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Language *is the key.*

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NEWCOMER LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY AND THE PLA PROCESS:

Understanding the language proficiency
levels required to work and study in
Canada

CAPLA CONFERENCE – Fredericton, 2006

Pauline McNaughton, Executive Director

Tuesday, October 17, 2006



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Facts and Stats

- **One in six young, highly educated male immigrants leaves Canada within a year due to the job market, a 2006 Statistics Canada study shows. For those entering Canada in the crucial skilled-worker and business class, 40 per cent moved on within the first 10 years.**
- Six out of ten immigrants are forced to make a downwardly mobile shift into a career, or job, other than the one they were qualified for.

- Among persons aged 25-54 with a university degree, unemployment for recent immigrants has consistently been at least triple the rate for the Canadian born



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Canadian Labour & Business Centre

- Lack of Canadian work experience
- Transferability of foreign credentials
- Lack of official language skills**

*Source: CLBC Handbook, Immigration
& Skill Shortages, by the Canadian
Labour & Business Centre*



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Ontario Regulators for Access

Access to Ontario's Regulated Professions by International Candidates - July 2003 - Regulators identified 4 main challenges that may prevent or delay access to professions by international candidates:

- lack of pre-immigration licensing information
- lack of knowledge of Ontario workplace practices
- **lack of occupation-specific language**
 - **the ability to read and write English does not guarantee comprehension particularly of occupation-specific language**



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A leg up for skilled newcomers. Goal of courses is to 'Canadianize' workers and help them land jobs in the fields they trained in, LAURA RAMSAY writes - Globe and Mail September 26, 2006 LAURA RAMSAY

Mohammad Yaser's story is a familiar tale of immigrant employment woe. Certified as a civil engineer in his native Pakistan, Mr. Yaser worked for six years there as a manager responsible for pricing and sourcing supplies and estimating job costs for a large construction company. But since immigrating to Toronto in January, 2004, the married father of two young children has been working as a security guard at a warehouse, unable to leverage his international education and work experience into a construction management job in Canada." The problem seems to be that I have no Canadian education or experience," he says. Mr. Yaser's frustration at being unable to find work in the field he trained for is increasingly paralleled by concern among Canadian employers who are not able to find enough professionals and skilled trades people to staff their businesses ...

Poor English is the primary barrier preventing skilled immigrants from landing relevant construction-management jobs, she says.

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Mr. Yaser is hoping a new course being launched in January by Toronto's George Brown College will give him the domestic credentials he needs to get back into the construction business. The course, Construction Management for Internationally Educated Professionals, is a three-semester, postgraduate program designed to help new immigrants who were trained elsewhere as architects and engineers to develop the language and workplace skills needed to land entry-level management jobs in the Canadian construction industry. Mr. Yaser will be one of about 27 students in the new program. "This is a great opportunity for me," he says.

The program doesn't attempt to certify new immigrants as either architects or engineers, both of which are regulated by professional bodies that set the rules for foreign-trained professionals, says project manager Suzanne Kavanagh. **The goal is to help immigrant professionals land their first job in a construction-related field by "Canadianizing" them -- teaching them about Canadian building codes, Canadian building materials as well as labour laws, human rights legislation and health and safety requirements.** As they get closer to graduation, the students will focus on interviewing techniques and workplace skills, Ms. Kavanagh says. "These are very capable people but they need to build up their confidence and familiarity with Canadian industry," she says.

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Poor English is the primary barrier preventing skilled immigrants from landing relevant construction-management jobs, she says. Technically qualified students whose English skills are not at the level required for college admission can take a career-specific language course that begins next month. It focuses on the vocabulary and concepts specific to the construction industry, Ms. Kavanagh says.

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A further complicating factor...

The Learning a Living Report findings show that although many countries “actively seek to attract skilled foreign workers with high credentials ... education credentials do not necessarily translate into functional levels of literacy, numeracy and problem solving skills in the official language(s) of the host country.”

Page 210, *Learning a Living: First Results of the Adult Literacy and Life Skills Survey*, Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development.

Available at

<http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/44/7/34867438.pdf>



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> **Immigrate to Canada**

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Immigrating to Canada as a Skilled Worker

Skilled workers have education, work experience, knowledge of English or French and other abilities that will help them to establish themselves successfully as permanent residents in Canada.

Applying to come to Canada as a skilled worker is not difficult. Consult this section to find all the information and forms you need to make your application.

