

*School of Linguistics and
Applied Language Studies*

*Workplace Communication for
Skilled Migrants:*

English for Professional Purposes

VUW ELIN941

John Prebble

*Language in the Workplace
Occasional Papers No.6 (April 2007)*

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Victoria

UNIVERSITY OF WELLINGTON

*Te Whare Wānanga
o te Ūpoko o te Ika a Māui*



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**Workplace Communication for Skilled Migrants:
English for Professional Purposes
VUW ELIN941**

JOHN PREBBLE

Victoria University of Wellington

Language in the Workplace Occasional Papers

Number 6 (March 2007)

Language in the Workplace Occasional Papers

This series of occasional papers is aimed at providing a wide range of information about the way language is used in the New Zealand workplace. The first paper outlines the aims and scope of the core project, the Wellington Language in the Workplace Project, and describes the approach adopted by the project team in collecting and analysing workplace data. The second describes the methodology adopted to collect workplace interaction, and its developments and adaptations to the very different demands of disparate workplaces. Subsequent papers provide more detailed analyses of particular aspects of workplace interaction as well as descriptions of methodologies for researching workplace communication.

These include

- an analysis of varied ways people get things done at work, or the forms which directives take in different New Zealand workplaces
- an exploration of the functions of humour in workplace interaction
- an analysis of the structure of formal meetings in relation to the way decisions are reached
- an examination of the varied literature on the role of e-mail at work
- an analysis of problem-solving discourse

The series is available in full text at this website: <http://www.vuw.ac.nz/lals/lwp>

The Research team includes Professor Janet Holmes (Director), Maria Stubbe (Research Fellow), Dr Bernadette Vine (Corpus Manager), Meredith Marra (Research Officer), and a number of Research Associates. We would like to express our appreciation to all those who allowed their workplace interactions to be recorded and the Research Assistants who transcribed the data. The research was supported by a grant from the New Zealand Foundation for Research Science and Technology.

Key words: applied language studies; business English; discourse analysis; employment; English as a second or other language; ESOL; immigrants; interlanguage; intern; internship; language in the workplace; mentor; multicultural learning; New Zealand culture; pragmatics; professional English; small talk; Rotary International; Rotary Club of Wellington; skilled migrants; Victoria University of Wellington; volunteer;

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Introduction and summary

Summary

Workplace Communication for Skilled Migrants, formally “English for Professional Purposes ELIN 941”, is a course within the School of Linguistics and Applied Language Studies at the Victoria University of Wellington. For short, the course is often called the “Skilled Migrant Programme”. This paper often uses “programme” or “course” when context makes the meaning clear.

The major components of the course are five weeks’ classroom preparation and six weeks’ internship with a Wellington employer. Participants return to the classroom for the twelfth and final week. Chapter 0 of this paper, “The Victoria Model” gathers the significant elements of the course together.

The first intake was in April 2005. Course participants are professionally qualified immigrants to New Zealand who have been unable to obtain work commensurate with their skills despite many endeavours.

Participants must be reasonably fluent in English and experienced in their professions, but often their usage does not have the flexibility needed to cope with demanding workplace communication in New Zealand. In particular, they are unable to use English in a manner that is expected in a professional or commercial environment: in effect, they suffer from a form of illiteracy. New Zealanders are familiar with highly educated immigrants driving taxis or stacking supermarket shelves. The course aims to arm its graduates with the necessary communication skills to break back into the kinds of occupations for which they were trained.

The teachers are Nicky Riddiford and Angela Joe, members of the English Language Institute at Victoria University. Fifteen to twenty volunteers from the Rotary Club of Wellington and from the Wellington community help them on each course.

In addition to help during the course, the Rotary Club of Wellington assists participants after graduation by assigning a member to each graduate as a mentor to support and help them in finding work.

The active participation of volunteers from the Rotary Club of Wellington and from the Wellington community means that the course is very well endowed with instructors, tutors, and specialist lecturers. The course brings together the skills and enthusiasm of a large number of institutions and individuals. This paper describes the

roles of the volunteer and salaried staff of the course and of the numerous institutions that contribute to its success.

Summary of stakeholder numbers

This paper describes and mentions a large number of institutions and individuals who have been or are involved with the Skilled Migrant Programme in one way or another. It is not possible to calculate a completely precise total of everyone who has helped with the programme, but the summaries below are reasonably accurate. For government and university departments, both departments themselves and units within departments are counted. At the end of each of the entries that follow, “§” marks the chapter or section of this paper that contains details about the stakeholders in question.

Government agencies and contractors: 4, §0

Units within Victoria University of Wellington: 6, §0

Victoria University academic staff: 10, §0

Other personnel: 11, §0, §0

Advisers and supporters from official and community circles, including members of advisory committees: 16, §0. §0 §0

Volunteer conversation and interview tutors: 21, §0

Volunteer visiting lecturers: 13, §0

Volunteer mentors: 22, §0

Members of the Rotary Club of Wellington: 35,¹ §0, §0

Spouses and business associates of members of the Rotary Club of Wellington: 9,² §0, §0

Employers: 49, §0

Occupations of participants: 32, §0

Participants’ countries of origin: 14, §0

For figures on success of graduates from the course in finding work, please see §0 of this paper.

¹ Also included in the 3 categories of volunteers, above.

² Also included in the 3 categories of volunteers, above.

Target readership of this paper

The Skilled Migrant Programme is far more complex than most courses at universities, with many different aspects and modules and many different stakeholders and contributors, to the extent that only those centrally involved with the programme have an overall grasp of its elements. This complexity can result in a significant information deficit for many stakeholders.

The original object of this paper was to inform members of the Rotary Club of Wellington, especially those who contribute in one way or another, to enable them to obtain an overview of the programme. The drafting process revealed that many other groups are also interested to know just what the programme is about and (for those who already have that overview) how it works in detail, and how the Rotary Club of Wellington and other friends of Victoria University make the course so much more than could be achieved if its resources were limited to what its budget could afford.

Additional target readers include: volunteers from the wider community; government departments that have a stake in the course; managers from Victoria University at school, faculty, and central levels; employers who offer internships; and the participants themselves. One result of these considerations is that some readers will find that they are already familiar with one or more sections of the paper. The writer hopes that the system of headings is informative enough for readers to skim such sections.

Contact details

Course name

Formal course name and designation: Workplace Communication for Skilled Migrants, otherwise, ELIN 941, Victoria University of Wellington.

Website

<http://www.vuw.ac.nz/lals/programmes/englishprof/workplace-communication.aspx>

Applications for entry

Programme Director Dr Angela Joe, English Proficiency Programme Director, School of Linguistics and Applied Language Studies; Phone (04) 463-5607; email angela.joe@vuw.ac.nz, or

ESOL Assessment and Access Specialist Service Ms Judi McCallum, Multicultural Service Centre, 61 Taranaki Street, Wellington; Phone (04) 384-8618; email esol.specialist@xtra.co.nz.

Academic inquiries: syllabus development

Nicky Riddiford, course coordinator, nicky.riddiford@vuw.ac.nz

Academic inquiries: Language in the Workplace Project

Professor Janet Holmes, director, janet.holmes@vuw.ac.nz

Rotary Club of Wellington

<http://www.rcw.org.nz>

rcw@opalsoft.co.nz

Notification of errors or omissions

Several people have checked this paper, but if there are errors or omissions, please accept the apologies of the author, who would be very grateful to hear about any corrections that are necessary: john.prebble@vuw.ac.nz.

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Structure of this paper

For an overview of the Skilled Migrant Programme (English for Professional Purposes ELIN 941) readers are referred to the Summary at the start of this paper. Below, the paper first describes the initial stakeholders in the programme and then staff and other professional personnel who are involved with it.

The paper then moves to the history of the programme, the philosophy behind it, planning, and the way in which the programme operates and reports, including descriptions of syllabus and pedagogy. It then discusses the volunteers and describes their work. It looks at the participants and the Wellington employers who have engaged them as interns. Before concluding, it summarizes the main elements and features of the course in Chapter 0, “The Victoria Model”.

Government agencies and contractors

The government of New Zealand is the major stakeholder in the programme. The government regards under-employment of skilled migrants as a loss to the economy, as well as being most unfortunate at an individual level. Consequently, the government has been willing to commit considerable resources to the course and to others like it. Several government departments are involved.

The New Zealand Tertiary Education Commission

The Tertiary Education Commission is the official body through which the New Zealand government funds universities and other providers of tertiary education. In 2004 it offered funds to tertiary providers to develop and to offer courses to get underemployed but highly educated migrants into skilled occupations. Victoria University was chosen as one of the providers to offer such a course.

Multicultural Learning and Support Services

Multicultural Learning and Support Services, known as “MCLaSS”,³ is not-for-profit organization constituted as an incorporated society that brings together the aspirations of a number of ethnic groups. Its members are both individuals and organizations. It provides social services in Wellington and the Hutt Valley in the areas of education programmes for refugees and migrants, ESOL teaching, orientation for resettlement, job search support, and mother tongue language courses. MCLaSS receives considerable support from the Wellington City Council, not least by way of the provision of premises in the Wellington Multicultural Support Centre, 61 Taranaki Street, Wellington. Its income comes from grants from charitable trusts; additionally, MCLaSS acts as a contractor for a number of government agencies.

