



**Title of Report:** Language Coaching for Professional, Vocational, and Academic Needs

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## **1. Identify and describe the training program.**

OISE Boston is an intensive English school accredited by the Commission on English Program Accreditation (CEA). The school has been here since 1999. Its mission statement says, “By specializing in rigorous English language coaching, we drive ambitious learners to achieve.”

The goals behind the mission statement are achieved with our program, which allows as much client choice as possible in regard to length of study and structure of the day. Executives’ time is limited. Therefore, we have no standard program length, nor do we have a single program structure. Clients can enroll for a single day of private tutoring, to brush up a presentation or project, or they can enroll for six months or longer if they need to make a substantial improvement in their skills. Clients can register for lessons up to six hours per day and they can take these lessons in a variety of configurations.

First, there are private lessons, group lessons, or combinations of the two. We recommend private tutoring for clients wanting to work in a sophisticated way with very specialized business vocabulary – for example, in banking and finance.

There is also a whole-day “Global Professional” or Quatorial Program, available for one-week periods or longer, offered at all levels. These programs focus on building skills in grammar, listening, speaking, reading and writing in an interdependent, natural way. They prepare the client to handle general business, professional, and intellectually serious situations and topics. (These sessions are limited to four students per class, hence the designation “Quatorial.”)

A part of the Global Professional Program is the Quatorial Project course (again limited to four students per class), in which students are trained in particular functions, such as giving instructions, polite refusals and explanations; hedging and avoiding direct answers; giving advice and recommendations; doing group presentations, etc. Clients are expected to take the lead in this class, designing and role-playing a variety of business and social situations. Their work is presented to the rest of the school in regular Friday performances via presentations, role plays, dialogues, or monologues.

The Global Professional Program includes a daily teacher-facilitated, student-directed self study class during which students can work independently on weak or specialized areas with teacher guidance. There is also a daily spoken performance workshop, during which students encounter a large variety of situations for practicing speaking, pronunciation, and intonation with other students.



Students can also register for combinations of these two options. For example, one client might choose the small group classes in the morning, and take private lessons in the afternoon instead of the Masterclass and Workshop. On the other hand, some prefer private lessons in the morning, but join the larger group classes in the afternoon. In this way, we are able to provide any kind of learning situation the client prefers, and the day can be tailored individually for each student.

## **2. Describe the target audience.**

Our prime target audience is twenty years of age or older. Clients are either presently employed professionally, or are about to be employed. We also seek students who are still at university and are trying to make themselves more job-ready, or those who are preparing for tests to enter the university. (These last are mostly summer students.) The Global Professional Quatorial Program is appropriate for both groups, although we do try to separate the students in classes along lines of age and experience.

Many of our clients come from companies. They are employees from whom the company expects a great deal in terms of their English ability. These employees will often be further trained in business at other locations in the US, or they are headed directly for new jobs here in their companies. They are normally given promotions and overseas assignments after their time at OISE Boston. On average, such clients stay about eight weeks, sometimes longer. Our Asian students are often in pharmaceutical sales and development, finance, heavy industry, software, or engineering. We have clients from Canada in mining and chemical fields, from Latin America in banking and finance, and from Europe in a wide assortment of fields, from doctors and lawyers to university professors and businesspeople.

## **3. Describe the needs assessment procedures utilized to develop the program.**

We use a needs assessment form which prospective students fill out, and general information about the students' needs is also included in the registration materials. Most of our business students take individual tutorials, and in that context their needs assessment is done on the first day of class. Faculty and students design a plan specific for each student on a tutorial contract, which includes not only the skills to be improved, but also the materials used to achieve goals, the assessment methods that the client and teacher consider appropriate, and the results of the assessment.

For clients who have no tutorial classes, we provide instruction in the language of meetings and negotiation, socializing, interviewing and giving presentations, as well as in the sophisticated use of language as needed by professionals during Global Professional Quatorial classes. The Global Professional syllabus used in the Quatorial classes has been developed over years of experience in seeing what our clients are interested in doing and what kinds of skills they want. It is a blend of academic and business material.