Notice:
CIC has introduced a new [simplified application process](#) for federal skilled workers.

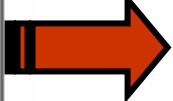
Source: <http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/skilled/index.html>


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| Proficiency Level | Ability | | | |
|---|------------------------------|-------------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| | Speaking | Listening | Reading | Writing |
| HIGH: You can communicate effectively in most social and work situations. | <u>Speaking:</u> High | <u>Listening:</u> High | <u>Reading:</u> High | <u>Writing:</u> High |
| MODERATE: You can communicate comfortably in familiar social and work situations. | <u>Speaking:</u> Moderate | <u>Listening:</u> Moderate | <u>Reading:</u> Moderate | <u>Writing:</u> Moderate |
| BASIC: You can communicate in predictable contexts and on familiar topics, but with some difficulty. | <u>Speaking:</u> Basic | <u>Listening:</u> Basic | <u>Reading:</u> Basic | <u>Writing:</u> Basic |
| NO: You do not meet the above criteria for basic proficiency. | Does not meet Basic Level. | Does not meet Basic Level. | Does not meet Basic Level. | Does not meet Basic Level. |

 **CLB 8**

 **CLB 6**

 **CLB 4**

Source: <http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/skilled/index.html>

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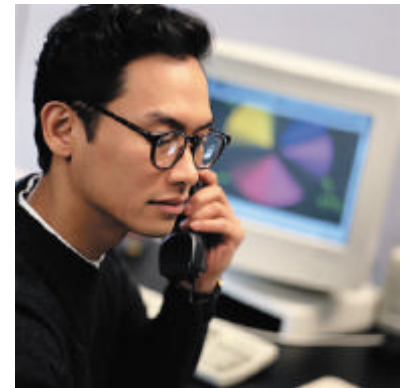


Immigrants from mainland China

The majority of new immigrants from mainland China are skilled workers or professionals, a smaller proportion of them are investors or entrepreneurs.

Most of them are able to read and write in English, but don't speak the language well enough to work here. They underestimate the language and professional barriers that await them when they come to Canada.

Source: TRIEC website



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Standards can help create access!

“Recognizing learning is a real-world issue for employers. For recognition to be meaningful for them, it has to be based on the demonstrated authenticity, currency, quality, relevancy, trustworthiness and transferability of the learning ... When individuals can demonstrate that their skills and knowledge meet standards for these criteria, then employers will feel comfortable in recognizing them.” Brain Gain Report (2001) page 5

Conference Board of Canada



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“Most language assessment tools are generic or academic, and do not measure the language skills needed in a workplace context.”



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The result is that ***some IE workers “can pass the tests, but cannot function successfully in the workplace; others with the potential to function successfully on the job fail these language tests.”***

*Developing an Occupation-Specific Language Assessment
Tool Using the Canadian Language Benchmarks: A Guide for
Trades and Professional Organizations.*



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*The Canadian
Language
Benchmarks, are
a standard of the
Government of
Canada.*

Canadian Language Benchmarks standard

A set of national language standards is key to the successful integration of immigrants into Canadian society, providing clear descriptors of language proficiency levels appropriate for the labour market, which are recognized and understood across the country.



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The Canadian Language Benchmarks standard offers

- ✓ Clear descriptors of language proficiency levels appropriate for the labour market
- ✓ Recognized and understood across the country
- ✓ Reliable standards that employers [and other stakeholders] can trust