MCLaSS is well known in the fields of both language studies and employment support. With extensive contacts with immigrant communities it is well placed to identify people who would benefit from joining the Skilled Migrant Programme. As contractor to the Tertiary Education Commission MCLaSS operates the Wellington ESOL Assessment and Access Specialist Service (ESOL specialist, Ms Judi McCallum). Ms McCallum has had, and continues to have, a major role in the Skilled Migrant Programme, detailed at relevant stages in this paper.

The Ministry of Social Development

The Tertiary Education Commission funds the development and teaching of the course. The Victoria University course also includes guided internships. During 2005 and 2006 the Ministry of Social Development funded this element of the course through its programme, “Enterprising Communities”.

Following a decrease in unemployment in New Zealand, the Enterprising Communities Programme ceased in 2006. Victoria University bore the cost of arranging internships for the first intake in 2007. The Migrant Employment Assistance Fund, also a programme of the Ministry, took over the cost of organising internships from July 2007.

Work and Income New Zealand

Work and Income New Zealand, known as “WINZ”, was formerly an independent government department. Following a change of policy as to the administration the public service, WINZ merged with the Ministry of Social Development and is now the

³ Sic. The vowel in the acronym takes the lower case.

operational arm of the Ministry. Among its duties are the administration of unemployment benefits, promoting employment, and running an employment service. Liaison between Victoria University and the Ministry is in practice with the office of the Wellington Regional Commissioner of Work and Income.

WINZ takes an active interest in skilled migrants courses as helping people to work in occupations that are most beneficial to themselves and to the economy. WINZ consultants address the course and participants sign on for WINZ help in finding employment. WINZ administers the disbursement of Ministry funds that are granted to the programme.

Victoria University of Wellington

English Language Institute

The English Language Institute, known as the “ELI” is a unit within the School of Linguistics and Applied Language Studies. The Institute offers a variety of programmes, leading to different qualifications or skills. One of very long standing is the English Proficiency Programme (or the “EPP”), a graduated series of courses in academic English for prospective university students for whom English is a second or other language. The courses are at several levels, depending on participants’ proposed courses of study, from undergraduate to doctoral. A second is the Graduate Certificate in Teaching English as a Second or Other Language, known as “Cert TESOL”, a course for graduates who are not trained as teachers.

A third programme is “ELTO”, or English Language Training for Officials. Most ELTO participants are funded by regular New Zealand government aid schemes, but there are occasional ad hoc groups. For instance, in 2006 and 2007 the ELI taught a course that was specially developed for Peruvian diplomats and other civil servants who were scheduled to act as hosts for the APEC meeting planned for Lima in 2008.

In 2004 the English Language Institute was approached to take responsibility for developing and teaching a course for skilled migrants, which has become an additional programme within the Institute, English for Professional Purposes, ELIN 941, known as the Skilled Migrant Programme.

School of Linguistics and Applied Language Studies

The School of Linguistics and Applied Language Studies is the parent body within the Victoria University of Wellington of the English Language Institute. Loosely, “applied language studies”, sometimes called “applied linguistics”, includes courses in teaching second or other languages. As well as linguistics itself, the School has degree programmes in applied linguistics, a distinct academic subject, and also offers programmes leading to Masters and Certificate level qualifications in teaching English as a Second or Other Language. As mentioned above, the English Language Institute is a unit within the School.

The New Zealand Marsden Fund and other significant providers support a major research programme within the School on “Language in the Workplace”. Much of the material in the communications skills modules of the Skilled Migrant Programme employs recordings of authentic conversations collected and analysed by researchers in the Language in the Workplace Project.

Language Learning Centre

The Language Learning Centre (formerly known as a “language laboratory”) is a facility within the Victoria University Library. It contains resources for self and guided study in learning English and other languages.

Continuing Education and Executive Development

Continuing Education and Executive Development, sometimes known as “CEED”, and formerly called the Department of University Extension, offers non-degree courses, lectures, and classes on a wide variety of topics. The second part of the Skilled Migrant Programme entails an internship with a suitable employer. Until trimester 2 of 2007, CEED personnel served as work placement coordinators, with the task of finding internships and of matching them to course participants. In late July 2007 the School of Linguistics and Applied Language Studies engaged Wellington recruitment specialists The Johnson Group Ltd as work placement coordinators. Section 0 of this paper refers further to the Johnson Group’s significant role in the success of the course.

Career Development and Employment

Victoria University’s Career Development and Employment unit works in a number of ways to help students obtain career advice. The unit helps students on the Skilled

Migrant Programme with developing written curricula vitae and gives advice on interview technique.

Central and Student Services

Participants in the course are enrolled as students of the university. They are entitled to call upon all university facilities and services. The course makes heavy demands on some services. For instance, practice of interview and oral presentation techniques call upon the greater part of the video cameras and tripods available at Victoria University, both centrally and within the School of Linguistics and Applied Language Studies. The role of the Career Development and Employment unit has been mentioned.

Staff and other personnel

Programme director and teacher

ANGELA JOE BEd (WAIKATO), Dip Tchg, Dip SLT (MASSEY), MA, PhD (VUW).

Dr Joe is Director of the English Proficiency Programme within the English Language Institute. Her main research interests are vocabulary acquisition and teaching methodology. She has published a number of scholarly articles in the field of second language vocabulary acquisition and is in demand internationally to design and to review English language courses. Dr Joe teaches one day a week on the Skilled Migrant Programme. She was a member of the planning team that developed the structure of the course.

Course coordinator and principal teacher

NICKY RIDDIFORD, MA, Dip Ed (VUW) Dip Tchg (NTH SHORE), LTCL (ESOL).

Nicky Riddiford is a member of the English Language Institute, where she has taught since 2001. She is a former President of the Wellington Branch of the New Zealand Home Tutor Project (an organization that matches immigrants with volunteer language tutors) and a member of the committee of the Wellington Association of Teachers of English as a Second or Other Language. She is the author of a number of articles on teaching methodology in scholarly and professional journals and of *Song Talk*, (1998) a textbook and companion CD of songs for teachers that employ song as a teaching vehicle for English language. The book is widely used in New Zealand and in several other countries. Nicky Riddiford is the course coordinator, principal

teacher, and course developer for English for Professional Purposes ELIN 941, the Skilled Migrant Programme.

Director, Language in the Workplace Project

JANET HOLMES BA (HONS), MPhil (LEEDS), FRSNZ. Specializing in sociolinguistics, Professor Holmes holds a Personal Chair in Linguistics. She is a former Dean of Languages and Literature at Victoria University and was director of the project that produced the *Wellington Corpus of Spoken New Zealand English*. She has published many scholarly articles and has written or edited a number of textbooks and other studies in sociolinguistics. Holmes and Stubbe's *Power and Politeness in the Workplace: a Sociolinguistic Analysis of Talk at Work*. (London: Pearson, 2003) is a particularly important source for the Skilled Migrant Programme. Professor Holmes is Director of the Victoria University Language in the Workplace project.

Programme strategic planner

JONATHAN NEWTON BA (CANT), PhD, Dip TESL (VUW).

Dr Newton is a Senior Lecturer in the School of Linguistics and Applied Language Studies. Dr Newton drafted the initial plan for what became English for Professional Purposes ELIN 941, the Skilled Migrant course, and was a member of the planning team that developed it. He has published widely in the areas of task-based interaction, incidental vocabulary acquisition and interlanguage pragmatics and is a regular speaker on these themes at international conferences.

Senior and central management

DEBORAH WILLIS MA (CANT), PhD, Dip Tchg.

Professor Willis is Pro-Vice-Chancellor and Dean of Humanities and Social Sciences at Victoria University, the faculty that is the home of the School of Linguistics and Applied Language Studies. As a former Director of the University Teaching Development Centre she has a significant scholarly interest in teaching methods.

DAVID CRABBE MA, PDSL (LEEDS).

Associate Professor Crabbe is Assistant Vice-Chancellor (Academic) within the central administration of Victoria University. In that capacity he has responsibility for academic policy and line responsibility for the academic quality of the course. Formerly, Associate Professor Crabbe was Head of the School of Linguistics and

Applied Language Studies. In that role, he was responsible in 2004 for Victoria's acceptance of to the Tertiary Education Commission's offer to provide the Skilled Migrant Programme and in 2004 and early 2005 he was a member of the team that undertook the strategic planning for the course.

Tertiary Education Commission ESOL Advisor

JUDI MCCALLUM MA (VUW) Dip Tchg (CHRISTCHURCH TEACHERS' COLLEGE). Ms McCallum is a former English language teacher. For some years she has been ESOL Advisor to the Tertiary Education Commission, working through Multicultural Learning and Support Services, and specializing in assessment and access. In that role, Ms McCallum identified a gap in the provision of appropriate ESOL courses for professional migrants and was heavily involved in initial planning for the course. She has a continuing responsibility for assessment of applicants and for admissions. She also serves as a workplace consultant.

Internship placement (work placement coordinators)

Victoria University Continuing Education and Executive Development was responsible for placing interns from the first five intakes, until mid-2007. Staff within CEED who have had this responsibility include:

TANIA MCGOWAN MSc, Programme Manager (Professional Development) and Work Placement Coordinator.

MELISSA NIELSEN, Special Projects Manager.

Interview and CV advisers

ELIZABETH MEDFORD BBA (BARUCH), Manager, VUW Career Development and Employment

MILLIE DOUGLAS BA (Hons) (LEEDS) PG Dip Career Guidance and Counselling (HUDDERSFIELD) Career Adviser.

Workplace consultants

Victoria University contracts several workplace consultants with each course intake. Their task is to smooth the path of students' internships. They attend interviews, they are available for consultation about workplace problems, they visit interns and their mentors on at least two occasions during each six-week internship, and they provide feedback and communication advice for interns in response to issues that have arisen

in the workplace. They offer suggestions to the teacher as to communication strategies that would usefully be addressed in classes held during the internship period.