## **4. Explain the English language training program's over-arching goals and specific objectives.**



The mission statement (“By specializing in rigorous English language coaching, we drive ambitious learners to achieve”) shows our institutional goals and objectives. It informs all of our activities, from the social events calendar to teaching styles in the classroom. As our major goal is to push students as far as they can be pushed in the direction they want to go during their time here, we provide social and intellectual events for our students that reflect their serious and ambitious aims, even during free-time activities.

Most importantly, the policies guiding appropriate activity in the classroom are also closely informed by the mission statement. Our program is rigorous and intensive, not particularly as defined by the number of hours that students spend in the classroom, since that varies from student to student, but because of the way those hours are used. Quatorial classes have no more than four learners, enabling the teacher to see that each student works hard and contributes. Each week’s syllabus includes a variety of material, ensuring that there will be no lack of useful and appropriate activities and tasks. Students are challenged as much as possible and get appropriate homework.

Rather than separating business and academic students, we have chosen what we consider to be the best elements of the separate business and academic courses that we teach and have combined them to create the Global Professional Quatorial syllabus. This syllabus ensures that all of our students learn the basics of the practical and necessary language of meetings, commerce, and negotiation, as well as the wider variety of vocabulary and grammatical structures taught in academic preparation classes. The teacher has the option, depending on the composition of the class, of intensifying either the business or the academic content of the material. By requiring our academic students to know how to participate in meetings, handle complaints, and negotiate terms, we have enriched their experience and skills in English. By requiring business students to interact with a wider variety of topics, we enable them to increase their ability to talk about the world around them in a more sophisticated way.

A final way in which we emphasize the words “rigorous” and “coaching” in our mission statement is our relatively new emphasis on preparing the students to continue their learning experience after leaving OISE Boston. While this point has always been one of our goals, we now focus on it and devote more teacher time and resources to it. Rigor is increased when new demands are placed on the students, and we now expect them to leave us knowing how to keep the momentum going.

#### **5. Describe the teaching methods and training procedures used in the program.**

Rather than choosing bits of various teaching methods and melding them together, OISE Ltd. has developed a list of the seven best practices for the classroom, and trains its faculty to deliver material in a way that makes the best use of these practices, which we call the “seven pillars” or “7 Ps,” of our approach. The 7 Pillars statements follow:

1. Purpose: By being driven by our students’ purpose, teacher and learners share a common intention.



2. Pitch: By pitching the lesson high, the teacher ensures that each student is challenged.
3. Pace: By injecting pace, the teacher ensures that lessons are dynamic.
4. Push: By pushing the students, the teacher helps them to go beyond their own expectations.
5. Positivity: By encouraging feelings of competence in each student, the teacher builds confidence.
6. Progress: By making students aware of their progress, the teacher encourages independent learning.
7. Performance: By providing practice, the teacher builds confidence in tackling the real world situations.

## **6. Describe the teaching materials used in the program.**

We use a wide assortment of books and materials, and all the teachers have permission to “switch out” any assignments on the syllabus for materials that are more appropriate to the interests of the students. This means, in practice, that any materials from any source can be used with any student. These range from Voice of America listening and reading texts, to company annual reports, and listening passages from internet sites such as *ted.com*. Materials may also include a text book series or newspapers and magazines. Here is a partial list of printed materials that we often use:

- *The Focus on Grammar series*
- *The Northstar Listening/Speaking and Reading/Writing series*
- *Raise the Issues*
- *The Market Leader series*
- *Working in English*
- *New International Business English*
- *American Accent Training*
- *Clear Speech*
- *Pronunciation Plus*
- *Pronunciation Pairs*
- *Essential Business Grammar in Practice*
- *Business Grammar in Practice*
- *Prospects Super Advanced*
- *Grammar and Vocabulary for CAE and CPE*
- *Objective Proficiency*

Our Quatorial class teachers are not limited to the use of these books, but these are the primary materials on the syllabus. In addition, classroom teachers often take their students to the computer area to use the internet during classes. Tutorial teachers may use the books listed above, or they may choose other materials, since they need to focus directly on each student’s personal and immediate needs. Needless to say, the internet is a top source of materials for classes, but we do have a large and comprehensive library in addition to the books above.