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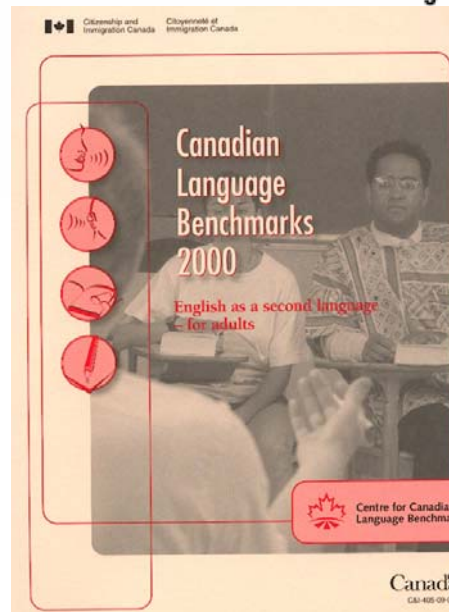
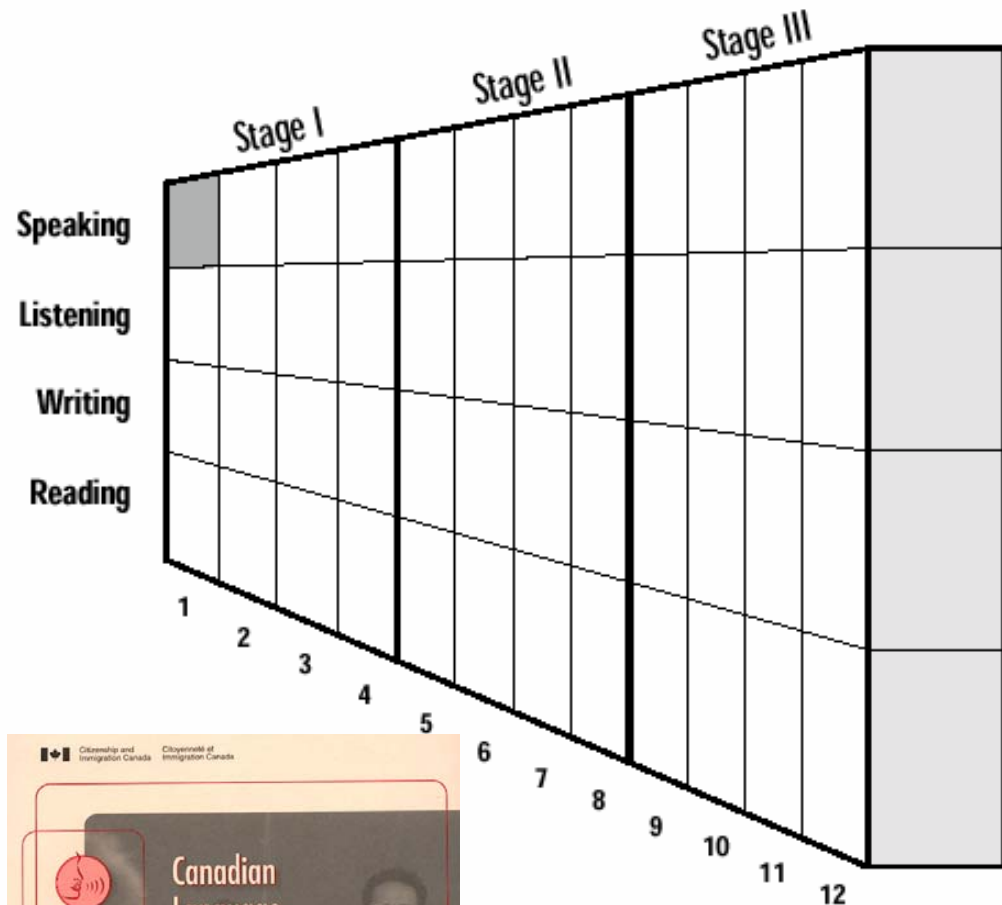
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Schematic Structure of the Canadian Language Benchmarks

As a ***national framework***, the benchmarks provide a ***common professional foundation*** of shared philosophical and theoretical views on language education ... and ***a common yard stick for assessing the outcomes.***

Progression is based on 3 factors:

- 1. Progressively more demanding communication tasks***
- 2. Progressively more demanding contexts***
- 3. Progressively higher expectations of effectiveness and quality of communicative performance***



Available at
www.language.ca



- Provide a *practical, fair means* to determine language proficiency
- Set out proficiency levels that are *more intelligible* to the general public
- Define proficiency in terms of *common human situations and behaviours* where language is used
- Describe clearly *what a person is capable of* accomplishing through language