In addition to supporting the intern, workplace consultants are available for advice to employers as to means of promoting effective strategies in working with the intern and with ethnically diverse workplaces in general. Where requested, workplace consultants are able to offer suggestions for effective communication and to provide opportunities for reflection on procedures and practices.

Workplace consultants look after between one and six participants, depending on their availability for the course in question. They come from a variety of occupations: human resources consultants, teachers, and so on. The course coordinator is ordinarily the workplace consultant for one intern, which enables her to keep in touch with this element of the programme. Workplace consultants have included:

JUDI MCCALLUM

NICKY RIDDIFORD

MARIA STUBBE

GLENDAL WESTON

HELEN WYLIE BARTLE

Mentors

Two groups of mentors support participants in the Skilled Migrant Programme. First, during the internship module, each participant is assigned a mentor from his or her employer. Secondly, the Rotary Club of Wellington appoints job mentors to support participants on graduation as they seek permanent employment.

Liaison between Victoria University and the Rotary Club of Wellington

JOHN PREBBLE BA, LLB (HONS) (AUCKLAND), BCL (OXFORD), JSD (CORNELL), INNER TEMPLE, Professor of Law, Victoria University of Wellington, former Dean of Law and former President of the Rotary Club of Wellington.

History and background

Need

From the mid-1990s, New Zealanders became increasingly aware that there were a significant number of immigrants who were unemployed or employed in occupations that were not commensurate with their qualifications. One would find, for instance,

that a taxi-driver or a supermarket shelf stacker had a postgraduate degree. When it was analysed, the census of 2001 showed that there were 2,200 skilled migrants with university qualifications who were permanent residents, but who were unemployed or underemployed.

OECD concerns

New Zealand is not alone in experiencing this phenomenon. For some years, OECD studies of migration have identified a similar problem, usually labelled “overqualification”.⁴ If anything, the position is worse in Australia than in New Zealand. The issue has gone from a subject of occasional discussion and focus for policy makers to a topic for serious consideration in the business press though, so far, the press appears more to have identified the problem than speculated on possible remedial measures.⁵

New Zealand developments

The New Zealand Budget of 2004 allocated funds to the Tertiary Education Commission to address the issue nationally, with funding expected to continue for at least a further four years. The Commission approved funds for the equivalent of 125 effective full time students for 2005 and sought expressions of interest from Auckland- and Wellington-based tertiary institutions in offering suitable courses.

In Wellington, the Commission chose Victoria University, Massey University, and Whitireia Polytechnic in 2005. In 2006, only Victoria and Massey offered programmes. Also, the funding model changed. Programmes that offered only a classroom training in English as a Second Language thenceforth received less than programmes that included both classroom and internship components.

Intensive course

The total course is 12 weeks long. In addition to the internship, and largely preceding it, the course includes 133 hours of classroom instruction for an enrolment of up to thirteen participants. This pattern may be compared with, for instance, one-semester senior year electives in the Law Faculty, which comprise 36 hours of lectures over 12 teaching weeks, and which have a minimum enrolment of 25 and a maximum of 150.

⁴ See, eg, “Foreign Talent”, OECD Observer No 257, October 2006 and OECD, International Migration Outlook 2006, www.oecd.org/migration.

⁵ Jessica Irvine, “Too Skilled for the Job”, *Sydney Morning Herald*, reprinted *Dominion Post*, Wellington, 4 July 2007, page C5.

Rotary Club of Wellington involvement

As mentioned in the Summary of this paper, one view of the course is that it is in effect a course in literacy. While all participants are literate and native speakers in at least one language, their skills in English are not sufficient for working in the kind of professional or commercial environment for which they are trained. It was this aspect of the course that particularly attracted the Rotary Club of Wellington.

The reason is that in early 2005 Carl-Wilhelm Stenhammar, the incoming President of Rotary International for 2005 – 2006, urged the world's Rotary Clubs each to work to establish or to help a literacy project in his year of office. The Rotary Club of Wellington chose the Victoria University course, Workplace Communication Skills for Skilled Migrants for its project. The club has been involved with the Skilled Migrant Programme as a partner with Victoria University since the first intake in April 2005.

Recognition by Human Rights Commission

In 2006 the Human Rights Commission of New Zealand acknowledged the Skilled Migrant Programme for its contribution to race relations in New Zealand. Joris de Bres, Race Relations Commissioner, presented a certificate of congratulations to the programme.

Philosophy and strategic planning

Development of the programme

The Tertiary Education Commission engaged Ms Judi McCallum of the Wellington ESOL Assessment and Access Specialist Service to manage the allocation of migrants to programmes in the Wellington region. Ms McCallum made an assessment of the needs of skilled migrant clients presenting to the Service. She identified the following issues as being of particular concern:

- Being selected out on the basis of being foreign before getting to interview.
- Unfamiliarity with local culture, making social exchanges difficult.
- Unfamiliarity with NZ workplace culture.
- New Zealanders being unused to dealing with different accents.
- New Zealanders having different accents from those commonly heard overseas.

- Lack of New Zealand work experience.

Ms McCallum took the view that a tertiary education school of applied language studies would be the sort of organization most likely to be effective in providing the kind of education that skilled migrants need, but she believed that a model different from the standard applied language course was necessary. Ms McCallum had studied a model of skilled migrant education that involved internships as well as classroom teaching while in the Netherlands on research leave from Massey University in 2003. She also concluded that a programme would be most appropriate if it taught authentic workplace language, rather than used textbooks and other materials developed for instruction in academic English.

Bearing these matters in mind, in October 2004 Ms McCallum approached the VUW School of Linguistics and Applied Language Studies (LALS) as preferred provider. Those initially involved were Professor Janet Holmes, Director of the Language in the Workplace Project, and Dr Jonathan Newton, a Senior Lecturer in the School with research interests in workplace training.

In consultation with Ms McCallum, Dr Newton drafted a provisional programme, comprising six weeks fulltime classroom tuition and six weeks work placement. Associate Professor David Crabbe, then Head of School, convened an advisory group on 14 December 2004 to consider and to develop Dr Newton's draft. Dr Newton and the group as a whole focused on developing strategies to address the concerns that Ms McCallum had identified. Apart from Associate Professor Crabbe, the group comprised:

Colin Drew, Local Government New Zealand.

Shawn Gilhooley, Migrant Attraction Officer, Positively Business Wellington.

Simon Hodge, International Programme Manager, Victoria University Continuing Education and Executive Development (CEED).

Angela Joe, Director, English Proficiency Programme, LALS, (EPP).

Francis Lo, Programme Developer, Presbyterian Support Central, Wellington.

Meredith Marra, Research Officer, Language in the Workplace Project, LALS.

Beverley Main, Director Human Resources Institute of New Zealand.

Tania McGowan, Professional Development Programme Manager, CEED.

Judi McCallum, ESOL Specialist and Access Specialist Service, TEC.

Jonathan Newton, Senior Lecturer, LALS.

Prudence Walker, EPP Language Tutor, LALS.

Judith Wagstaff, EPP Language Tutor, LALS.

Paul Winter, Director, New Zealand Employers and Manufacturers Association.

Thereafter, a programme planning team of Ms McCallum, Dr Joe, Dr Newton, and Associate Professor Crabbe further developed the planning for the course over the summer of 2004 - 2005.

Work of the planning team

The programme planning team focused particularly on the internship component that Ms McCallum's model called for. The programme that was developed addresses the needs that Ms McCallum identified by following four strategies.

First, the focus of the course is throughout on the needs of the workplace. This focus requires a reorientation of the usual teaching of the English Language Institute, which is generally concerned with academic English as used, for instance, in student writing.

Secondly, the internship component of the course is central. When skilled migrant courses were first thought of in 2004 the idea of internship was not always emphasised, and sometimes not even present. However, the Victoria University planners agreed that Ms McCallum was correct that successful internships, rich in experience, would offer the best prospects for addressing the needs that Ms McCallum had identified. This strategy involved obtaining good human resources advice about ensuring proper supervision and workplace mentoring. However, the result was a funding shortfall, addressed under the next heading.

Thirdly, as Ms McCallum had envisaged, the course ensures authenticity of content by using language and conversations sampled from workplaces throughout the Wellington region by the Victoria University Language in the Workplace Project, a partner in Victoria's proposal to the Tertiary Education Commission.

Fourthly, it was important to ensure full buy in to the goals of the programme on the part of employers and relevant institutions within the Wellington community. To achieve this result, and to obtain further advice as to the structure and content of the course, Victoria University invited a number of stakeholders, some of whom had been members of the advisory group that Associate Professor Crabbe convened in December 2004, to form a Programme Advisory Group. The group comprised:

Trevor Burgess, Chief Executive Officer, Exicom Technologies, Porirua.

Francis Lo, Programme Developer for Presbyterian Support Central and himself a skilled migrant.

Paul Winter, Director, Employers and Manufacturers Association.

Colin Drew, Local Government New Zealand.

Shawn Gilhooley, Migrant Attraction Officer, Positively Business Wellington.

Beverley Main, Director, Human Resources Institute of New Zealand.

