

# Case studies: Teacher's notes

## CASE STUDY 1: VIRTUAL WORKING

This case study is based on the issue of whether or not telework (allowing employees to work from their homes with computers connected to the employer's network) is a good idea. Students begin by reading an article about companies' attitudes to telework and deciding whether statements are true or false. This leads on to categorising the advantages and disadvantages of telework. Students are then presented with a situation in which a company wants to try a pilot scheme with one employee working from home. They read information about four candidates on the shortlist and they have to hold a meeting in order to choose one of them for the experiment.

### Warm-up

Ask students if they ever work from home. Elicit a few advantages and disadvantages of doing this. Ask them to say if they think there are any advantages or disadvantages for their company when they work from home. Don't let the discussion go on too long, as they will return to it later.

**1** Go through the instructions with the class. Ask students to read the statements first, as this will help them with the text by giving them an idea what it is about. Then, when they have read the text, ask them to decide if the statements are true or false. Encourage them to try to correct the false statements.

### ANSWERS

- a** false (It included small to medium-sized businesses.)
- b** true
- c** false (Many companies believe that up to half their meetings could be held online.)
- d** true
- e** true
- f** false (It was carried out by an independent survey company; it was *commissioned* by a web conferencing company.)

**2** Ask students to work in pairs and to go through the list of factors and decide which ones are advantages and which ones are disadvantages of telework. Check answers with the class and invite anyone who has experience of telework to say which ones actually were advantages or disadvantages for them. If no one has done any telework, invite them to speculate about which would be the most important advantages or disadvantages.

### ANSWERS

Advantages: a, b, d, f, g, h, i, j, m, n, q  
Disadvantages: c, e, k, l, o, p, r, s

**3** With medium-sized and large classes, it would be better to put students into small groups to do this exercise. Go through the instructions with the class and make sure everyone understands what they have to do. Allow plenty of time for them to read the information about each candidate and to decide what order they, personally, would put them in.

Students may need to prepare what they are going to say in the meeting for homework. Allow them to make notes, but discourage them from writing down whole sentences, which they then simply read out. It might help them run the meeting more efficiently if they decide who will chair it and choose someone to take notes. The chair can then make sure everyone contributes and can lead and structure the discussion.

As they have their meetings, go around giving help and encouragement. If they can't reach an agreement during the course of their discussion, allow them to have a vote to decide on the winning candidate. Get the groups to present their winning candidate to the rest of the class and give the reasons why they chose that person.

### 1:1

Give your student time to read the information on all the candidates and reach a decision about their order of priority. Make sure you do the same. Then have a discussion about your decisions. Be prepared to challenge your student's choice, but do this gently and be careful not to dominate the conversation. Encourage your student to give reasons for his/her opinions and set a good example by doing so yourself.

## CASE STUDY 2: INCENTIVES

This case study is based on the topic of how a company can encourage loyalty and commitment from its workers by offering incentives or perks. Students read about various types of incentive schemes and discuss the advantages and disadvantages of them. They then look at the case of a transport company with an absenteeism problem among its workforce. They have to take part in a meeting to decide how to tackle this problem and decide which of four proposals for incentive schemes is best.

### Warm-up

Go through the definition of an *incentive scheme* with the class and ask students to vote on whether or not such schemes work.

**1** Go through the statements with the class and make sure everyone understands them. Then ask students to read the text and find out whether they are true or false, according to the text.

**ANSWERS**

**a** true **b** false **c** true **d** false **e** true

**2** Go through the questions with students first to make sure they understand them, then put them into pairs to discuss their answers.

**3** Ask students to read the opinions and decide if each is talking about an advantage or disadvantage of incentives. Allow them to compare their ideas in pairs before checking with the class.

**ANSWERS**

**a** A **b** D **c** D **d** A **e** D **f** A **g** D **h** D **i** D **j** D

**4** Ask students to categorise the opinions again, this time according to whether they relate to individual incentives or group incentives.

**ANSWERS**

Individual incentives: a, b, c, g, i, j

Group incentives: d, e, f, h

**5** Go through the instructions with the class. Ask students individually to read the four proposals and think about which one they consider to be the best. Remind them that they can come up with their own proposal if they wish. With large classes, divide students into small groups. Ask them to have a meeting to discuss the proposals and to try to come to a group decision. Remind them to feed in their own proposals if they have them. Encourage them either to reach a unanimous decision in their group or to have a vote and go with the majority decision. Have a class feedback session and find out how much consensus there is.