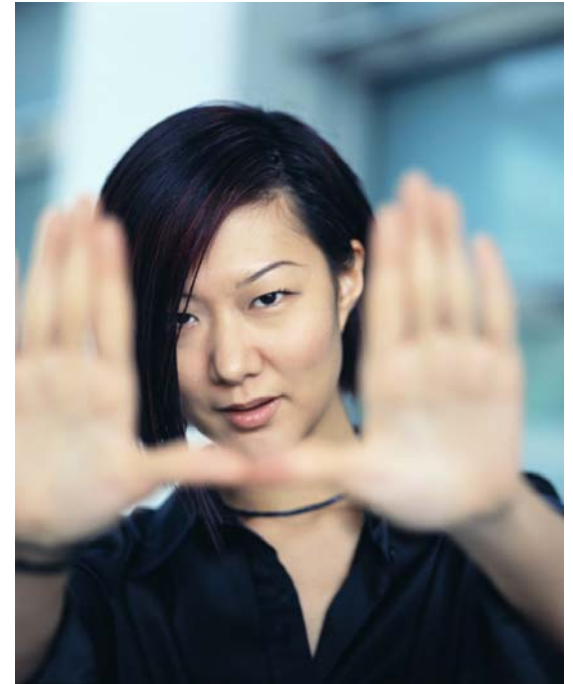


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- The CLB provide the basis for a national assessment system for use in adult ESL/FSL community, education, training, and labour market, including a system of recognition of CLB/NCLC assessors and assessment service providers.



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**CLB tools for
placement into ESL
classes**



CLB Levels 1-8



CLB Levels 7-10

Employment

Bridge/ELT
Programs

CLB Levels 5-10

(Language requirements vary)

Employment

Profession or
Trade Licensing

General ESL
Programs

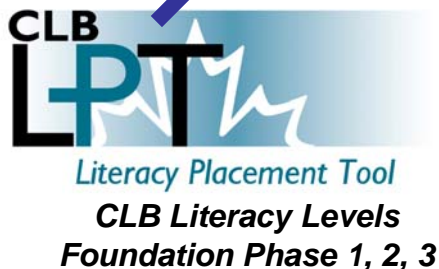
CLB Levels 1-8

(Availability varies across
Canada)

Further Training
(Post Secondary)

