach/mindset
- intrapreneur/ entrepreneur

3. The expression "put oneself in someone's shoes" means:

- **empathize with someone's perspective and opinion**
- to exchange shoes with someone for fun
- substitute someone temporarily in their job

4. Which best defines the meaning of "insight"?

- **a statement describing a true nature of something [correct]**
- a philosophical reflection
- an important conclusion from research

5. Which word best describes the people who "want to begin brainstorming new ideas immediately, once they hear about the problem":

- **impatient**
- user-driven
- empathetic

## CASE STUDY

Bank of America "Keep the change."

Watch this short commercial of a banking product developed by Bank of America with the Design Thinking approach. The company that supported the Bank in this product development was IDEO. IDEO is among the global pioneers of Design Thinking and has been promoting the DT method since 1991, when it was founded.

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1. The need identified at the empathy stage by the IDEO researchers was related to:

- **difficulties in putting money aside**
- difficulties in using a credit card
- not remembering to pay money to charity on a regular basis

2. The new product attracted quickly:

- **1 million customers**
- 200 000 customers
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4. The maximum annual amount of the incentive paid by the Bank under the "Keep the change" program is:

- 250 USD
- 150 USD
- 500 USD

LISTENING  
SARA

**Have you had more time for yourself since you started working from home? How do you take care of your mental health during this time?**

There is more time in theory, but I don't think we've ever been flooded with information and new reports from the world with as much frequency and intensity as we are now. I spend far too much time keeping track of them all, so sometimes I feel like the days are over before they have time to start for good. :)

**How have your responsibilities at home changed?**

Women often work, in a sense, two or even three jobs: at work, running the home and sometimes as teachers. With three children at home, I had to divide my time between work and childcare responsibilities. It was difficult to explain to them that I didn't have time for them because I had to send an urgent report or answer an email. It was a real struggle.

**How did you cope with an overload of work, especially child-related duties?**

When all the household members are present, it is very difficult to explain to them, especially the children, not to interrupt our work. I can recommend an effective technique for giving a clear signal to those around you who you are currently working on something very important with and you want not to be disturbed. This signal can be putting headphones in our ears, placing a characteristic object on our desk and then our relatives, if such rules have been established beforehand, try not to disturb us. This greatly advanced remote working because it was based on very clear communication. However, this technique must also not be abused.

**How did you learn to relax? To strike the balance?**

This is a very difficult and big problem when working remotely, and one that we may still be struggling with for a long time. In short, it's about being able to mentally switch between work mode and leisure time.

**Do you have any advice for mums working from home office?**

Set regular hours for work and stick to them. Even though you will be at home, you need to know when your working hours are and when your regular day starts. Therefore, during the time set aside for work, forget about the laundry that is waiting, the washing up or the cleaning.

**And as regards the boundaries drawn between work and personal life?**

Set yourself a place for office work and always do it there. Moreover, a neat outfit influences our mood, makes it easier to mobilise for activities and to have the right attitude to them. Psychologists say that a person dressed and groomed like this for work even over the phone sounds more professional. And please remember one thing, always start the day in a similar way. Our daily routines, such as having a cup of coffee before starting work or meditating after getting out of bed, also have a mobilising effect and support what we have to do next.

**TASK 1**

Choose the correct answer according to the information described in the interview.

How does Sara take care of her mental hygiene during home office?

- a. She has a comfortable chair.
- b. She tries to work in one place. (+)
- c. She eats healthy food.

How have Sarah's responsibilities changed?

- a. They have not changed.
- b. They have changed in an unnoticeable way.
- c. She has to combine work and family life. (+)

What advice does Sarah have for working mums?

- a. Sara does not give any specific advice.
- b. Sara says to keep things the way they are.
- c. Sarah believes that it is important to have a good work and home schedule. (+)

What is an important part of daily life for Sara when working in a home office?

