



Core Qualifications

Training Field Description

Language and Culture

Modules:

- Intercultural Learning
- English for Employees in Tourism
 - Reception
 - Restaurant
 - Tourist-Information
 - Tour Operator
 - Applications
- Practice in Language
- Preparation of Practical Training Abroad
- Support for Individual foreign Language Training

1. Targets

The acquisition of the competence to act at an international level is part of the key qualifications for employees in the tourist industry.

To start with, this includes **language skills**. In order to communicate with one another, at least one of the business partners has to be able to speak the other's language. Or they use a common lingua franca, i.e., usually English.

Simply having a command of this language, however, does not automatically involve insight into and empathy for the corresponding cultural norms and behaviour patterns that, after all, only represent one way of life among many, if we apply a global yardstick. To be able to hold their own in the global market, people working in it should acquire an understanding for different moral concepts and customs in different cultural areas, and they should learn to adapt to this in their business relations. What they require is therefore **intercultural competence**.

2. Definition of the training field

The Language and Culture training field therefore combines two areas which, although they are interrelated, should not necessarily, and cannot possibly, be completely taught together.

The English-speaking area is only one of many in the international tourist business. So teaching English in this case does not serve primarily the purpose of dealing with these target cultures as far as their language and culture are concerned, but to teach English as a lingua franca enabling employees in the tourist sector to communicate everywhere with customers and colleagues from all over the world. In principle targets like this already define what we understand by the acquisition of **language skills** in this training field: this is not supposed to be a course in English for general educational purposes but to prepare the learners linguistically for everyday work. In other words, this training field describes typical professional situations, it defines the necessary linguistic requirements for coping with these situations and practises phrases and expressions in the language that are appropriate to the job. This is done by means of → Modules 2-6.

The English lessons should make mention of the intercultural aspects. But speaking about them only in this context would mean dealing with them only superficially. **Intercultural competence** is indeed connected with language competence (see also → Module 1, Component 2), but is simultaneously part of all other core qualifications in a "Tourism" training course. Whether it means taking care of international customers or the development of market strategies for other countries, cultural factors always play a role, they often determine decisions. The components developed in → Module 1 can help to acquire the necessary capacity to act.

As it involves the entire personality the international capacity to act cannot be learned at school or in advanced training sessions alone, even if the teaching is very practically oriented and contains affective components. Even as far as the knowledge of a foreign language is concerned language courses can only teach basics that have to be consolidated and extended through continuous use. Practical experience

abroad and lifelong advanced training are thus of decisive importance for people working in the tourist sector.

Educational institutions can support their students in this respect by familiarising them with methods and material and, for example, by giving them the opportunity to use and evaluate the knowledge they have acquired within the framework of controlled traineeships abroad. Ideas and suggestions about this topic can be found in → Modules 7 and 8.

3. Scenarios

The suggestions and information on training methods are illustrated by means of examples in each of the modules in this training field.

4. Information on training methods

The following statements locate the training field within the **Common European Framework of Reference for Languages**.¹

“The Framework of Reference provides a common base for the development of syllabuses for the target language, curriculum guidelines, exams, textbooks, etc., throughout Europe. It offers a detailed description of what students have to learn to do in order to use a language for communicative purposes and the kind of knowledge and skills they have to develop to be able to act in a successfully communicative way. The description also covers the cultural context in which language is embedded.”²

The Language and Culture training field aims at qualifying the learners for professional situations in which they have to deal with guests from foreign cultural areas or in which they work as foreigners themselves. This calls for an **action-oriented approach** that sees linguistic skills in the context of communicative actions. An approach of this kind also incorporates cognitive and emotional possibilities and people’s intentions as well as the whole range of skills they have available and use as socially active human beings.

Here it is necessary to distinguish **general skills** of the learners of a language (their general knowledge and skills, their personality, their attitudes, their intercultural competence and their capacity to learn) and **communicative language skills** that comprise linguistic (e.g. use of correct verb forms and appropriate phrases), socio-linguistic (e.g., the use of appropriate forms of politeness) and pragmatic components (e.g., appropriate structuring of a business letter).

Many of the **general skills** are required and activated in language teaching but at the same time the teaching can and is supposed to help develop these learner skills further. In this training field, the emphasis with regard to general skills is on developing intercultural competence. The principles of teaching methodology for intercultural learning are mainly explained in → Module 1. But the other modules take this aspect into consideration as well.

A learner’s or language user’s **communicative language skills** are developed by means of suitable tasks using different language activities. They comprise reception, production, interaction and mediation (especially interpreting and translating). Each of these activities can be carried out in the oral or written form or in both.