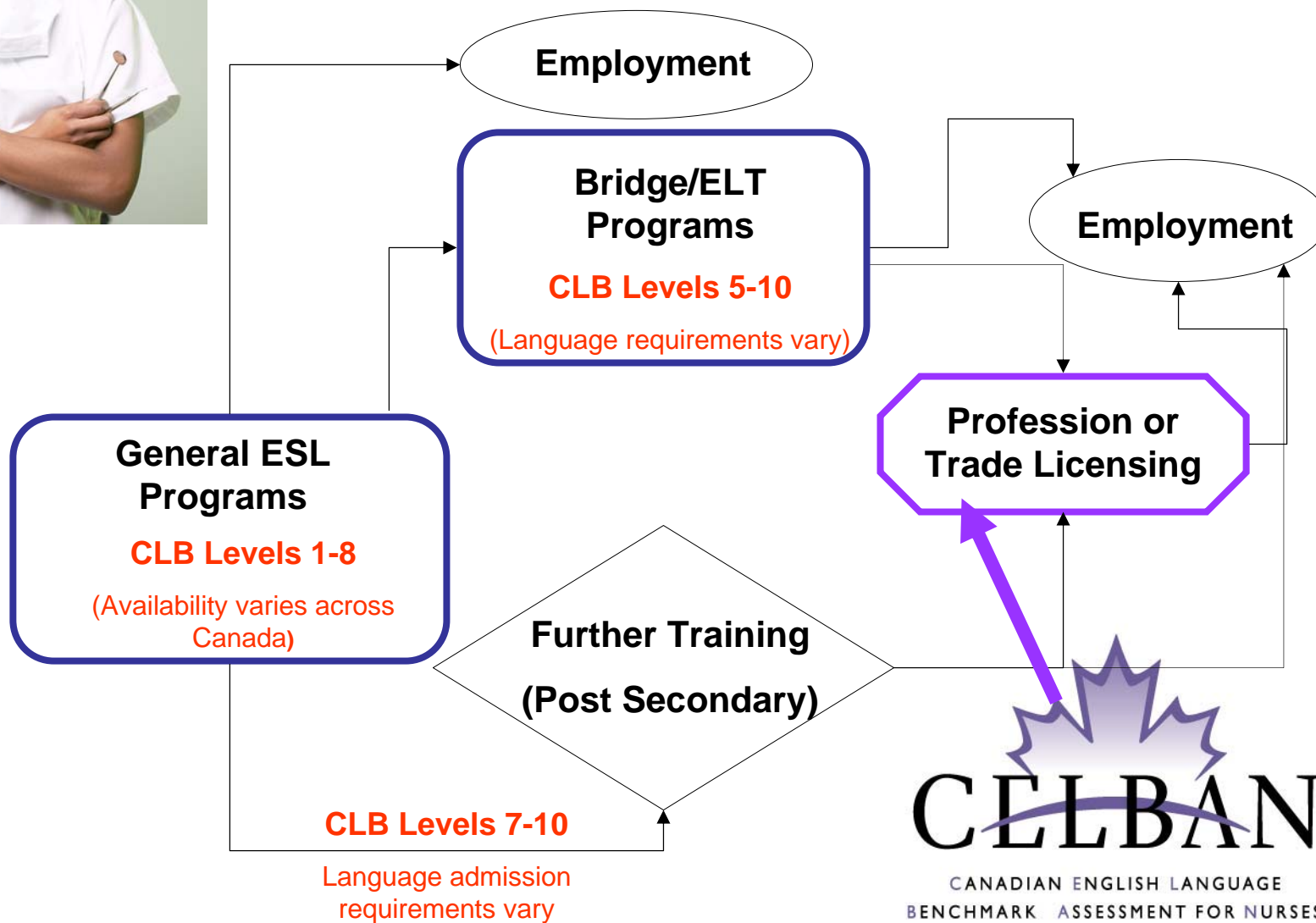
CLB Levels 7-10

Language admission
requirements vary





Model for CLB for Professional Licensing



For information about language needed for success in specific occupations



Employment

Bridge/ELT Programs

CLB Levels 5-10

(Language requirements vary)

Employment

General ESL Programs

CLB Levels 1-8

(Availability varies across Canada)

Profession or Trade Licensing

**Further Training
(Post Secondary)**

CLB Levels 7-10

Language admission requirements vary





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For Learners



Canadian
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Study and Work



Understanding the language proficiency levels
required to work and study in Canada.



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For Practitioners



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Study and Work



Understanding the language proficiency levels
required to work and study in Canada.



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Suggested PLA best practices

- 1. Benchmarking PLA processes**
- 2. Determining CLB levels necessary for clinical placements and employment**
- 3. Language portfolio to supplement or parallel PLA portfolio**

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#1 *Benchmarking College Courses*

- **Pre-Program:** language tasks that students should be capable of before entering a specific College program
- **Program:** language tasks that students would learn as part of the program
- **Post-Program:** language tasks that would be required of students in the workplace in the field
- ***Also includes observations from instructors regarding:***
 - Particular difficulties related to language demands
 - Supports provided or recommended, and
 - Student feedback and observations

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Colleges and training institutions are using the CLB increasingly to benchmark college courses to better counsel immigrants

Examples

- Red River College
- Vancouver Community College
- Camosun College
- SAIT
- Bow Valley College
- Ontario - Colleges Integrating Immigrants To Employment project (CIITE)

Benchmarked courses at Red River College

Aerospace-related Course
Automotive Technician
Business Administration
Chemical and Biosciences
Technology
Civil Technology
Computer Accounting
Computer-Aided Drafting
Computer Analyst Programmer
Culinary Arts
Developmental Services Worker
Early Childhood Education
Electrical
Electrical Engineering
Gas Turbine Engine
Health Care Aide
Heavy Duty Equipment
Hotel and Restaurant Administration
International Business
Manufacturing Technology
Medical Laboratory Sciences
Nursing
Nursing Refresher
Piping Trades
Sterile Processing
Welding
Wood Processing
Other Programs
Transport Driver Training Schools
Truck Driver Training



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Benchmarking PLAR Processes

Portfolio Development can include:

- a paper outlining your education and career goals
- learning outcomes and competency statements
- documentation verifying the learning you claim
- a chronological record of your significant learning experiences
- **a life history paper**
- a resume
- formal and informal records of your past learning achievements

Challenge For Credit can include:

- assessment of educational documents
- standardized tests and program reviews of employer-based training
- product assessment
- interviews and **oral exams**
- performance testing and demonstrations
- essays
- challenge exams
- self assessment



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Canadian Language
Benchmarks/
Essential Skills

Niveaux de compétence
linguistique canadiens/
Compétences essentielles

#2 Benchmarking language levels necessary for clinical placements and final employment

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www.itsessential.ca

Relating Canadian Language Benchmarks to Essential Skills:

A Comparative Framework



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An OLA is a description of language competencies linked to success in one occupation. Referenced to the CLB, it outlines in a standardized format, speaking, listening, reading and writing competencies and related sample tasks for a given occupation.

OLAs are based on 3 national sources:

- Canadian Language Benchmarks
- Essential Skills Profiles
- National Occupational Standards

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OCCUPATIONAL LANGUAGE ANALYSIS

October 13, 2005

Overview of the Methodology

What is an Occupational Language Analysis?