- a. Attention to appropriate dress code (+)
- b. Fresh coffee at 8 a.m.
- c. A comfortable chair

**TASK 2**

Complete the gaps by putting the correct word in the correct grammatical form.

1. I don't think we've ever been ..... with information and new reports from the world with as much frequency and intensity as we are now. I spend far too much time keeping ..... of them all, so sometimes I feel like the days are ..... before they have time to start for good.

- flooded
- track
- over

2. I had to ..... my time between work and childcare responsibilities. It was difficult to explain to them that I didn't have time for them because I had to send an ..... report or answer an email. It was a real .....

- divide
- urgent
- struggle

3. A ..... outfit influences our mood, makes it easier to ..... for activities and to have the right ..... to them.
- neat
  - mobilise
  - attitude.

ROBERT

TASK 1

Choose the correct answer according to the information described in the interview.

What did Robert find to be the biggest problem with remote working?

- a. Faulty computer
- b. Lack of space

**c. Problems with work organisation (+)**

What should be done as a first step to ensure good remote working conditions for employees?

- a. Employees should be given comfortable chairs.

**b. Basic processes should be defined and adapted to the changed situation. (+)**

- c. Each employee should get a therapist.

How should I start the process of introducing remote working?

- a. By gathering your employees and informing them about remote working

**b. by training your managers how to manage their teams in the new environment (+)**

- c. by purchasing new equipment

What are the disadvantages of remote working?

- a. uncomfortable chairs
- b. lack of free coffee
- c. difficulty in separating work from personal life

People who work remotely and are constantly distracted by the phone, the baby, the instant messenger, after a whole day feel that they have achieved a lot during the day.

- a. it depends
- b. true

**c. false (+)**

What do employees miss most when working remotely?

- a. Meetings with management
- b. Contact with the boss

**c. Contact with other employees (+)**

The transition to remote working should take place with as little change as possible in terms of the tools used.

- a. it depends
- b. false

**c. true (+)**

The change from office to home office is a very heavy burden on the employee. The company should take care to limit other additional changes in the organisation.

- a. it depends
- b. false

**c. true (+)**

TASK 2

Complete the gaps by putting the correct word in the correct grammatical form.

1. People who work remotely and are constantly ..... by the phone, the baby, the instant messenger, after a whole day feel that they have not done anything, that they have become very tired because they have constantly ..... their attention and their work has not ..... any further.

- distracted
- shifted
- progressed

2. What I missed the most was the contact with another human being, the direct contact. I am a ..... person, I like being among people, and remote work does not serve to ..... interpersonal .....

- sociable
- maintain
- ties

3. The new role of managers would be to teach new ways of planning. The idea is that everyone should plan ..... to their own needs and ..... . If someone can't concentrate in the morning because they have some extra work to do, then they should make it clear that they will do their key tasks, which are ..... to the work of others, at a specific time.

- according
- capabilities
- linked

Based on the interview with Robert, collect insights about him. What are the positive and negative trends experienced by Robert? What is his real need connected with working from home?

**Ss own answers**

One of the techniques used by Design Thinking is "How might we...?". Having identified the need of our persona (in this case Sara), we construct a question beginning "How might we...?" and paraphrasing the need into a challenging question. To learn more about this technique, see: <https://www.odellkeller.com/the-how-might-we-method/>

Take a look at insights collected from Sara's and Robert's interviews. How would you start the "How might we...?" question to start finding solutions to their needs?

e.g. How might we help Sara organize her day better / organize childcare / feel more social bond when she

has home office / relax more efficiently with limited time?

How might we help Robert be more connected with office colleagues / deal with lack of motivation?

## VIDEO

Brainstorming- (video script)

Hi everyone. I hope you're all fine today. The aim of our meeting is to find potential solutions to our challenge "How might we help Sara make her home office place more like a super office?"

At first, we need to generate as many ideas as we can. There are, of course, many different methods including brainstorming, brainwriting or analogous inspirations, for instance. The most essential thing, however, is thinking outside the box and looking for alternative solutions to the challenge we've created. As for me, we should use a brainstorming method. What do you think about this idea?