Communicative tasks in class – no matter whether they reflect ‘real’ use of language or are mainly of a ‘didactic’ nature – are communicative to the extent that they require the students to understand, negotiate and express contents in order to achieve a goal. The focus of a communicative task is on achieving this goal.

¹ The original text can be inspected under <http://www.goethe.de/z/50/commeuro/deindex.htm>.

² see Framework of Reference Chapter 1

It follows therefore that the content-level plays a central part here, i.e. the realisation of the communicative intention.

When it comes to performing tasks specially developed for learning or teaching a language, however, it is not only the contents that are important, but also the linguistic form in which these are negotiated. In the general selection and sequencing of communicative tasks a balance needs to be struck between accuracy in terms of form and content and desirable fluency when speaking and writing.³

The form that communicative tasks might assume for the field “English for employees in the tourist sector”, and how these are to be designed in terms of their contents and methodology, are topics that are dealt with in detail in → Modules 2-6.

The curriculum is to be understood as a maximum offer designed to meet as many requirements as possible. It is the responsibility of the local instructor to select the appropriate material for the participants in his course and, where necessary, to modify the model appropriately. The necessary selection for the specific teaching situation can be made either according to the pressing needs of the specific course and/or according to the criterion of time available. Depending on the professional requirements expected the focus might, for example, be placed on spoken skills or rather on written skills. Naturally a major part is also played by the level of difficulty of the teaching units. This point in particular makes great demands of those instructing the class. This is because teachers who are training employees from the tourist business, normally do not have a homogenous learning group in front of them. The necessity of preparing a possibly very heterogeneous group for coping with professional situations, calls for the differentiation of tasks with respect to fundamental and extended skills (principle of the foundation course/additional course and internal differentiation).

So, for example, when providing instruction on how to deal with complaints, the foundation course would mean that the receptionist can understand that the guest is complaining, and possibly even what the guest's problem is. She can express her polite regrets and understanding for the guest and signal to the guest that she will do something about it immediately. Until the complaint has been clarified she then might perhaps offer him a seat and a drink so that the guest feels understood, respected and in good hands. The additional course would, for example, train a receptionist to be able to cope with all the stages of professional complaints management using the appropriate language.

5. Contents of the training field (120 hrs.)

The Language and Culture training field is subdivided in the three main sections **Intercultural Training**, **English for Employees in the Tourist Sector** and **Intercultural and Language Practice**. The eight separate modules are allocated to these main sections.

Measured by the envisaged time frame of 120 hours, these sections appear to be immoderately large. The proposed learning topics, however, should not be misinterpreted as a mandatory programme to be worked off obediently. On the contrary, the modules are organized on the building-block concept. Should certain important aspects be left out of account in the modules, the instructor is invited to supplement them by adding further learning topics.

Even if the course leader decides only to treat a part of the topics listed, it is still advisable to start by reading through all the teaching units, because basic information on training methods is not repeated in every section. → Modules 1 and 2 are especially important in this context. Module 1 explains the procedure relevant to the set of topics 1 “Intercultural Training”, which naturally differs from that in the language-oriented modules. → Module 2 contains a list of recommended textbooks as well as general remarks on training methods for the language-oriented modules to which reference is made in the units that follow.

As a consequence of what has just been said, the suggestions as to the number of hours to be devoted to each module need to be treated flexibly. Here the same criteria apply as for the selection of contents and placement of emphases. The following plan may serve as a (tentative) guideline:

³ cf. Common European Framework of Reference, Chapter 2.1.3

- **Intercultural Training**
 - Module 1: Intercultural Communication (20 hrs.)
- **English for Employees in the Tourist Sector**
 - Module 2: Reception (including dealing with complaints) (28 hrs.)
 - Module 3: Restaurant (12 hrs.)
 - Module 4: Tourist Information (including 'guided tour') (20 hrs.)
 - Module 5: Travel agency and travel operator (20 hrs.)
 - Module 6: Applications (20 hrs.)
- **Intercultural and Language Practice**
 - Module 7: Traineeships abroad (additional offer)
 - Module 8: Aids to further foreign language training for the individual learner (additional offer)

6. Interfaces

The field Language and Culture training field "cuts across" all other training fields, because the aim of this training field is to qualify the students in such a way that they can fulfil the professional requirements described in other modules within an international context and if necessary in a foreign language.