While the Programme Advisory Group offered useful comment on a number of aspects of the plans for the course, a crucial factor was that the group verified the need to elevate internship to at least the same level as the classroom element of the course

Funding shortfall

Although the Skilled Migrant Programme is much more intensive and much more expensive than standard university courses, that model is necessary. It is to the credit of the Tertiary Education Commission that in making its funding decisions the Commission appreciated that skilled migrants have special educational needs and that, if those needs can be met, and if participants can be placed in skilled positions, the return for the individuals concerned and for the New Zealand economy is immediate and significant.

Notwithstanding the generous level of funding, Victoria University had four concerns: regarding the level of support that participants would need in their internship workplaces; as to the need for intensive coaching in the skills that participants lacked; regarding the desirability of putting participants in touch with appropriate networks; and as to components of the classroom syllabus beyond core language skills.

Support for internship

The first of these concerns had strategic significance. Unless the internship programme was well funded, the Victoria University course could not proceed as envisaged by the planning team and the Programme Advisory Group. However, while TEC funding as finally determined was sufficient for teaching there were insufficient funds to support the internship element of the course at the level necessary to achieve the results that the planning team had in mind. One response in some courses has been

to ask participants to find their own placements. Victoria University was concerned that it would be hard for people from other cultures who had been out of the skilled workforce for considerable periods to find internships that offered work at an appropriate level of seniority. Instead, it was decided to approach the Ministry of Social Development for assistance. (One of the Ministry's missions is to promote employment.)

Putting this decision into effect required considerable planning, in order to discover whether there was a Ministry funding programme that was appropriate and then to organise the necessary application. Ms McCallum undertook most of the necessary work in this respect. Officials involved included Mr Wayne Skippage, Social Development Manager, Work and Income, Wellington and Mr Craig Nicholson, of the Office of Ethnic Affairs within the Internal Affairs Department. Mr Michael Bryant, Regional Commissioner of Work and Income, approved the application.

During 2005 and 2006 the Ministry's Enterprising Communities Fund supported the internship module. This fund was discontinued in response to falling unemployment. Victoria University bore the cost of internship organization for the fifth intake, in March of 2007, while efforts were made to find a replacement source of funding. From the sixth intake, in July 2007, the Ministry's Migrant Employment Assistance Fund has provided the necessary support.

Support for securing funds for the course

This bare account of locating funding, switching from one fund to another, and ensuring that the Skilled Migrant Programme fits correctly into the requirements of government policy does not do justice to the work of those involved, which was considerable. Dr Joe, as Programme Director, and Ms McCallum, as ESOL Adviser to the Tertiary Education Commission, have had carriage of the task. Throughout, a number of people in the Wellington community and in official circles have assisted with advice and support. Notable among them is Ms Sue Driver, a former Wellington Regional and City Councillor, who was very generous with her time and advice in her role as Project Manager, Settling In, for the Ministry of Social Development.

Ministry of Social Development, Community, and official leaders who have supported this and other aspects of the Skilled Migrant Programme include:

Ms Judi Altinkaya, National Manager for Migrant Settlement, Department of Labour.

Ms Felicity Bollen, Labour Market Manager, Work and Income, Wellington.

Ms Sue Driver, mentioned above.

Ms Mel Harrington, Regional Contracts Manager, Work and Income, Wellington.

The Honourable Marian Hobbs, MP.

Mr Alan Sanders, Enterprising Communities Adviser, Work and Income, Wellington.

In addition to the funding from the Ministry of Social Development, help from the Rotary Club of Wellington to identify internship opportunities has further enriched this element of the programme. Victoria University has addressed the other needs that were identified (intensive coaching, syllabus enrichment and help with networks) by seeking voluntary help, as explained in the next section of this paper.

Planning for extension of classroom elements

More intensive teaching

The second of Victoria University's concerns, which were identified in section 0, was that many of the skills that migrants need require one-to-one instruction and practice, particularly if they are to be learned in an intensive course of six weeks in the classroom. While a 1:12 teacher:student ratio is generous by university standards it does not allow for one-to-one attention; not, at least, without leaving the rest of the class working by themselves for long periods.

Nicky Riddiford, as course coordinator and developer, addressed this concern. Her strategy was to invite volunteers from the Rotary Club of Wellington and from the Wellington community to become one-to-one or one-to-pair tutors for conversation, interview technique, and so on. Over the first five intakes, a total of eighteen classroom volunteers took part.

Having such a large pool is a challenge for coordination, but it means that volunteers can nominate the hours over the course when they will be available. With this information, it is possible to adjust the weekly timetable to ensure that there is a sufficient cohort of volunteer tutors available when needed.

Networks

The third concern relates to support networks. In emigrating, migrants lose home country networks built up through connections of family, education, profession, and so on. The Skilled Migrant Programme addresses this problem from several angles. First, one objective of internships is to start the process of integrating participants into the New Zealand arms of their professions. Secondly, some classroom volunteers are from business and professional circles. Thirdly, as will be described in more detail later in this paper, the Rotary Club of Wellington invites each intake of participants to two luncheon meetings and appoints mentors to advise participants as they graduate from the course.

Extending the syllabus

The substantive components of the syllabus beyond language learning (in the broadest sense of the oral and writing skills that have been mentioned) potentially posed the most intractable problem. In planning the course, Nicky Riddiford realized that participants would need instruction in New Zealand conditions, not only as regards the workplace but also in respect of society and government, but there was no budget for specialized teachers. As it happened, this problem was overcome surprisingly easily, through the good offices of the Rotary Club of Wellington.

In early 2005, the Skilled Migrant Programme asked members of the club to volunteer to help with classroom conversation practice. Studying the backgrounds of the volunteers, Nicky Riddiford realized that they included a number of people who were well qualified to instruct participants in the knowledge and skills that they needed. These members of the club kindly agreed to become honorary visiting lecturers in their areas of expertise. Following the same model, the programme has also engaged other honorary visiting lecturers. Details of the topics covered are listed later in this paper under “Visiting lecturers”.

Classroom

Introduction

There are two intakes each year, starting in early March and late July. Courses are intensive, and limited to thirteen enrolments. Most intakes are full.

The course has two major components: classroom and internship. Each intake begins with five weeks in the classroom, with instruction and practice from 9.00 am to

1.00 pm. Afternoons are for homework, chiefly practising the various forms of business English that are covered in the syllabus. Participants analyse videotapes of their practice in interviews, conversation, and oral presentations and use resources in the Language Learning Centre. Also during the afternoons, the programme arranges appointments with prospective employers who have expressed willingness to engage participants as interns. Preparation for the internship that is to follow is a major focus of the classroom module.

In the second component of the course, participants work four and a half days a week for six weeks as interns with Wellington or Hutt Valley employers, with Monday afternoons in the classroom for further instruction and for discussion of the progress of their internships. Courses finish with a final week in the classroom, to consolidate what has been learned and to help to re-launch participants on the process of job seeking.

Syllabus

The core of the classroom section of the course is instruction in business and professional English, both written and oral. There is a particular emphasis on what is known as “pragmatics”, that is, polite or otherwise appropriate locutions and vocabulary. This factor distinguishes the course from most university instruction in foreign languages, which tends to focus on the manner of expression that is appropriate for essays, answering examinations, or leading seminars. In addition to language acquisition the course includes a number of modules on substantive knowledge and skills. Particular elements of the syllabus include:

Discourse analysis

Analysis of authentic conversations collected by the VUW Language in the Workplace Project is a key component of the communication skills focus of the programme.

Interpreting subtleties of direct and indirect manners of expression is often very difficult for second language learners. For instance, direct negatives are uncommon in English interactions; so, how does the subordinate recognise when the superior in fact means “No”? How should one initiate difficult inquiries or requests? English speakers use many softeners: “I was wondering whether ...”, “I was just thinking ...”, “I’m a bit concerned about ...”. As with these examples, softened locutions tend to use “I”,

not “you”. But how does a non-native speaker realize that a sentence from a manager starting, “I was wondering if ...”, is in fact an instruction?

Small talk and greetings

The study of small talk is a major topic within discourse analysis. Some cultures have little concept of the small talk that opens almost every New Zealand workplace conversation. For instance, how does one respond to “How are you?” People from other cultures are apt to reply at length or, if the inquirer continues on his way without stopping for an answer, to suspect insincerity. Who initiates and who terminates small talk in the New Zealand workplace? When does small talk occur? How long does it last? What topics are suitable? What responses are required? These are perplexing questions for the non-native speaker, but facility in small talk is a major indicator that an employee will fit in.

Communicative strategies

Discourse analysis in the programme includes considerable emphasis on conversational gambits of one kind or another, such as dealing with superiors, with colleagues, with subordinates, and with support staff. Subtopics include: making requests; making suggestions; making a complaint or criticism; refusing politely; disagreeing; giving and receiving compliments; and apologising. This study takes account of such contextual details such as social distance, power relationships, and degrees of imposition or urgency as important variables involved in choosing appropriate language. Feedback is sometimes direct and sometimes with the use of videotape.

Slang and idiom

All immigrants have difficulty with the idioms of their new countries, non-native speakers particularly so. The programme addresses this issue from the perspectives both of understanding and of usage.

As to understanding, the programme instructs participants in the meaning and use of a number of common expressions that migrants find particularly troublesome. For instance, “Every man and his dog” neither implies the presence of dogs nor suggests that women were absent.

Business communications

There is instruction in writing letters, reports, and in framing e-mail correspondence. Telephone skills require special attention. For instance, fluent English speakers from South Asia may find that their accent and intonation requires them to speak particularly slowly when on the telephone. Conversely, because of the absence of visual and contextual clues from either the speaker or the environment it is a major challenge for non-native speakers to understand what people say on the telephone. More generically, the course gives attention to such things as opening and closing conversations, leaving messages, ways of finishing calls gracefully, and recognising when the interlocutor wishes to terminate a call.