An Occupational Language Analysis (OLA) is a description of language competencies linked to success in one occupation. Referenced to the Canadian Language Benchmarks, it outlines, in a standardized format, speaking, listening, reading and writing competencies and related sample tasks for a given occupation. An OLA is:

- > focused on language skills;
- > a generic description of a broad occupational category;
- > representative, not definitive (that is, it suggests what may be required of a person in this occupation, not what should be expected); and
- > mastery-level – describing language requirements of a worker who is fully competent and has had the opportunity to experience the full range of tasks and to demonstrate successful performance.

What is the purpose of an Occupational Language Analysis?

Who might use this?

ESL teachers, trainers, course developers, instructional designers

job analysts

sector councils, industry associations, unions

employers

learners, potential job applicants, job incumbents

career counsellors, guidance counsellors
governments

For what purpose?

- > to develop occupation-specific language training curriculum, course materials or assessment tools
- > to understand language complexity
- > to modify non-language training (e.g., technical, soft skills training) to accommodate a broader range of language proficiency

- > to analyse language competencies of the job

- > to define occupational requirements
- > to evaluate, facilitate and/or support occupation-specific learning opportunities
- > to inform the development of HR tools and products

- > to understand and identify communication requirements of an occupation
- > to accommodate or bridge communication gaps
- > to inform the development of workplace training plans
- > to inform policy development
- > to assist in performance management

- > to understand occupational language requirements
- > to plan for personal/professional development to meet occupational language requirements
- > to identify career paths
- > to build resumes

- > to advise individuals on career options and educational routes
- > to inform labour market policies and programs





How is an OLA developed?

An OLA is developed by individuals with expertise in the Canadian Language Benchmarks (CLB) and Essential Skills using three pre-existing, well-documented Canadian sources:

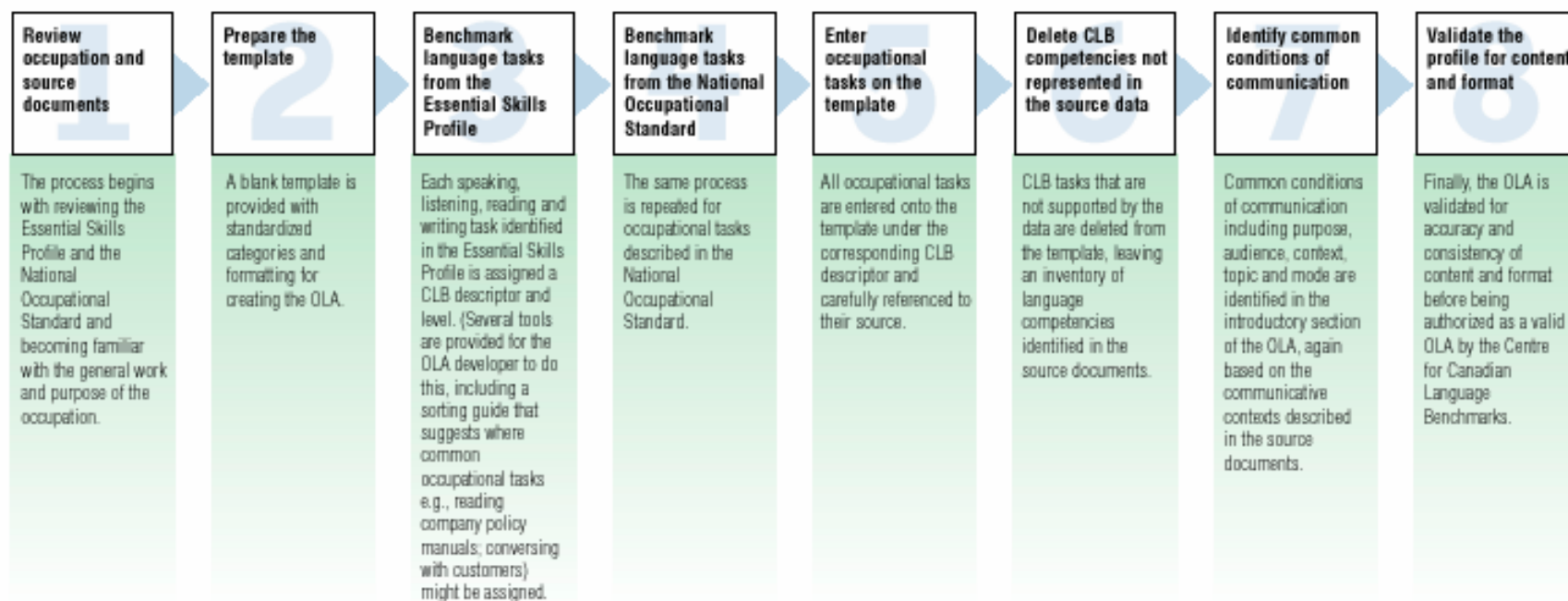
- > *Canadian Language Benchmarks 2000: English as a second language for adults*¹ developed by Citizenship and Immigration Canada, a descriptive scale of communicative proficiency in English and French as a second language expressed as 12 benchmarks or reference points in 4 skill areas: reading, writing, speaking and listening.
- > an *Essential Skills Profile*² – developed by Human Resources and Skills Development Canada, describing how nine essential skills (e.g., reading text, document use, numeracy, writing and computer use) are used by workers in one specific occupation.
- > a *National Occupational Standard*³ – a description of skills and knowledge needed to perform competently in the workplace developed by employers and employees, and nationally validated and endorsed by the related industry.