7. Certificates

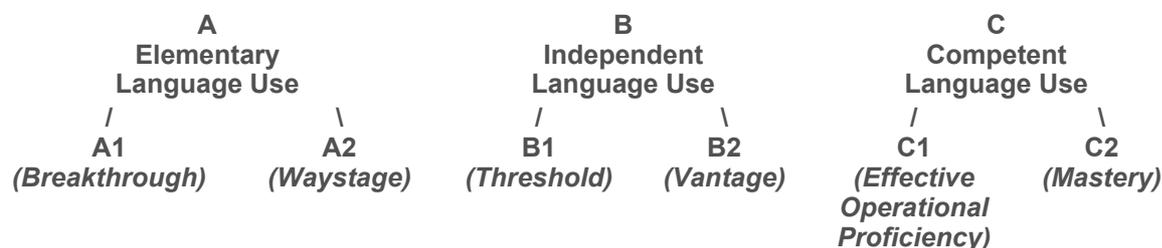
There are some remarks in → Module 1 on the certification of the capacity to act internationally (intercultural competence).

The documentation of experience abroad in the 'European Language Passport' is described in → Module 7.

The course contents of → Modules 2-6 that focus on communicative language competence may prepare the way for exams and certificates recognised throughout Europe.

For quite a while there have been European efforts to develop exams that are recognised and comparable throughout Europe. An overview of these and other internationally offered exams can be found under <http://www.language-learning.net/DE/index.htm>. The **Common European Framework of Reference for Languages** described under Point 4 has meanwhile become the basis for all European activities.

Among other things, the Framework of Reference defines six levels of language competence described with reference to fields of reception, interaction, production and mediation respectively.



The following internationally recognised certificate examinations are available especially for employees in the tourist sector,

1. EFTI (English for the Tourism Industry)

This exam was developed by the *London Chamber of Commerce and Industry (LCCI)* and is offered at the levels A2 (Waystage) and B1 (Threshold). It provides evidence of written and oral language skills for

employees in the tourism industry. The exams are held four times a year by national agencies of the LCCI.⁴

2. WEFT (Written English for the Tourism Industry)

This exam was also developed by the *London Chamber of Commerce and Industry (LCCI)* and is offered at two levels. One level was developed for airlines, hotels, tour operators and staff in travel agencies, national tourist authorities and tourist information offices, the second level for employees in administrative and management positions with hotels, airlines, tour operators or other organisations. The exams are held four times a year or on request.⁵

3. The European Language Certificates - English for the Hotel and Catering Industry

This exam is part of the European offer of language certificates developed by the German Association of Adult Education Centres (Deutscher Volkshochschulverband). It is offered at level B1 (Threshold) and is held by all member organisations of the ICC (International Certificate Conference). The ICC is an international association of adult-education organisations.⁶

Above and beyond this offer, there are also examinations at national levels that are geared to the Common European Framework of Reference. In Germany there is the **Resolution of the Conference of German Ministers of Education and Culture (Kultusministerkonferenz – KMK) on the certification of foreign-language knowledge in professional training**, which is currently being implemented by the individual federal states.⁷ It is recommended that instructors teaching outside of Germany find out about the equivalent national initiatives.

The language modules we have presented are suitable preparation for these exams, But the organisations that offer examinations also provide information about suitable preparatory material even offer mock exams to enable learners to check their status.

The **European Language Portfolio**⁸ is a slightly different approach for the documentation of a person's knowledge of foreign languages. It is a document in which people who learn or have learned a language at school or outside school can document and reflect their experience of language learning.

The portfolio contains a **Language Passport**, which is regularly updated by its owner. It provides a schematic form enabling learners to describe their language skills according to the criteria defined in the Common European Framework of Reference. The passport can serve as a supplement to other well-known language certificates.

Apart from this, the language portfolio contains a detailed **Language Biography** of the learner describing his experience in each language and designed to help him plan and evaluate his learning progress on his own.

And finally the portfolio contains a **dossier** in which the learner's own work can be collected for purposes of documenting the learner's language skills.

So, as far the language portfolio is concerned, instructors will act in a more consultative capacity, making the portfolio available to their students and helping them filling it in. The language passport also contains a section in which the language teacher may ratify or amend the student's self-assessment.

⁴ For details see <http://www.lccieb.org.uk/>

⁵ For details see <http://www.lccieb.org.uk/>

⁶ Further information under <http://www.sprachenzertifikate.de/>

⁷ see <http://www.kmk.org/doc/beschl/rvfz02-04-26.pdf>

⁸ see <http://www.coe.int/portfolio>