Interview techniques

Even reasonably sophisticated native speakers benefit from being coached in interview techniques. People from other cultures have special needs. For instance, they can be too loquacious, too obsequious, or too confident that their home-grown skills and knowledge will translate seamlessly into the New Zealand workplace, or, conversely, far too modest.

Telephone interviews, or even clarifying a few employment-related issues by telephone, are particularly challenging exercises for non-native speakers. The course endeavours to prepare participants for such conversations.

A particular challenge is that for some time now most New Zealand businesses have used behaviour-based questions when interviewing candidates for employment. For instance, questions like, “Describe an occasion when you made a mistake and the steps that you took to remedy it”, or “Tell me about a time when you had to handle a difficult team member/client”, are common. New Zealand candidates who are well prepared for interviews know that they must expect these questions, but in many countries interviewers do not use them and they come as a surprise to most participants in the skilled migrant course.

Some interviews, particularly for public sector positions, require knowledge of New Zealand culture. For instance, candidates are wise to anticipate the question, “If appointed, how will you incorporate the principles of the Treaty of Waitangi in your work?”

Preparing course participants for interviews that will include behaviour based questions and questions on New Zealand culture is a major element of interview

training. Volunteer lecturers from the Rotary Club of Wellington who are very experienced in current interview practice are an extremely valuable resource for this part of the course.

Oral presentations

Using their colleagues as an audience, participants practise making presentations to small workplace meetings. Both this work and interview practice is videotaped and critiqued, as are some conversations. Topics include summaries or commentaries on the news of the day and five minute talks on their career experience.

Body language

The course is not long enough for a substantial coverage of the syllabus in Allan and Barbara Pease *The Definitive Book of Body Language* (many editions). Rather, it addresses issues of body language where New Zealand practice tends to vary from the practice of other societies. Eye contact, personal space, facial expressions, and the use of gesture are generic examples. Specific instruction attempts to answer such questions as: When standing, where should you hold your hands to appear confident and competent? When there is a handshake between a woman and a man, which gender first offers a hand? In other greetings, whom do you hug and whom do you kiss, and when?

Curricula vitae

Almost all participants in the course need help in putting their CVs into a form that is acceptable to New Zealand employers. As mentioned, staff from Victoria University Career Development and Employment are available to help with this module and to check drafts.

New Zealand government, society, employment relations, and trade unions

Visiting lecturers conduct classes on micro and macro aspects of political economy that most New Zealanders in professional or business workplaces take for granted. Reflecting participants' particular need for instruction in interview skills each course has several classes and many practice sessions on this topic.

New Zealand culture

There is no discrete module on New Zealand culture. As is evident from this chapter, teaching addresses a miscellanea of New Zealand practices as they arise in one context or another. Some elements come from Maori and some from British and other

European heritage. An example of the first is not sitting on tables. An example of the second is the expectation of apologies for lateness. After only a very short delay New Zealanders expect a muttered apology and after very little longer something more fulsome. In contrast, some cultures tolerate an hour or so of lateness without expecting an apology.

Teaching structure

A typical day in the classroom might include:

- Oral presentation practice.

- Discourse analysis and role plays.

- Interview practice.

- Feedback on homework, such as an e-mail exercise.

- Guest lecture.

Internship

Workplace

As mentioned above under “Philosophy”, Victoria University made a strategic decision to elevate the internship element of the course to equal importance with the classroom. To expand on the reasons, most participants in the programme have not previously had experience in a New Zealand professional or business workplace. Employment laws make it difficult or risky for employers to engage immigrants who are not familiar with New Zealand culture for trial terms; so obtaining such experience is a major hurdle. The primary objective of internships is to provide participants with experience that they can call upon in applying for employment. An additional benefit is that their managers as interns may be willing to comment on their performance in the workplace for the benefit of possible future employers.

Most internships are organised with some formality, with participants facing an interview panel before being accepted. Interviewers sometimes decide that the candidate is not suitable, in which case advisers seek another position for the applicant in question. The assigned workplace consultant accompanies the participant to interviews. The purpose is to observe and to provide commentary afterwards, rather than to take part in the interview, but consultants sometimes intervene to clarify misunderstandings.

The policy of the Skilled Migrant Programme is that internships should be planned as well as possible, with clear lines of authority and obligations. Work placement coordinators and workplace consultants explain these matters to prospective employers. These explanations need to be conducted tactfully, bearing in mind that the employers concerned are volunteers and that hosting an intern can be burdensome.

Details of internships

Employers are asked to appoint a mentor for each intern, usually someone from the same work group. Usually, the mentor is the manager or supervisor or team member who is responsible for the intern. If the mentor is not to work fairly closely with the intern, the employer is usually asked also to appoint a buddy who can advise the intern on a day-to-day basis if needed. These workplace mentors should be distinguished from the job mentors that the Rotary Club of Wellington appoints for graduates of the course to support them as they seek permanent work.

During each internship, workplace consultants meet two or three times with interns and their mentors. On each occasion, the normal protocol is for the consultant to meet first with the mentor, secondly with mentor and intern, and thirdly with the intern alone. Often, a manager joins the meeting. If an internship runs into difficulties the consultant has additional meetings with managers or mentors to attempt to find a solution.

Consultants work with employers to try to ensure that interns are assigned to reasonably demanding work that tests their skills and experience. Assignments require care: for instance, the programme cannot expect employers to unleash interns onto clients or customers without supervision. A common solution is to assign interns to difficult projects (often only one project) that are necessary for the employer but that the employer has not had the time or resources to address. For instance; a lawyer from China investigated and wrote a paper on Chinese industrial law and industrial relations for an employer that was interested in labour competition between New Zealand and China; an engineer investigated how a large engineering plant could save energy; and an investment analyst conducted a review of his employer's strategic plan.

As mentioned, the final week in the classroom consolidates what participants have learned and addresses lessons from the internship module. There are additional

visiting lecturers, and a number of recruitment agencies visit to offer advice and to take details of participants' qualifications and experience. Also in this week, participants meet mentors assigned to them from the Rotary Club of Wellington.

Success of internships

Readers familiar with employment matters will understand from the above that finding suitable employment and placing participants in internships where there will be a reasonable fit from the perspective of both parties is challenging. For this reason, this aspect of the programme is heavily resourced in respect of both work placement coordinators and workplace consultants.

So far, all internships have been beneficial and nearly all can be described as fully successful. In a few, success has been mixed. The course coordinator and workplace consultants review reports of internships and interview interns with a view to learning from placements that have turned out to be sub-optimal. There are a variety of causes. Some relate to attributes of the intern himself or herself. Just like some New Zealanders, some individuals from other cultures have personalities that make it hard for them to fit into teams. Another problem is that one or two participants have over-estimated the level of their personal expertise or the ease with which it is internationally transferable.

Workplace communication and internships

Focusing secondly on places of employment, as a generalization it is probably true to say that internships are more likely to be fully successful in organizations where processes and information sharing are formalized and well tried. This tends to be particularly true, for instance, though by no means exclusively, of large employers in the finance sector. Such employers are likely to ensure that people who work with interns are well informed about the objectives of the interns' short terms of employment and the objectives of the employer in volunteering to take part in the programme.

Miscommunication is very seldom a problem, but when it occurs the effect can be significant. Perhaps the most dramatic such occurrence was when an employee appointed as buddy to an intern appeared to have received the mistaken impression that his task was to train the intern, and that having been trained the intern would take over, whereupon the buddy would become redundant. As can be imagined, this mistake required smart work by the workplace consultant.

To emphasize, the sorts of factors canvassed in the preceding two paragraphs are rare, but it is no doubt helpful for readers to understand some specifics of the challenges that face the Skilled Migrant Programme. That said, most internships successfully achieve their objectives of exposing participants to business or professional workplaces and of giving them New Zealand workplace experience that they can call on when seeking employment.

Planning for success of internships

While every workplace is different and while interns have different skills, capacities, and needs, the programme has identified a number of practices that tend to promote success. To summarise, these practices are:

- Assign reasonably demanding work to the intern, often one or two fairly large projects that will occupy most of the duration of the internship. The intern's tasks should be clearly defined. See section 0 of this paper.
- Ensure that people involved at the workplace are well briefed as to the purposes of the internship. In the nature of things, failures of communication sometimes occur. As a safety net, at the initial workplace interview the assigned workplace consultant discusses the programme with the responsible manager and workplace mentor. See section 0 of this paper.
- Where possible, try to assign a designated workspace to the intern.
- Schedule regular debriefing meetings with the workplace mentor or buddy. Desirably, meetings should be at least weekly, though some employers are able to arrange daily or twice-weekly debriefing, which can be very valuable.
- Help the intern to take part in the social side of the workplace, for instance by introductions and inclusion in conversation at morning tea.

Benefits to employers

When work placement coordinators ask employers whether they will accept interns the coordinators' approach is based on the premise that employers provide this service to interns and to the programme through a lively sense of social responsibility. That is, employers are conferring a benefit on the programme. Victoria University are most grateful that so many Wellington employers are willing to take part. However, it is pleasing that many employers have found considerable reciprocal benefits from the internship programme.

The most obvious such benefit is that from time to time employers have vacancies that they offer to interns as continuing positions. Victoria University and the Rotary Club of Wellington take great satisfaction in being instrumental in such direct and immediate contributions to alleviating New Zealand's skill shortage.