Note: The rationale behind this methodology is that the rich data in these nationally validated occupational profiles can be used to derive a broad inventory of language tasks. This methodology is suitable for the purposes stated on the table on the previous page. Other occupational contexts in high stakes situations (e.g., occupations where risks of miscommunication are very high) or occupations which do not have well developed standards or Essential Skills Profiles may warrant different methods to develop or validate the analysis, including:

- > direct observation/job shadowing
- > structured interviews
- > focus groups
- > review of job profiling information
- > review of authentic materials
- > written questionnaires and
- > expert reviews.

For more information about this and other CLB/Essential Skills initiatives, go to www.itessential.ca

PROCESS STEPS





GOLF CLUB GENERAL MANAGER (NOC # 6121)

Job Definition¹:

Golf Club General Managers are related to the group “Facility Operation Managers”. Facility operation managers plan, organize, direct and control the operations of commercial, transportation and recreational facilities. Facility operation managers are employed by a wide range of establishments, such as airports, harbors, canals, shopping centers, convention centers, warehouses and recreation facilities.

Additional Occupational Information²:

Golf club general managers report to a board or owners and are responsible for all management functions, operating procedures, practices and results of a golf club. Golf club general managers have fiscal responsibilities and responsibility for their operations. They are becoming more bottom-line oriented and as a result there is a fine line between service and profit in this occupation. Good internal and external communication is important in order for golf club general managers to successfully market their operations. Finally, there is a movement toward job combinations and golf club general managers are being required to develop a broad perspective of their operations and as a result are not specialists in one particular job.

Overview:

This Occupational Language Analysis (OLA) presents Canadian Language Benchmarks (CLB) competencies and typical listening, speaking, reading and writing tasks performed at a competent level by golf club general managers. The tasks are illustrative only, and do not provide a complete sample of what a golf club general manager does on the job. Other essential skills such as numeracy and computer skills are beyond the scope of the OLA. The OLA was validated by a panel of people employed in the occupation and by CLB experts. It was developed by CLB experts using three key resources:

- the *Canadian Language Benchmarks 2000*, Centre for Canadian Language Benchmarks and Citizenship and Immigration Canada
- the *National Occupational Standards for Golf Club General Manager*, Canadian Tourism Human Resource Council
- the *Essential Skills Profile for Golf Club General Manager*, Canadian Tourism Human Resource



Skill: Speaking

I. Social Interaction

Interpersonal Competencies

Greet, introduce self and ask about the other person. (CLB 3)

- *greet [job] applicant: be friendly; put applicant at ease (NOS-C3.2)*

Express and respond to gratitude, appreciation, complaint, disappointment, dissatisfaction, satisfaction and hope. (CLB 7)

- *close [job] interviews: ask if applicant has questions; thank applicant (NOS-C3.2)*

Respond to a minor conflict or complaint. (CLB 8)

- *resolve member/user conflicts: listen to complaint; empathize; assure member/user of willingness to address complaint; follow up, referring to appropriate staff as necessary, e.g., discuss complaints relating to pin placements with greens superintendent (NOS-D4.3)*

Conversation Management

Manage conversation. Check comprehension. (CLB 8)