- Sounds interesting.
- Fantastic
- Let's get started, then.

Ok, great. First, I would like to make this method clear to you and emphasize the key points.

Remember that our main aim is to produce a vast array of ideas and draw links between them to find potential solutions. We are free to use out-of-the-box and lateral thinking to seek the most effective ideas. It's essential to cover the problem from every angle.

We are going to work this way:

- We begin with a target question: " How might we help Sara make her home office place more like a super office?"
- Then, each person is going to 1. . Keep in mind , we aim for quantity, because in brainstorming method quantity breeds quality.
- The time limit is 20 minutes. To do this, we are going to use Miro to stay visual. As far as I know, you are all familiar with this tool.
- Remember to provide only ideas on topic. We need specific solutions. Don't stray off topic.
- Of course, you can build on others' ideas and reach new inspirations. Imagine, for example, what if the budget was unlimited or what if there were no space limits?
- Another very crucial thing- refrain from criticism. That's not the place for criticising. No complaining or discussions, as well. Just clear ideas.
- The next stage will be selection. There are a few ways to do it. I suggest voting for three best ideas. Each of you is supposed to

select three most attractive ideas. Then, we discuss and choose 3 solutions that get the most votes.

Is everything clear?

Ok, let's get started then. You've got 20 minutes to generate your ideas. Use Miro post-its to put them on the whiteboard. Remember- even very weird ideas are welcome. I do really encourage you to think outside the box. Be creative!

.....

Ok, time's up. Let's have a look at our Miro board and all the ideas.

Now, you will have three minutes to select three solutions that, in your opinion, are the best. Put a dot on the post-it you like the most.

.....

Ok, I hope you are ready .

Let's look at our choices and select the three ones which have the most dots.

### Reading Comprehension:

In brainstorming method the number of ideas must be limited. T/F (F)

The ideas should be always reasonable and feasible. T/F (F)

In brainstorming method the topic should be covered from every possible perspective. T/F (T)

One of the key rule in brainstorming is that quality is more important quantity. T/F (F)

There should be no room for criticism while generating ideas. T/F (T)

Ideas not related to the topic are also acceptable. T/F (F)

We are not limited when it comes to selecting the best ideas. T/F (F)

At the end of the brainstorming process only one idea is selected to be prototyped. T/F (F)

Vocabulary test:

The synonym of the word "out-of-the-box" is:

**Imaginative**

Imagination

Innovational

The phrase "stray off topic" means:

**To digress from the point**

To wonder

To get to the point

We should ..... from criticism.

**Refrain**

Stay

Sustain

The phrase "vote for" means:

**Indication of a choice**

Refuse your choice  
The activity of denying

The phrase "lateral thinking" means:

**Viewing and solving a problem in a new and creative way**

Tackling the problem head-on  
Incomprehensible thinking

"Weird ideas" are:

**Outlandish**

Stupid  
Funny

The synonym of the word "imaginative" is:

**Creative**

Fruitless  
Unresourceful

The phrase "draw links between" means:

**Make a connection between**

Define a limit

Create boundaries

Now, come back to Robert and the "How might we...?" question you created for him.

Write a question and generate as many ideas as possible to answer the question. Remember the brainstorming principle: QUANTITY OVER QUALITY and NO IDEAS ARE BAD IDEAS.

Set your students the timer below for 3 minutes and go!

The next stage in Design Thinking process is PROTOTYPING. The idea is to create a cheap and quick PROTOTYPE of the chosen solution that will enable the user to test the idea. It can be a cardboard model or a storyboard.

To learn more about prototyping see the website: <https://careerfoundry.com/en/blog/ux-design/design-thinking-stage-four-prototyping/>

Choose one of the ideas you like the most from the previous exercise and create a prototype.