Such outcomes are greatly welcomed as excellent evidence of the success of the internships in question. But out of fairness both to employers and to interns, the programme takes pains to emphasise that employers' offers of internships are just that, that the programme is immensely grateful to cooperating employers, but that there is no general expectation that an internship will result in permanent employment with the employer in question.

In addition to some offers of continuing employment, employers have reported a number of incidental benefits. Here are three examples. First, employers sometimes find that foreign-trained interns whose qualifications are on paper equivalent to corresponding New Zealand qualifications in fact have greater depth of training and skills than their New Zealand counterparts. To take an example, the training of a participant who was a graphic artist turned out to have comprised extensive art education at secondary level, followed by four years at an art college, and then five years for a professional graphics degree.

Secondly, employers are becoming increasingly aware of the changing composition of the New Zealand workforce and of the increasing proportion of foreign-trained workers that they can expect in the future. Some monocultural workplaces are concerned that existing staff are not sufficiently prepared to work in a friendly and efficient manner when, in due course, they appoint foreign-trained staff. These workplaces see the acceptance of interns as a useful way of helping their staff to become accustomed to foreign colleagues in a situation where the appointee is clearly in need of help to become accustomed to the New Zealand workplace.

Thirdly, some employers have found internship a useful opportunity to appoint as mentor or buddy a staff member to whom they want to give leadership experience.

Refinements in planning and organization

The coordinator regularly refines the planning of the course in ways that are too numerous to mention. An example that concerns the relationship between the internship and classroom elements is illuminating. Originally, interns worked Monday to Thursday, with classroom meetings scheduled on Friday. This arrangement proved

to suffer from the demerit that interns missed the social occasions that often occur on Fridays in New Zealand workplaces. Monday morning was tried for classroom meetings, but this schedule often caused interns to miss workplace team meetings. As at September 2007, the class meets on Monday afternoons, which seem to entail the fewest clashes.

Additional components of the course

Introduction to New Zealand social conventions

The course attempts in a small way to introduce participants to some of the conventions that New Zealanders observe in social situations. First, in addition to the volunteer work of its individual members that is described later in this paper, the Rotary Club of Wellington invites each intake of the Skilled Migrant Programme to luncheon meetings in weeks three and twelve of the course.

At lunch, the club assigns a host to each participant, with a view to scattering them on different lunch tables. These meetings expose participants to a large group of Wellington professional and business people and offer help in extending their networks. Where possible, hosts try to introduce participants to people in their industry. In addition, at the luncheon in the twelfth (final) week, participants are introduced to the club members who have been assigned to be their mentors as they enter the work force.

Graduation ceremony

Courses terminate with a formal graduation ceremony attended by one or two people from senior levels in the administration of Victoria University. This level of recognition indicates that the university acknowledges the course as a postgraduate programme, albeit of an unusual kind. Another important aspect of the graduation ceremony is that it affords an opportunity to invite all volunteers and other stakeholders in the Skilled Migrant Programme. The programme could not operate at anything like its current level without the help of large numbers of busy people who repeatedly make their time and skills available. Victoria University is extremely grateful for this most generous help.

Post course meetings

One of the hopes of the Tertiary Education Commission in funding programmes for skilled migrants is that providers should keep in touch with their graduates and offer continuing advice and moral support. To this end, Victoria University maintains a database of graduates' contacts. The course coordinator convenes informal gatherings of graduates several times a year at the university. Generally, one or both of the Programme Director and the Director of the Language in the Workplace Project are able to be present.

Graduates from different intakes of the course meet one another at these meetings and exchange experiences and advice. The course teachers also endeavour to help graduates with difficulties that they have encountered.

Employment agencies

Employment agencies specialising in relevant areas of the workforce visit the class, discuss the needs of the sectors that they serve, and establish contact with participants.

Financial assistance for participants

Some participants qualify for the unemployment benefit by virtue of length of residence. They are permitted to keep drawing the benefit during the course. Secondly, participants who have been in New Zealand for at least two years qualify for allowances as tertiary students. In addition, the Ministry of Social Development provided funds to meet expenses of travel to the course or to internship workplaces in 2005 and 2006. For one intake there were hardship funds to meet the cost of business clothing for interviews and for participants' time at work.

Qualifications, application, reporting, and measurement of success

Application, selection, and enrolment

The course has no budget for advertising, but government and voluntary agencies in the Wellington region are well aware of it and refer suitable candidates to Ms Judi McCallum, ESOL Advisor to the Tertiary Education Commission. Also, graduates of the course sometimes refer friends and acquaintances.

The ESOL Advisor interviews and tests all applicants. Where necessary, she discusses individual cases with the Programme Director and the Course Coordinator.

The programme admits approximately one applicant in four. To qualify, applicants must:

- Have entered New Zealand as skilled migrants or as accompanying family members;
 - Have qualified for permanent residence in New Zealand;
 - Have a university or equivalent qualification;
 - Be unemployed or underemployed;
 - Be trained in a profession;
 - Have had at least two years' experience in their profession, preferably in the last five years. This experience may be in their home countries or elsewhere;
 - Have a good level of language proficiency (around IELTS 6.0, which is a little below the minimum for entry to postgraduate courses at Victoria University).
- Most people admitted to New Zealand as principal migrants readily satisfy this requirement, but some accompanying persons need additional English tuition before joining the course.

In addition, there is a general assessment of suitability and aptitude, taking account of such factors as likely prospects as an intern and flexibility in adapting to New Zealand conditions. Contact details for applicants are in section 0 of this paper.

Enrolment

Applicants who are accepted enrol for the course via the Victoria University Enrolment Office, receive a student identity card, and become entitled to all the rights and privileges of Victoria University students, including the right to access all student facilities and services. In practice, the most significant are the use of the Language Learning Centre and help from the VUW Career Development and Employment unit.

Entrants

On entering the programme, participants are very often demoralized and without much hope. Some have been unemployed or employed in unskilled positions for years. Most have had no experience in skilled work since arriving in New Zealand. All have answered many advertisements and made many applications for positions without advertisement.

Few have had any success at all in applying for employment. For instance, a poll of the March to June intake of 2007 showed that fewer than half had ever managed to

proceed as far as an interview in an employment selection and no one had got past the interview.

As a result of their experiences, some entrants have been contemplating returning to their home countries. Others would do so if it were not for their children, who typically integrate well. All are anxious. All regard the Skilled Migrant Programme as their last chance or the next thing to it.

Considering their experience, it is remarkable how quickly participants cheer up. No doubt role-plays, discussion with their peers, and meeting the many volunteers who help with the course, all play their part. Anticipation of an internship with an employer who has agreed to engage them is most heartening. Most significant, however, is that most people who take the decision to make a new life in another country have an inner resilience on which they can call when an opportunity arises.

Assessment and reporting

The programme does not employ formal examinations, but it supplies graduates with formal reports on their progress and achievement. The course coordinator prepares a report, focusing particularly on classroom performance, but also taking into account reports from workplace consultants. Mentors appointed by employers to be responsible for interns prepare a second report, following a template to ensure that necessary matters are covered. Work performance is an important topic in workplace mentors' reports and communicative skills are significant in both reports.

Measurement of success

The two intakes of the Skilled Migrant Programme in 2005 and the two intakes in 2006 had a total of 40 participants. Their positions as at June 2007 were:

In skilled work, 25

Self employed, 4

In further education, 2

Seeking skilled work or position not known, 9

There were 12 graduates from the March to June cohort of 2007. As at August 2007, two remained with their internship employers on short or medium term contracts. Seven were in permanent skilled employment; one had a 12-month contract position; one was not seeking work for health reasons; and only one remained who was actively seeking work. Of the seven in permanent skilled employment, five had found their positions within a month of graduating from the course.

From one perspective, the partners in the programme, Victoria University and the Rotary Club of Wellington, would be delighted if 100 per cent of graduates found skilled employment of their choice very soon after leaving the programme. From another point of view, such a result would indicate a shortcoming. It would suggest that the selection process is too rigorous, with the result that some applicants who could have benefited from the programme were being excluded. Admitting some applicants near the cut-off point who show potential but who may not make the grade goes some way to ensuring that everyone who does possess the skills and attributes to make a rich contribution to the New Zealand economy can earn a chance to do so. Further, considering the demoralizing experiences that almost all participants have suffered before entering the programme the partners take great heart from the results to date.

The Rotary Club of Wellington

The Rotary Club of Wellington is New Zealand's oldest Rotary Club. It was founded in 1921, 16 years after the Rotary movement began in Chicago. Membership is fairly stable at a little over 150. Like all Rotary clubs, it meets weekly. The Wellington Rotary Club meets for lunch on Mondays. Rotary clubs exist to foster contact between people of different vocations and to promote service to the community. Some clubs are very active in visible fundraising, for example by running stalls at fairs. The Wellington Rotary Club's fundraising tends to focus on gala dinners, charity auctions, and similar events.

Many Rotary clubs prefer to offer hands-on help to deserving causes. The Wellington Rotary Club is no exception, with, for instance, annual tree planting and such things as occasional visits to villages in the Pacific Islands to improve housing. The club's main service thrust is probably from providing directors, trustees, and committee members for a good many charitable organizations. Members make a particularly valuable contribution in these roles because they bring skills to bear from their professional and business lives.