- *communicate with other departments; follow up on information, for example: acknowledge reports [and] ask for clarification, if necessary (NOS-A4.2)*
- *conduct [job] interviews: ensure applicant understands position (NOS-C3.2)*
- *determine results of advertising and promotions; solicit feedback from members/users, for example: ask questions, e.g., where members/users are from, how they heard of the club (NOS-A4.5)*
- *ensure members/users are aware of policies, rules and regulations (NOS-F2.1)*

Use a variety of strategies to keep conversation going. (CLB 8) Encourage others to participate. (CLB 8)

- *encourage staff input and feedback, for example: ask for questions and comments; maintain 'open door' policy; be approachable (NOS-C5.2)*
- *engage [job] applicant in conversation: ask open-ended questions; develop scenarios; invite dialogue (NOS-C3.2)*

Contribute to/co-manage a discussion or debate in a small formal group (work meeting, seminar). (CLB 9)

- *motivate staff [and] hold regular staff meetings: encourage staff to ask questions and make recommendations for improvement; address problems and concerns (NOS-C5.1)*



Skill: Listening

I. Social Interaction

Identify specific factual details and inferred meanings in dialogues of casual small talk, introductions, leave-taking, and in short phone calls. (CLB 4)

- *listen to take messages (ES-OC)*

Identify stated and unspecified details, facts and opinions about situation and relationship of participants containing expression of and response to gratitude and appreciation, complaint, hope, disappointment, satisfaction, dissatisfaction, approval and disapproval. (CLB 7)

- *resolve member/user conflicts: listen to complaint; empathize; assure member/user of willingness to address complaint (NOS-D4.3); respond to customer complaints, e.g., when tee times are double booked resulting in slow play. The golf club general manager listens to the complaint and accommodates or compensates the customers, sometimes following a set policy (ES-TS)*
- *may have to deal with board or members' complaints, soothing feelings and negotiating in order to resolve the issue (ES-TS)*
- *conduct [job applicant] screening interviews to: determine applicant's interest level; identify strengths and limitations of applicant in comparison to job requirements; identify suitability of applicant to club and membership (NOS-C3.1)*
- *ensure communications with suppliers are open and honest; inform suppliers of needs and concerns; listen to feedback (NOS-F3.4)*

Identify stated and unspecified details about mood, attitude, situation and formality in discourse containing expression of and response to formal welcomes, farewells, toasts, congratulations on achievements and awards, sympathy and condolences. (CLB 8)

- *maintain communication with management and staff to share achievements, issues, problems and solutions (NOS-D3.1)*

II. Instructions

No communication tasks for this category were found in the source documents. These tasks may, in fact, exist for this occupation and will require individual assessment in each work context.

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#3 Develop a language portfolio
for documenting competencies
relevant to PLA process based
on European Language Portfolio
model

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Best practices for discussion

Preparation for PLAR

- Preparation and orientation through
 - Bridging programs (terminology, workplace requirements, etc.)
 - ESL programs

*e.g. Edmonton
Mennonite Centre for
Newcomers -
Engineers*

Determining Language Readiness for PLAR

- Determining benchmarking requirements for e.g.
 - Formal course work
 - Documentation/Portfolio development
 - Clinical placements
- Language assessment and counseling

*Modify and apply
college benchmarking
processes*

Providing language training supports/interventions during PLAR

- Ongoing language training as necessary to ensure
 - Readiness for clinical placements & employment
- Use a parallel language portfolio to document competencies

*Parallel
language
portfolio
model*

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CAPLA report titled “Recognizing the Prior Learning of Immigrants to Canada: Moving towards Consistency and Excellency”, June 2006

My suggested amendments (see underlined comments)

- **Transparency** - “Easy access to clear, well-articulated, up-to-date information at key sources is critical for all foreign-trained individuals ...” and needs to include recommended CLB language levels to successfully participate in PLA processes.
(Just using plain language is not enough.
- **Pre-Advising/Counseling** - needs to provide counseling related to language readiness for PLAR
- **Values** “...to improve continually the accessibility, credibility, and effectiveness of their RPL systems to meet the needs of foreign-trained clients” needs to specifically reference accessibility relevant to minimum CLB language levels and effectiveness in preparing clients for language requirements of workplace
- **Client Responsive** - needs to develop partnerships with related bridging/language training programs or other relevant support services
- **Quality Assurance** - needs to develop tools that help determine readiness for clinical placements and final employment or at least monitoring success of PLA process in this regard



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For more information visit

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Language is the key.

La langue, c'est la clef.