We also use a wide variety of preparation materials in tutorials for the following tests: the TOEFL, the TOEIC, the GTEC, and the GMAT sentence correction task. In addition, we help students prepare for the Cambridge test series: First Certificate, Advanced, and Proficiency.

We believe that since the world will not simplify its use of English for the learner, all learners need to learn to deal with authentic speech and materials as soon as possible. Therefore, we teach techniques for accomplishing this goal as soon as the learner is ready.

The resources of the school are used in ways that increase the ability of the faculty to coach with greater effectiveness and demand more of our students. We actively buy new books in order to keep our library up-to-date, particularly test preparation materials such as TOEFL, IELTS, and TOEIC. We offer iPods and speakers for listening practice as this greatly maximizes our ability to target individual students' interests. We have dedicated teacher computers available for classroom use, which expand the amount of material a teacher can bring to the students. A projector and a digital camera help our students to prepare, deliver, and critique their professional presentations, while practicing what they will do in meetings and at conferences. Finally, more practice with and reflection on performance, using recently-acquired digital voice recorders and the video camera, have been integrated into speaking lessons. All of us have found that more technology in the classroom provides a more challenging and rigorous environment.

## **7. Explain what the content of the English language training program consists of.**

### **A. What written and spoken genres are covered in the training program?**

Since our students' programs are much more individualized than they might be in other schools, largely because there is so much private tutoring and there are such small classes, it is almost impossible to make a list of what genres are taught here. We teach whatever the students need to know: language for banking, finance, management, budget and auditing; safety; chemical, mining and manufacturing processes, pharmaceuticals; law; medicine; aviation; etc. We cover e-mails and letters, telephoning, presentation and meeting language, annual reports, promotional materials and advertising, sales, group presentations and discussion panels, description of processes, etc.

In the summer, when we have European students in large numbers, we might well also teach English for the humanities – i.e., for literature and novels, poetry, and so forth. As a small school, we can adjust to the individual needs of the students who are here at any given time. We can switch books in Quatorial classes to a literature focus or a business focus, and we can group students in those classes based on their needs.

### **B. What communicative functions are covered in the training program?**

Again, the clients tell us what they need and want, and we endeavor to provide it. There are some standard language functions we consider "requirements" and which appear formally in the syllabus. These include negotiating, asking and answering questions, giving



opinions, agreeing and disagreeing politely, refusing politely, asking and responding to sensitive questions, giving instructions, persuasion, delivering news, and making complaints.

Additionally, the Quatorial Project class is geared for practicing these functions. Groups of four students have assignments every week for which they must script a role-play and demonstrate situations in which the assigned functional language is appropriately used. These are performed for the assembled school on Fridays.

### **C. What speech events are covered in the training program?**

Our day begins with one of the students from the Quatorial classes giving a presentation in our small auditorium. The presentation is attended by the other students, the faculty, and staff. Even students who are only here for a week can normally be scheduled to present, and this is an excellent opportunity for them to practice their public speaking skills. There is a question-and-answer period following the presentation, and we make sure that everyone has the experience of being questioned and having to answer.

The various course formats allow for practicing a wide range of speech events. In small-group Quatorial classes, there are role plays, meeting simulations, negotiations, discussions, reports, and an assortment of other opportunities for clients to practice using language in situations in which they may find themselves. In the Spoken Fluency Workshop, students practice the language needed by international professionals, from chatting about set questions and doing pronunciation exercises to practicing interviews or collaborating to produce work that will be performed for the rest of the class.

We also train students in tutorials for any kind of context in which they need to use English, from tests of spoken language such as the TOEFL or *Prépa colle* to preparing international faculty to teach at area universities.

