Trinity CertTESOL

Resource 1: Study Skills

The CertTESOL course is an intense and rewarding learning experience leading to a highly regarded international qualification for Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages. You may still be thinking about whether to follow a Trinity CertTESOL course or you may have already registered for a particular course.

This module will introduce you briefly to the work involved in a CertTESOL course and the various study skills that are required:

- Working as a team member
- Managing your time
- Taking notes
- Computer skills
- Participating in inputs
- Feedback and reflection
- Writing assignments

*For each **Reflection Task**, take a moment to think and make notes mentally or in writing before you continue to read.*

Working as a Team Member

You will be part of a group of trainees with different backgrounds and experience but all sharing skills towards a common goal. How well you do on the course depends to a large extent on how well you work together with your peers and instructors towards that goal.

Reflection Task 1

1. Do you prefer working individually or as part of a team?
2. When was the last time you worked as part of a team? How did you feel about it?
3. What particular skills can you bring to the team?

Through collaborative learning you share knowledge, ideas and suggestions. You will be able to encourage and motivate each other, and have a much more enjoyable time on the course. In this way, when you prepare your individual assignments and lesson plans, you are able to draw on what you have learnt from peers as well as on your own ideas.

Managing Your Time

The CertTESOL is rich in content. In addition to teaching practice (TP) and input sessions, there are lesson plans, materials, reflection, assignments, and filing to be completed. In order to be successful on the CertTESOL, you need to organize your time carefully.

Reflection Task 2

1. How well do you generally manage your time?
2. How well do you respond to working under pressure?
3. What strategies do you use for time management (e.g. making lists, setting time frames, etc.)?

If you have already registered for a course, you should have received a Handbook with course information, a course timetable and a pre-course task. Before the course starts, use these to make:

- a provisional schedule or timetable for the whole course, so you have an overview of your lessons, assignments, and exams
- a weekly plan, so you have time allocated for TP, assignments, and review
- a daily list, so you can confidently and efficiently achieve your targets

Once you have started training, prioritise your activities with your deadlines in mind. Make sure you set realistic goals and standards for yourself, and organise all your materials into easily accessible folders with clearly separated sections.

Study Planner Apps

Using an app can help get you into the habit of managing your time effectively by prioritizing your work on tasks and assignments according to the course schedule.

Some useful apps include:

- [IStudyPlan](#) (Android, iPhone)
- [iStudiezPro](#) (Mac, Android, Windows)
- [My Study Life](#) (Mac, iPad, iPhone, Android, Windows)

Note Taking

During observations and inputs you need to listen, participate, think and take notes at the same time.

> **Reflection Task 4**
>
> 1. How efficient is your note taking?
> 2. What strategies do you use (e.g. key words, mind maps, abbreviations, different colours, etc.)
> 3. What do you do with your notes after the event?
> 4. Do you use apps for note taking and organizing information?

While taking notes

- use a reasonably sized notebook and leave a margin or blank spaces for added information or comments
- making notes on your laptop or tablet is fine, though make sure you can still stay focused on your instructor and participate in the session
- don't try to note down everything; listen carefully and note main points
- listen for signal statements: *It's really important…, Don't forget …*
- be economical with your language
  - use acronyms, e.g. *TTT (teacher talking time), CCQ (concept check question)*
  - write the beginning of a long word, e.g. *diff(erent), pron(unciation)*
  - leave out the vowels, e.g. wrksht (worksheet), cntxt (context)
  - develop a code, e.g. pics (pictures), w/b (whiteboard)

After taking notes

- summarize key points, especially those that relate to your upcoming TP sessions
- check with your peers to clarify or supplement your notes
- file your notes under the relevant sections of the course units

Note taking apps

These apps provide a convenient notepad while also enabling you to collect information in the form of e.g. images, text, web pages, audio/video clips into a single place. The information can then be edited, annotated, filed, and shared with peers.

- [Evernote](#) (Mac, iPad, iPhone, Android, Windows, Safari, Chrome)
- [OneNote](#) (Mac, iPad, iPhone, Android, Windows, Kindle Fire)
- [GoodReader](#) (Mac, iPad, iPhone, Android, Windows, Kindle Fire)

Mind mapping apps

You can utilize these apps in a number of ways. They are great tools to capture and organize ideas for lessons and assignments and they may also be used to rework input notes into a more visual format. Some trainees employ mind maps as revision aids.

- [Freemind](#) (iPad, iPhone, Android, Windows)
- [Mindjet](#) (iPad, iPhone, Android, Windows)
- [iMindMapHD](#) (Mac, iPad, iPhone, Android, Windows)

Computer Skills

Depending where you are planning to teach, it is highly likely that you will need to use IT to communicate with management and your teaching team, produce lesson plans and materials, and to deliver your lessons.

Reflection Task 5

1. How computer literate are you in terms of accessing information and using and producing materials such as text files, images, video and audio?
2. What are some advantages and disadvantages of using IT in the classroom?

Essential computer skills for the CertTESOL include

- emailing your tutors and your peers and downloading documents
- word processing lesson plans and assignments
- creating your own lesson materials: worksheets PPT presentations, using text, video and images
- accessing and using internet sources for information and downloading.

Participating in Input Sessions

In order to be successful on the CertTESOL, you need to take an active part in inputs, group work and feedback sessions.

Listen actively

- bring a positive and engaged attitude
- think about what you already know and what you would like to find out
- listen with an open mind and be receptive
- actively respond to what you hear: comment, ask questions and make suggestions

Feedback and Reflection

On the CertTESOL a lot of your learning will come from practical application of newly acquired knowledge. In your TP feedback, you will reflect and share ideas on what you are doing well, and how you can improve your teaching, as well as receiving feedback and suggestions from your trainers and peers.

Reflection Task 6

1. How can you learn effectively from experience?
2. What do you think is important when giving and receiving feedback on performance?
3. How do you feel about giving and receiving feedback?

When giving feedback to others

- balance positive comments with areas for improvement
- be encouraging - confidence inspires performance
- provide constructive ideas for how things can be improved

When receiving feedback

- thank the person
- take notes on both positive comments and areas to improve on
- ask for clarification if you don't quite understand the point being made
- use the comments to specify personal aims for your next TP session

Reflect on your own teaching by asking yourself

- what went well and why
- what could I have done better, why and how

When observing others, think of

- what they did well and why
- what you would like to incorporate into your own teaching
- how you can achieve this

Be open to new ideas, confident and positive.
Use key points in feedback to develop personal aims for your next TP lesson.

Assignment Writing Skills

On the CertTESOL you will need to produce the following portfolios/journals and assignments:

Unit 1: Teaching Practice Portfolio and Guided Observation Journal
Unit 2: Language Awareness (most centers use an in class or take-home exam)
Unit 3: Learner Profile
Unit 4: Materials Assignment
Unit 5: Unknown Language Journal

Reflection Task 7

1. How confident do you feel about your writing skills?
2. How accurate is your language?

When writing assignments

- be clear on requirements: you will get detailed guidelines
- for creative thinking, use brainstorming, mind-mapping or other ways that suit your learning style
- start writing as early as possible
- you will be penalized for inaccurate use of language
- proofread your assignment and make necessary edits

We hope you have enjoyed this introduction to some of the Study Skills for the Trinity CertTESOL course and found it useful.