## WHAT IS BRAIN-FRIENDLY TEACHING?

*Magdalena Zubiel PhD, WSB University in Toruń*

Brain-friendly teaching builds on students' cognitive curiosity, uses the strengths of the brain, combines purely cognitive knowledge with emotions, allows students to ask questions of their own. Brain-friendly teaching builds on students' cognitive curiosity, uses the strengths of the brain, combines cognitive knowledge with emotions, allows students to make hypotheses. It is not limited to a purely verbal message, appeals to many modalities and makes it easier to combine individual pieces of information. The most important element and a prerequisite for success is undoubtedly appealing to students' cognitive curiosity. a safe and friendly atmosphere. People are by nature curious about the world and want to understand it. Everything that is new, unknown, unusual, mysterious, not fully explained, attracts our attention. On the other hand, trivial, ordinary and everyday phenomena do not stimulate the activity of the neuronal network, and thus do not initiate the learning process.

We do not pay attention to normal-looking passers-by, but we certainly remember a man dressed in an elegant suit and walking. This natural mechanism protects our brain from an excess of surrounding impulses and from the so-called stimulus overload. Since there are usually many more stimuli than the limbic system can process, selection becomes not so much a choice as a necessity. The rational brain selects out of all stimuli the most important ones. If the hippocampus judges an item to be new and interesting, it sets about storing it, that is, it creates a neural representation of it. From this it follows that a thing must be relatively new and interesting for our fast learning brain structure assimilates it or supports its assimilation.

Although our long-term memory has a huge capacity, the input to it, i.e. working memory, is the eye of the needle. Therefore, anything irrelevant must be overlooked. Research shows that of the visual stimuli we receive we process only about 10%. In the past, survival depended on the ability to extract the most important information in the environment was essential for the survival of each individual.

Today, in the society of the knowledge, when we are flooded with information avalanche, the ability to make choices is also one of the key competences. This means for the teacher that it depends on the way in which new material is introduced whether the students' attention is focused on the phenomenon under discussion or on something completely different. If the teacher's posture, voice, facial expressions or manner of speaking convey the message that we are about to deal with an interesting and intriguing phenomenon, this is a signal to the students' neurons that the thing is worth attention.

The first step that initiates the learning process and leads to memorization is directing all attention to the selected object. This process can be compared to illuminating a selected point on the stage with a spotlight. All eyes are then directed in that direction, while other elements remain in the shade. If, however, the teacher begins the lesson with the presentation of another unremarkable topic and presents it as yet another curricular issue that has to be dealt with because it may appear on a test, the students' brains get subconsciously and pre-reflectively the information that the topic is ordinary and trivial and therefore, from the subjective point of view of the brain, of little interest. The result of this assessment of the situation is a lack of neurotransmitters, without which effective learning is not possible.

Much more effective are the teachers who are able to awaken fascination in their students and activate the most powerful mechanism, which is intrinsic motivation. The fact that something has been said does not mean that it has been absorbed. To teach and learn are two completely different processes. If students only learn in order to pass tests, they are driven by an extrinsic motivation that is incomparably less effective than the intrinsic one. Great things can only be achieved when the internal motivation is awakened. Then the goal is learning itself, and learning becomes an adventure and pleasure. The brain releases dopamine, a hormone of happiness, which increases the level of motivation. In order to arouse fascination in the students, the teacher himself must be fascinated by the subject he teaches. The sparkle in his eye, the tone of his voice and the way he talks are for others, not always conscious, but clear: "What we have to deal with today is extremely interesting!" The teacher's enthusiasm through the mechanism of the teacher's enthusiasm through the mechanism of mirroring and fine-tuning is transferred to the students. Such a consonance is possible thanks to mirror neurons. The way knowledge is transmitted and communicated triggers a whole chain of reactions in the brain that initiates the learning process. An important role is played here by combining cognitive knowledge with positive emotions. Research in the field of mirror neurons emphasises that our brain is tuned into good social relations and works conditions in which it works most effectively.