**1:1**

You could ask your student to describe a problem that his/her company experiences and to suggest an incentive scheme that might be a way to solve it.

## CASE STUDY 3: OFFICE DESIGN

This case study discusses the issue of office design and whether open-plan offices or closed offices are best for the company and for the employees. Students begin by reading a text about office design and identifying whether statements are true or false. They then discuss their own situation and talk about the kind of office they prefer. The main exercise in this case study is a simulated meeting in which students take the roles of four people in an electronics company which is going to redesign its office. They discuss two proposals from an architect, make a choice and decide where each person will sit.

**1** Go through the statements with students, then ask them to read the text and say whether the statements are true or false, according to the author. When you have checked the answers, get students' reactions to the text and help with any difficult words.

**ANSWERS**

**a** true **b** true **c** true **d** false **e** true

**2** Put students into pairs to discuss the questions. Encourage them to report back to the class on their ideas.

**3** Go through the instructions and the roles with students, then ask them to get into groups and take one role each. Ask them to decide who will lead the meeting and who will take notes. Allow preparation time for them to decide which proposal their character would choose and how they would express their views at the meeting. Allow them to make notes, but discourage them from writing scripts.

While they are having their meetings, go round offering help and encouragement. Tell them to try to come to a decision on which proposal to accept, then to decide where each person will sit.

In a class feedback session, ask the note-taker from each group to report back on their meeting and the decisions they came to.

**1:1**

Ask your student to prepare arguments for one of the roles and to let you know which one he or she has chosen. You can then prepare arguments for an opposing role and have a two-person meeting.

## CASE STUDY 4: TOIL

TOIL stands for *time off in lieu*, the practice of getting staff to work extra hours, but giving them time off later instead of paying them overtime. This case study is based on the advantages and disadvantages to both a company and its staff of using TOIL to cope with busy periods. Students begin by reading comments about overtime, then saying whether they agree or disagree with them. They then read some information about a company, listen to a conversation between two of its managers and answer questions. This leads on to a simulated meeting in which students assume the roles of managers and staff representatives discussing possible TOIL arrangements at a popular tourist attraction. They then listen to the director of the company talking about their policy.

### Warm-up


Explain the title and find out what the arrangements are in students' companies. Do they get paid for overtime, or are they expected to do it without payment? Can they take time off later to make up for extra hours they work? Which would they rather have, more money or more free time?

**1** Put students into pairs and give them plenty of time to read and discuss the comments. Answer any questions they may have about new vocabulary. Ask them to mark the statements according to whether they agree, disagree or are not sure. Then have a class feedback session to find out how much consensus there is.

**2** Focus attention on the photos and the company information. Go through the questions with students, then ask them to read the information and find the answers. When you have checked these, answer any questions about new vocabulary.

### ANSWERS

- a** It is a tourist attraction, consisting of a museum and gardens.
- b** Yes
- c** It is a beautiful location to use as a setting for films and TV shows.

**3**  **2.29** Go through the questions with students before you play the recording, so that they know what information to listen out for.

### ANSWERS


- a** They have a TV company coming to do some filming on Saturday evening and they don't have enough staff to cover it.
- b** It would be too expensive, and the two people they want to do the job are already working a full week and probably wouldn't be interested in doing overtime.
- c** They can have a day off later on.

### 2.29

- A:** Hey, Dave, we've got a problem this weekend. A big TV crew is coming on Saturday evening to do some filming. Who's going to cover it?
- B:** What about Steve and Anna? They're both good people.
- A:** Yes, but they're working all this week, and I don't think they'd be interested in overtime. In any case, it's too expensive, and we can't really afford it.
- B:** What about 'time off in lieu'? It's something I've been thinking about for a while.
- A:** Time off in what?
- B:** Time off in lieu, or TOIL. It means that you work extra hours, but instead of getting money for overtime, you take a day off later, when there is less work.
- A:** That sounds like a good idea. Do you want me to ask them if they're interested?
- B:** Yes, let's try it out and see how it goes.

