

A form for needs analysis

BUSINESS ENGLISH NEEDS ANALYSIS

Name: Company:

Contact numbers:

To help us make the English programme useful, please fill out the form below.
 What do you need to do in English? How good are you already? Do you urgently need to work on improving this skill? Look at the key at the bottom before you start.

Language area	How good am I?*	How urgently do I need this skill?*
talking to clients	0 1 2 3 4 5	now very soon next year don't know
letters or formal faxes	0 1 2 3 4 5	now very soon next year don't know
using the telephone	0 1 2 3 4 5	now very soon next year don't know
dealing with visitors	0 1 2 3 4 5	now very soon next year don't know
talking to colleagues	0 1 2 3 4 5	now very soon next year don't know
reporting to managers	0 1 2 3 4 5	now very soon next year don't know
giving presentations	0 1 2 3 4 5	now very soon next year don't know
attending meetings	0 1 2 3 4 5	now very soon next year don't know
negotiating	0 1 2 3 4 5	now very soon next year don't know
note-taking at meetings	0 1 2 3 4 5	now very soon next year don't know
e-mail, faxes or memos	0 1 2 3 4 5	now very soon next year don't know
report-writing	0 1 2 3 4 5	now very soon next year don't know
understanding the news	0 1 2 3 4 5	now very soon next year don't know
other:	0 1 2 3 4 5	now very soon next year don't know

*** KEY:**

- How good am I?
- 0 = I can't do this at all
 - 1 = I try but I'm not very good
 - 2 = I can do it but I make a lot of mistakes
 - 3 = I'm OK at doing this but I make a few mistakes
 - 4 = I'm quite good at doing this – I don't make many mistakes
 - 5 = I'm very good at doing this – I hardly make any mistakes

How urgently do I need this skill? Circle the words which are true for you.

Any comments or requests?

Thank you for your time.

2.3 Needs analysis interviews

It is helpful if interviews can be arranged to confirm initial comments or conclusions about needs. This also applies if needs analysis forms have been filled out by potential students because managers' (or organisers') and students' perceptions of needs may vary considerably. Ideally, you – as the students' future teacher – should attend and/or lead these interviews.

Interviews with in-company course coordinators

Focus on getting answers to the following questions:

- *What does the company want the students to be able to do?*
- *In what specific situations will they be doing these things?*
- *Which of the above are priorities? In terms of percentages? ... e.g. 70% report-writing, 20% replying to faxes and 10% speaking on the telephone*
- *What kind of feedback does the company want from the school?*
- *Have the students had any training before?*
- *Which previous training courses have been arranged in general?*
- *Who attended?*
- *What kind of requests and comments have come from managers and potential students?*

Interviews with students' managers

An even better overview of training needs and requirements can be gained if you can interview your future students' managers. They are the people most directly in touch with students' real needs and they should also have an insight into their company's longer term foreign language needs. Enlist the in-company course coordinator's help in organising interviews with key people within the organisation. Justify these meetings by saying that managers directly above employees taking courses are the people most in touch with their employees' needs and problems. They are the people who can really confirm priorities.

In your interviews, rather than having free-form discussions, focus on these questions:

- *What do you want your staff to be able to do?*
- *In what specific situations will they be doing these things?*
- *Which of these things are priorities? In terms of percentages? ... e.g. 80% speaking and listening – so as to be able to participate in meetings, 20% reading and replying to faxes*

- *How do your staff cope now? Do they get help from colleagues? Do they use an agency? Do they take work home? Do they use a translator or interpreter?*
- *What level of success are you hoping for?*
- *What are your staff's most urgent short-term needs for English?*

When managers are talking, give support through reflective listening and clarifying questions (e.g. *Can they use the phone at all? So you mean you can't understand their memos?*). Since managers have often not given any careful thought to their staff's real English needs, answering these questions may not be easy for them. This is often the reason for the failure of previous training programmes: overly generalised courses may have failed to address their staff's specific needs.

Note that as well as allowing you to confirm the initial needs analysis, these interviews should also help you to 'sell' your courses to students' managers. This is important because when managers believe in an English course, they are likely to make sure that students are freed up to attend classes and may well also make resources more readily available to their staff, e.g. in the form of typical faxes or memos written in-house. The clear focus of your questions will show that you mean to take answers seriously.

Interviews with individual students

As well as helping you to analyse students' precise needs, interviews with students can also help motivation because your clearly focused questions will make it clear to students that you are interested in improving the language they need to use at work. If students are given a very generalised 'chatty' oral interview, they are likely to perceive your language programme as vague and irrelevant to their real-life English needs. Also, determining a student's level of English in a work context will involve more than a 'chat' on general topics. The student will need to be asked very specific questions, such as the following:

- *What do you find most difficult about English?*
- *Which area is most important for your job: speaking, writing, reading or listening?*
- *What exactly do you need to do in each skill area? (What kind of speaking, writing, etc.)*
- *How would you prioritise your needs in terms of percentages?*
- *How have you found training programmes in the past?*
- *What do you think you can do to improve your performance and success on this course?*