### **8. Explain the delivery mechanisms employed by the program.**

OISE Boston teaches only face-to-face classes. We offer small-group classes (up to four students) and private tutoring. Only one class, the Spoken Fluency Workshop, can have up to twelve students. This policy is to ensure that students have ample opportunity to work with other learners, from other language backgrounds, which is a situation they will all undoubtedly encounter. We also have a self-access center with learning software, books, listening materials, and staff trained to help students use these resources.

### **9. Explain the assessment procedures used in the program.**

Clients are asked to take our placement test before arrival, so that we can assess their abilities and place them correctly if they have registered for a Quatorial class. Tutorial students are assessed on the schedules made with their teachers as a part of the tutorial contract that is filled out on the first day of a tutorial class.



If the client will be with us for more than a month, we can also administer a test at the beginning and at the end of the registration period. This test will provide a progress score that reflects a percentage of total improvement on a TOEIC-like reading and listening test of one hour in length.

Clients can change levels during their program in one of two ways. Either teachers and the Academic Manager can make the decision, based on the student's performance in class, or the student can take a level-end test to provide us with more information on his/her readiness to take on more complex work.

Friday is a regular assessment day, and each Quatorial student is tested in some way in the Grammar section and also in the Comprehension and Expression sections of class on Friday morning. There is a weekly assessment form for class performance on which grades are given, including a section in which the teacher comments on strengths and weaknesses. The grade is discussed with the student, who signs the form along with the teacher. Tutorial students are assessed on the skills they chose to work on in a way and at a time agreed on by the teacher and student.

#### **10. Explain the program evaluation mechanisms used.**

As noted above, our program is accredited by the Commission on English Language Program Accreditation (CEA). As a CEA-certified institution, we follow a strict set of policies on school review and program evaluation.

In order to ensure that the school continues to provide a high standard of service in all areas, there is a systematic review of services by the administrative staff. Where necessary, input is sought from teaching staff, students, and outside sources. We have been reviewing the areas listed below for the past years on a schedule. These procedures themselves can be reviewed between scheduled times as a result of perceived deficiency or suggestions for improvement.

On a regular basis we review the following elements of our program:

- student housing
- policies and procedures regarding employees' performance
- facilities space and décor
- students' visa issues
- admissions policies and procedures
- the policy manual
- student advising, counseling and orientation
- agent procedures and materials
- student health insurance policies and procedures
- the social program
- legal issues
- the mission
- the curriculum



- student achievement
- school development planning and evaluation

**11. Discuss the challenges involved in offering this English training program.**

It is always a challenge for us to provide great, enthusiastic, experienced, and well-prepared teachers for our clients. We want to push the clients, we want them to find the courses intrinsically interesting, we want them to make as much progress as possible, and we want them to be motivated and encouraged to continue working after they leave. This means that we are constantly looking for excellent teachers.

**12. Describe the successes of the program and explain how they are documented.**

We have no methods to demonstrate our success quantitatively. We base our belief in our success in the following qualitative and anecdotal results.

First, on our test, which is taken at the beginning and end of client programs longer than a month, improvement scores average around one to two percent per week of stay. We do not monitor the conditions under which the students take the test, and while we do not suspect that there is cheating going on, this is not a secure, proctored exam.

Second, we have plenty of anecdotal evidence that our students' TOEIC scores improve considerably. In fact, most of our students get the scores they need for promotion, raises, international postings, etc. However, this kind of information comes only from their e-mails or postings on our Facebook page, as we cannot require clients to report all their test scores to us after they leave.

Third, our end-of course evaluations from the students are overwhelmingly positive. We have an online survey, which all of our students fill out before they leave, with questions to the students about their experience here. Their companies do not participate in this evaluation.

However, we do have continuing returning students from the companies for which we train, and this repeat business seems to us to be the most reliable way of judging whether our programs are successful in the eyes of the companies who send students here. These continual bookings from the same companies and departments suggest to us that we are doing the right things.