Apart from the kinds of leadership roles described in the previous paragraph, there are not many projects that call for large infusions of club members' business and professional skills and experience. The Skilled Migrant Programme is unusual in this respect. Long periods of unemployment often result in participants' being not at all

well off, but they are always intelligent and generally resourceful; so they do not suffer from many of the other problems of disadvantaged members of society. On the other hand, what they do need is exactly what club members are well qualified to offer: tutoring in the requirements and practices of the New Zealand professional and business workplace. This close fit between the needs of participants in the Skilled Migrant Programme and the resources of members of the club has resulted in numerous club members contributing in the different ways that are set out in the next section of this paper.

Volunteer work

Affiliation

Most volunteers are members of the Rotary Club of Wellington or are spouses of members or have been recruited by members from within their place of work. Others are neighbours of the university from Kelburn or Karori, and a few are friends of the university from further afield.

Roles

Volunteers perform a wide variety of roles within the programme, some more than one. Various types of conversation practice, interview practice, and speaking are very significant.

Some volunteers give visiting lectures that call on their specialist knowledge of, for instance, New Zealand government and public systems, or of employment law and relationships, or of techniques of dealing with challenging workplace situations.

Volunteers who are members of the Rotary Club of Wellington are particularly qualified and experienced in the areas just described. Several are or were senior managers with extensive experience of job selection procedures and knowledge of the kinds of questions that are common, almost standard, in interviews today. They commonly submit participants to very searching and realistic mock interviews. They are able to explain what it is that interviewers are looking for and how particular kinds of question are designed to elicit that information. They can advise participants how to conduct themselves in various kinds of employment situations, such as the first weeks in a new position, or how they should interact with co-members of a team. This specialised knowledge has proved an invaluable component of the classroom component of the course.

Most internship placements are arranged from a database of contacts that Victoria University Continuing Education and Executive Development built up over the course of the first five intakes, but a significant number come from offers of placements within Rotary Club members' workplaces or as a result of referrals from club members.

The Wellington Rotary club appoints a job mentor for each course participant on graduating. The mentor meets the graduate regularly for six months or so, or until the protégé finds a position.

General organization

Rotary clubs typically operate through a number of standing committees, each chaired by a member of the club's board of directors. Directorships rotate annually, reflecting the Rotary year of July to June, and there is also a partial turnover of the membership of each committee each year. Commonly, one of a club's committees is the Vocational Service Committee. As the name implies, the remit of the Vocational Service Committee is particularly appropriate for that group to take responsibility for the Rotary Club of Wellington's contribution to the Skilled Migrant Programme.

Members of the Rotary Club of Wellington volunteered as individuals to help with the first intake of the Skilled Migrant Programme in March 2005. The partnership between the club and the programme was formalized in time for the third intake, in March 2006. Since then, the Vocational Service Committee has been responsible for organising and administering the club's contribution. The Rotary Club of Wellington makes a modest budget available to its committees to help in their work. The club's contribution to the Skilled Migrant Programme has been almost exclusively in time and in skills, but for one intake the club contributed to participants' costs in travelling to the places of work where they were assigned as interns.

Responsibilities and duties

In summary, the duties of the Vocational Service Committee in respect of the Skilled Migrant Programme entail:

- explaining the programme to the club and canvassing members for volunteers;
- organizing telephone trees and telephoners to seek possible internships among members;
- identifying possible mentors and requesting their assistance;

- matching participants with mentors;
- liaising with internship consultants and the course coordinator.

The committee also keeps an eye on the programme in case of unexpected expenses that may be within the budget of the committee. Chairs of the Vocational Service Committee during the currency of the partnership between the club and the programme have been:

2005 – 2006 Denise Church

2006 – 2007 Lee Wilkinson

2007 – 2008 Grant Uridge

Members of the Committee since 2005 have included: Helen Algar, Karl Baker, Ruth Bruce, David Chapman, Denise Church, John Cook, Bruce Christianson, Donna Dentice, Ken Fink-Jensen, Peter Garnett, Nigel Gould, Elizabeth Griffin, Leigh Johnson, Ian Lawrence, Christina Leach, Clélia Lind, Patrick McArdell, Jane McCann, Ian McCarrison, Richard Norman, Jim O'Neill, John Prebble, Peter Silcock, Joan Smith, Justin Smith, the late John Watson, and Lee Wilkinson.

Peter Garnett, Clare Austin, and Lee Wilkinson have had special responsibility for the mentorship element of the programme. Bruce Christianson and Karl Baker have been in charge of identifying possible positions for interns known to club members or their business associates.

The New Zealand Institute of Management: mentor training

In their service function, Rotary clubs try to call upon not only the resources of their individual members. The Skilled Migrant mentor programme is a good example of the operation of this philosophy. Post-course mentorship was not originally a component of the club's help to the Skilled Migrant Programme, but was suggested by David Chapman, a member of the Vocational Service Committee in 2005. Mr Chapman is Director of the New Zealand Institute of Management, which promotes business mentorship and which regularly runs mentor training courses. Through Mr Chapman, the Institute has run two courses for members of the Rotary Club of Wellington who have volunteered as mentors to course graduates. The Institute donated its charge for organising and presenting the courses and bore the ancillary costs.

Role and duty of Rotary job mentors

Members of the Rotary Club of Wellington appointed as job mentors to graduates of the course are not expected to find positions for their protégés. Rather, their role is to

offer support and commonsense advice to graduates as they apply for work. Mentors may meet their protégés monthly or more frequently if that seems desirable and are ready to respond to questions by telephone. They act as a sounding board to comment on protégés' strategy. They may read job applications, discuss forthcoming interviews, or comment on experience at interviews that did not result in offers of employment.

Mentors do not offer legal advice, but they may help protégés to understand employment contracts that they have been offered and comment on whether the terms seem fair within a New Zealand context, as they might if requested by an inexperienced friend or relative. Perhaps above all mentors encourage their protégés in the challenging process of seeking work. In short, job mentorship in the present context is not a specialized role. It is more a question of mentors calling on their experience of the New Zealand workplace and in their own careers to offer practical advice and support.

Mentorships last until the protégé finds work or, as a maximum, for six months. Mentors sometimes retain the connection for a month or so into a protégé's employment to be ready to respond to requests for advice. In practice, most mentorships last a relatively short time because of the rapid success rate of graduates in finding work;⁶ it is common for graduates to need to meet their mentors only once or twice.

Written guidelines set out the roles of mentors and protégés. The course coordinator explains the guidelines to both parties. If questions arise during the course of mentorships the course coordinator is the contact person for protégés. The mentorship coordinator appointed by the Rotary Club of Wellington Vocational Service Committee has a corresponding role for mentors.

The Johnson Group Ltd

The Johnson Group Ltd is a Wellington recruitment consultancy specializing in middle management positions in the public sector. The principal and founder is Leigh Johnson, a member of the Rotary Club of Wellington. The company encourages employees to undertake public service projects of one kind or another and makes company time available for this purpose. Several members of the Johnson Group act as classroom volunteers and as visiting lecturers for the Skilled Migrant Programme.

⁶ See, eg, the figures for the March to June cohort of 2007, set out in section 0 of this paper.

Because of their knowledge and experience of the New Zealand workplace their contribution is particularly valuable.

In addition to its extensive volunteer work, the Johnson Group accepted responsibility for locating internships and placing interns from the start of the sixth intake of the course in late July 2007. The course organisers are very grateful that the Johnson Group was willing to accept this appointment, which occurred at short notice. Johnson Group Personnel with responsibility for internships include:

Project coordination: Kirsty Bidwell.

Finding internship positions: Leigh Johnson.

Interviewing and assigning interns: Melissa Alfonso Cruz.

Summary of Rotary work for the programme

The following list summarises the ways in which the Rotary Club of Wellington, individual members, spouses, and associates contribute to the Skilled Migrant Programme.

Serving as interview and conversation tutors

Delivering visiting lectures

Serving as post graduation job mentors

Hosting participants at club luncheon meetings

Providing mentor training

Locating internships

Rotary annual diary

For the benefit of incoming chairpersons and members of the Rotary Vocational Service Committee it is helpful to record the main annual milestones of the Club's contribution to the partnership. This diary is arranged in the order of the Rotary Year. Ordinarily, there are two courses each year.

July

Course coordinator makes contact; may request a circular asking for more volunteers.

Set dates for participants' visits to Rotary lunches.

Appoint mentor coordinator.

Ask members to arrive early to host participants at first Rotary luncheon.

Course starts towards the end of July.

August

Check with work placement coordinator whether to seek internships among club members.

September - October

Internships start early September.

Mentor coordinator and course coordinator meet to select mentors.

Mentors appointed, meet protégés at second Rotary luncheon.

Ask Vocational Service Committee members to arrive early to host participants at second Rotary luncheon.

Course finishes October.

End of course lunch at Victoria University on final day. Club volunteers invited.

Graduation. Club volunteers invited.

February

Course coordinator makes contact. May request a circular asking for more volunteers.

Set dates for participants' visits to Rotary lunches.

Appoint or confirm mentor coordinator.

Ask members to arrive early to host participants at first club lunch

March

Course starts early March

Check with course coordinator whether to seek internships among club members.

April - May

Internships usually start soon after Easter.

Mentor coordinator and course coordinator meet to select mentors.

June

Ask members to arrive early to host participants at second club lunch.

Mentors appointed, meet protégés at second club lunch.

Ask Vocational Service Committee members to arrive early to host participants at second club lunch.

Course finishes mid-June.

End of course lunch at Victoria University on final day. Club volunteers invited.

Graduation. Club volunteers invited.

