



English lesson 5 – Answer sheet

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Learning aim:

To select evidence from a text to justify a point of view.

Scenario:

Zara has started a digital marketing apprenticeship at Hawk UK, a digital marketing agency. She spends 80% of her week working for Hawk and 20% studying for a BA honours in digital marketing at a city university.

She has been in post for just over a month.

Zara has just received this email from her line manager, Hamish. After reading the email, answer and discuss the questions below in your group.

Zara,

Update on our team meetings. We expect all team members to attend our team meet every Wednesday at 2.30pm. We join wherever we are – in the office or from home. I aim to send the agenda to all team members by 11am, so they have a chance to review the items and consider the input required. (Couldn't this week or last but normally I do.) If you're expected to present, your initials will be next to the agenda item so please review it well in advance!

I understand you are in uni on a Wednesday, but we can't flex on this meeting. Make sure you work your uni time around us please. Really important.

Also, just checking why you haven't been in the department socials for the last two weeks? Our team go out every Friday night. (Well, the fun bunch anyway. Just not Jackie and Bea – don't ask, it is a Loooong story!)

We usually leave the office around 6pm and head to town. First round on the agency and then you need to pay for your own food and drink. This is a good way to get to know people and build a sense of unity so hope to see you there this week!!

Crazy busy again this week but if you need to speak to me, I can make myself available for a 15-minute video call Wednesday afternoon – only if urgent though please.

Cheers,

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1 – How do you think Zara would be feeling after reading the email, and why? Select evidence from the text to back up your point of view.

A month into the role, it could be that Zara is feeling a little overwhelmed, especially as she seems to be having to balance her university study with her manager's strict, seemingly inflexible, expectations. Students might also suggest that she is feeling sad, anxious, embarrassed and/or stressed. Encourage them to use evidence from the text to back up their point of view. 'Make sure you work your uni time around us please.' The use of imperative here is not considerate of her position and could be perceived negatively. Equally, the use of the pronoun 'us' could make Zara feel isolated from the wider team.

2 – State two things that Hamish seems to be concerned about, and why. Provide quotes from the text.

1 – 100% attendance at all team meetings – he wants all the team to come together each week and does not seem to be flexible on this expectation. 'We expect all team members to attend our team meet every Wednesday at 2.30pm.'

2- Attendance to the weekly team social – he clearly wants everyone to attend and seems to deem those who don't attend as not 'fun'. 'Our team go out every Friday night.'

3 – How do you think Hamish was feeling when he wrote this email, and why? Select evidence from the text to back up your point of view.

Possible answers include:

Stressed – he's not thought about the impact this email might have on Zara, a new member of the team. He states he is 'crazy busy again' and has failed to send out the agenda for the team meeting for the last two weeks. Therefore, he might be feeling overwhelmed or under pressure.

Hamish shows little awareness and empathy and does not seem to put his staff and their needs first. He clearly views himself as 'fun', not showing an understanding of the many reasons why his staff may not wish / want / be able to attend the socials every week. He also doesn't adhere to his own strict standards – as he failed to send out the agenda for the last two weeks. 'Couldn't this week or last but normally I do.'

4 – How would you advise Zara to respond to the situation, and why?

Possible answers include:

Seek help – seek support and advice from a trusted colleague or university mentor. Workplaces have a duty of care to protect the health and wellbeing of all their staff, so if Zara needs support, she must seek it out.

Breathe and sleep on it – take time before you respond. You'll feel differently in the morning. There could also be wider issues with the line manager that you're not aware of. He might, for example, be struggling personally and/or professionally and this might be affecting the way he behaves at work. It seems that two other members of the team, Jackie and Bea, are 'out of favour', so there could be historical, ongoing concerns around his suitability for the role.

Respond in person – Written text can be interpreted in many different ways. It might be that the manager's written style is different to how he conducts himself in person. Go into the office and politely request an in-person meeting to air your concerns in a professional and assertive manner. Start by acknowledging the two concerns he seems to have and empathising with them. Then state why you cannot be flexible with your university day and are unable to attend the weekly socials. Finally, state the solutions you have come up with and ask for his advice.

5 - How would you advise Zara NOT to respond to the situation, and why?

Possible answer include:

React straight away – Reacting straight away will mean you'll be fuelled by your emotions. Anger and frustration are not the foundations for a professional and considered response.

Tell everyone in the office – Immediately telling others in the team or forwarding the email for them to look at would not reflect you in the best light. Be courteous and professional. Speak only to a trusted colleague or university mentor.

Apologise and say yes – If it's not possible for you to move your university day, then speak to the university about the request and remind your line manager that this was agreed in your contract / at your initial meeting. Also, if you don't wish to (or can't) attend the team social, then that is your choice and it must be respected. You could suggest other ways to improve connectivity within the team as an alternative.

6 – Should Zara ask for support from her mentor, another manager or trusted colleague, and why?

Yes – absolutely. Dealing with this issue alone may prove challenging. Seek out advice from a trusted colleague or university mentor and create a plan of action.