**4** Put students into groups of four and give them time to read the information and decide who will take each role. Remind them of the sort of language we use to express opinions and react to them. For example: *I think that ...; In my opinion, ...; I agree; I don't agree; Yes, but ...; Isn't it the case that ...; etc.* It would be worth putting these phrases up on the board so that students can refer to them while they are holding their meeting.

Students may need to prepare what they are going to say for homework. Allow them to make notes, but discourage them from writing down whole sentences, which they then simply read out. It might help them run the meeting more efficiently if each group decides who will chair it and chooses someone to take notes. The chair can then make sure everyone contributes and can lead and structure the discussion. As they have their meeting, go around giving help and encouragement. Encourage students to come to a clear final decision. Get each group to present its decision to the rest of the class.

**5**  **2.30** Give students time to read the sentences before you play the recording. This will give them an idea of the sorts of things Jon Day will say and will help them fill the gaps more easily.

### ANSWERS

- a** weekends
- b** balance
- c** training
- d** part-time
- e** management
- f** communication

**2.30**

In this company, we have strict budgets. Overtime can be expensive, especially as we need our employees to work weekends and bank holidays. It's also part of our company culture to encourage a healthy work-life balance, and with paid overtime, people tend to work harder than is good for them. Staff know that unusual working hours are part of the job, but we also offer good working conditions and training opportunities. It's still difficult to cover all the unsocial hours needed for our business. In the end, we use a combination of part-time employees and time off in lieu, or TOIL. We also take on a number of students during our busiest season to take the pressure off regular staff.

TOIL works well for us, but it needs careful management. We have a rule that staff cannot take more than three days in lieu each month. We keep detailed records of all the hours worked and review them regularly in order to spot potential problems. If you expect staff to cooperate with unusual hours, it's important that everyone knows what is going on. Good communication is fundamental to making the system work.

**1:1**

Ask your student to choose one of the roles from the four given. Choose one for yourself which is different from that chosen by your student so that you can have a discussion and try to persuade each other to adopt your viewpoint.

## CASE STUDY 5: INDUCTION

The focus in this case study is induction programmes for new employees of a company. Students hear about the programme conducted by an airline, identify the features of it and discuss the elements of a good induction programme. They then roleplay a meeting in which members of a team from a clothing company decide how to improve their induction process.

### Warm-up

Find out if students have experienced an induction programme in any of the companies they have worked for. If so, get them to say briefly what it involved and whether they felt it was a good idea.

**1** Go through the questions with students, then ask them to read the text and find the answers.

#### ANSWERS

- a** People who want to work for the company
- b** Yes.
- c** It makes sure new staff have all the knowledge, skills and experience they need to work effectively together to achieve the company's goal.

**2** **2.58** Go through the list of features with students and make sure they understand them all. Then play the recording and ask them to tick the features the speaker lists.

#### ANSWERS

He mentions A, D and F.

**2.58**

Every new employee at AirFly goes through our induction process – that includes office staff as well as pilots.

We believe the induction process is really important because it presents our future vision and values, and provides information about the business performance and future hopes and expectations of the airline.

The induction process is also important because we want everyone to enjoy working at AirFly. So on the first day we have a meet-and-greet, and we give each new employee a buddy. Your buddy is someone on your team whose job is to support you during your first couple of months at AirFly and to answer any questions you may have. They will be able to provide useful information on things like staff benefits.

In total the induction programme lasts for two months. During the first month you will take part in activities like shadowing other members of your team and health and safety training. In the second month you will find out more about your job and your manager will set your goals and objectives.

Finally, we always arrange a workshop at the end of the programme, where we encourage all new starters to meet and exchange information about their first two months at AirFly.

**3** Put students into small groups to discuss the questions. Appoint a spokesperson in each group to report back to the class on their decisions.

**4** Put students into groups of four and give them time to read the instructions and the list of activities. Encourage them to ask you if there is anything they don't understand.

It might help them run the meeting more efficiently if they decide who will chair it and choose someone to take notes. The chair can then make sure everyone contributes and can lead and structure the discussion. As they have their meeting, go around giving help and encouragement. Encourage students to make a definite decision on what activities to include and where they should be in the programme. Get each group to present its programme to the rest of the class.

**1:1**

Suggest that your student leads the meeting. Encourage him/her to make most of the suggestions, but be prepared to disagree occasionally in order to give him/her practice in defending viewpoints and to ensure that there is genuine discussion.