Volunteers

General

As mentioned, a good many people, both from the Rotary Club of Wellington and as individuals, volunteer to help the Skilled Migrant Programme. The largest group help with conversation and interview practice. They are not all available every week, but the group is big enough to provide a weekly body of tutors who can give attention to participants individually or in pairs and who can take part in role-plays of interviews and of other critical workplace interactions. Some concentrate on conversation practice, some on interviews, and some take part in both. The schedules below list them in their areas of primary focus. Visiting lecturers are listed with their topics. All members of the Rotary Club of Wellington's Vocational Service Committee help with finding volunteers for their various tasks, with certain members, mentioned in section 0 of this paper, taking particular responsibility. Volunteers who are members, spouses, or friends of members of the Rotary Club of Wellington are marked [®] and members of the Johnson Group are marked ^{®J}:

Conversation and interview tutors

Helen Algar[®]

Melissa Alfonso Cruz^{®J}

James Austin[®]

Stephen Brown[®]

Dinah Dobson

Charmaine Thomson^{®J}

Danny Fahy^{®J}

Helen Fergusson

Rebecca Groves

Katherine Hamilton^{®J}

Carole Hartney

Sanne Hill

Leigh Johnson^{®J}

Janie Kirkaldie[®]

Peter Lawson[®]

Mandy Leighs

Pip Oldham
Rachel Plimmer
Jo Smith^{®J}
Carol Stigley[®]
Carla Wild

Visiting lecturers

Helen Algar[®] “Anticipating and Meeting the Needs of the Interviewer”
Michael Gilchrist “Employment Relations and Unions”
Leigh Johnson^{®J} “Interviews for the Public Sector”
Peter Lawson[®] “Making a Personal Impact and Creating a Relationship at Interview”
Denis McLean CMG[®] “New Zealand and the World”
Meredith Marra “Small Talk in the Workplace”
Judi McCallum “Promoting Inter-Cultural Competence through a Framework for Understanding Culture”
Rama Ramanathan[®] “Facing the Problems of Immigrants”
Jo Smith^{®J} “Using Recruitment Agencies Strategically”
Carol Stigley[®] “What New Zealand Employers Want”
Maria Stubbe “Communication Difficulties”
Francis Wevers[®] “Employment Relations and Unions”
Lee Wilkinson[®] “Thinking on your Feet”

Mentors

All mentors are members of the Rotary Club of Wellington or spouses of members.

Those who have taken part include:

Helen Algar[®]
Stephen Brown[®]
Ruth Bruce[®]
Denise Church[®]
Mike Doig[®]
George Fairbairn[®]
Ken Fink-Jensen[®]

Grant Foggo[®]
Allan Fenwick[®]
Brian Hassell[®]
Heather Hayden[®]
Keith Manch[®]
Patrick McArdell[®]
Murray Milner[®]
Gill Olifent[®]
Harry Pappaforatos[®]
Colleen Singleton[®]
Mark Stevens[®]
Tricia Walbridge[®]
Francis Wevers[®]
Lee Wilkinson[®]
Mark Woodard[®]

Participants

Participants come from a wide range of countries and share a similarly wide range of professional backgrounds. Most hope to re-enter their former profession, though they accept that they may have to begin at a lower level than they had enjoyed in their countries of origin. Some participants decide to take up related work. For instance, medical doctors whose English is not good enough to cope with the additional training required to practise in New Zealand may aim for one of the many careers where a background in medicine is required. Others may find it necessary to change because there is no scope for their particular specialization in New Zealand. For example, several scientists have sought related or different roles and teachers whose accents are not attuned to the New Zealand classroom have moved to other occupations. The details in the lists below are totals for the first six intakes, 2005 to 2007.

Countries of origin

The largest groups come from South Asia and East Asia. Individual countries of source are:

Bangladesh

Brazil
China
India
Indonesia
Japan
Malaysia
Nepal
Russia
Serbia
Singapore
South Korea
Sri Lanka
Ukraine

Occupations

Course participants come from most professions and industry sectors, with an emphasis on finance. Accountancy is the most represented profession, with approximately 12 enrolments. (“approximately” because of the difficulty of finding a precise definition of “accountant”). As well as their professional qualifications, a number of participants have extensive experience in businesses of one kind or another.

Accountant, general
Central banking
Civil servant (management)
Commercial banking
Credit controller
Data analyst
Editor and marketing specialist
Economist and economic researcher
Engineer (civil, specialist in health and safety)
Engineer (electrical and electronic)
Engineer (structural)
Financial accountant
Financial and business analyst

Food technologist and factory inspector
Graphic designer
Human resources specialist
Investment analyst
IT specialist (hardware)
IT specialist (programming, systems analysis)
IT specialist (software development)
Lawyer
Management accountant
Maritime court judge
Medical doctor
Professor of English
Programmer and web designer
Public relations
Project manager and logistics specialist
Scientist (specialist in dyes)
Stockbroker and investment analyst
Teacher of English
Teacher of mathematics

Employers who have hosted interns

A variety of employers have supported the programme by making places available for interns. As a generalization, most host employers are fairly large organizations. The public sector, the private sector, education, and the voluntary sector are all represented. As would be expected of internships in Wellington, there has been an emphasis on the first. The employers for the first five intakes, 2005 – mid-2007, were:

Accident Compensation Corporation
Black Coffee Software Ltd
Capital and Coast District Health Board
Caritas
Cogent Communications Ltd
Council of Trade Unions
Crown Law Office
Department of Internal Affairs
DHL Shipping

Dulux New Zealand Ltd: Engineering Department
EGL Eagle Global Logistics Ltd
Enterprise New Zealand Trust
FSB4 Financial
Grosvenor Financial Services Group Ltd
Health Care New Zealand
Hutt Hospital
Kiwibank
Land Transport New Zealand
Markit Enterprises
Massey University (Textile and Design course)
Ministry of Economic Development
Ministry of Education
Ministry of Social Development
National Association of ESOL Home Tutors
National Bank of New Zealand (Private Banking)
New Zealand Institute of Management
New Zealand Post
Office of Ethnic Affairs
Oxygen Finance Ltd
Pharmac
Porirua City Council
Reserve Bank
Retailers Association
Royal New Zealand College of General Practitioners
Statistics New Zealand
The New Zealand Red Cross
The New Zealand Stock Exchange
Travelex Worldwide Money Ltd
Victoria University (Careers Service)
Victoria University (CEED)
Victoria University (Facilities Management)
Victoria University (Finance)
Victoria University (Law Faculty)

Victoria University (Library)
Victoria University (Public Affairs)
Victoria University (Victoria International)
Wellington City Council
Whitireia Polytechnic
Zintel Enterprise (NZ) Ltd

The Victoria Model

This paper describes the implementation and refinement of a particular model of instruction for skilled people whose lack of language and cultural knowledge prevents them from finding employment that calls on their professional skills and knowledge. The essential elements of the Victoria Model are:

- INTERNSHIP. The internship module is crucial. It both gives participants on-the-job experience and acts as their first rung on the employment ladder. It is crucial for internships to be well planned and well supported. Chapter 0 describes the protocols that the Victoria Model has used.
- CLASSROOM. The classroom module serves both as a preparation for internship and for future employment and as the organisational fulcrum of the course. Chapter 0 describes salient aspects of the syllabus.
- AUTHENTIC LANGUAGE. For many participants, fluency is not a major problem. Their difficulty is that the English that they know is not the English of the New Zealand professional workplace. Ironically, the problem may not be so acute for non-fluent speakers, since interlocutors may make allowances for their obvious unfamiliarity with English. Nevertheless, they, too, need to discover customary usage. There seems to be no substitute for research to determine just what language people use and how and in what circumstances they use it. Fortunately, this research has been done and the results are available both within Victoria University and publicly.
- PERSONALISED INSTRUCTION. At least some one-to-one conversation and interview practice with native speakers experienced in the New Zealand workplace has a major impact on improving participants' performance.

-VOLUNTEERS. Institutions that offer communication courses for skilled migrants will struggle to staff the courses fully. Partly it is a question of resources and funding. Internship organization and support require considerable resources. Personal instruction is expensive. Partly it is a question of the range of skills and knowledge needed among instructors. For instance, experts in teaching of pragmatics and workplace English may not be experts in current interview and selection practices. Volunteers working as conversation and interview tutors, visiting lecturers, and mentors, and helping to locate internships, add greatly to the success of the model. Fortunately, New Zealand has a large number of service clubs with members who have skills and knowledge appropriate to the tasks that are needed. Also, New Zealanders in general have shown themselves willing to help with language instruction. The success of the ESOL Home Tutor movement, with 3000 volunteers instructing 6000 to 7000 migrants and refugees every year is notable evidence.⁷

Conclusion

English for Professional Purposes ELIN 941, the Skilled Migrant Programme, is an enterprise that is heavily supported by the public, the private, and the voluntary sectors. It is probably true to say that there is no other programme at Victoria University where government funding and voluntary help are so heavily engaged. But there can be no doubt that the effort is worthwhile. Each course lasts only 12 weeks. And yet participants who for at least two years, often much longer, have failed to make any progress in mounting the employment ladder are radically transformed. Many arrive at the course close to giving up hope. Yet within weeks of graduation most are in demanding employment that calls on their skills, experience, and education. Within months the larger part of the remainder are also employed. It is rare for any educational programme to see such dramatic and tangible results in such a short time. The success of the programme is a matter of great satisfaction to both Victoria University and the Rotary Club of Wellington.

⁷ "Hungary to learn ... and then Teach" *The Dominion Post*, Wellington, 5 September 2007, page E12, www.esolht.org.nz.