

# Social Responsibilities

## Introductory Guide for Teachers and Educational Managers



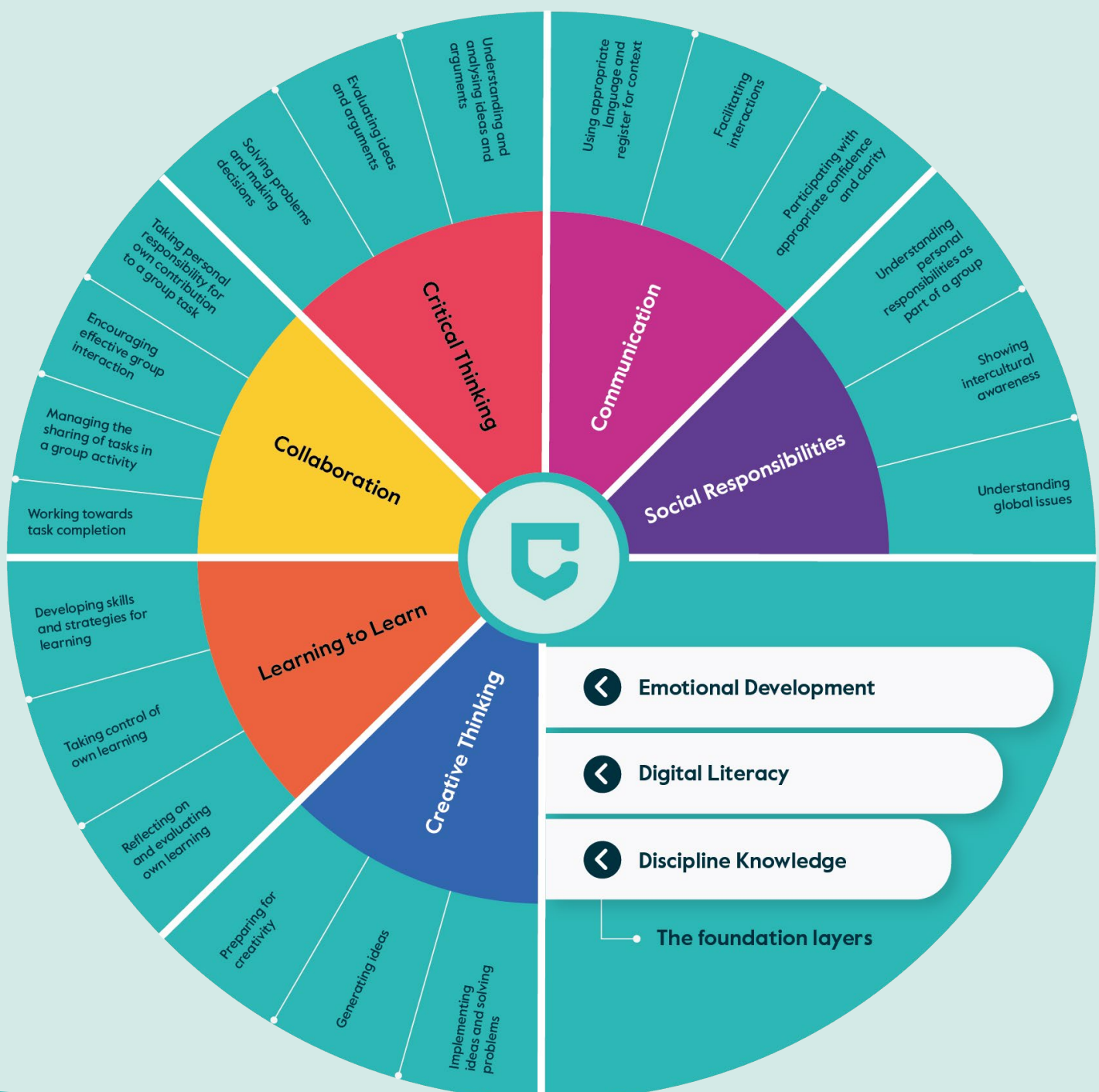
Cambridge  
Life Competencies

# Why teach Life Competencies?

Our world is changing fast and we need to prepare our students with skills and experiences that go beyond simply learning an additional language.

We see the increasing need to work together with people from around the world, to think creatively and solve problems, to analyse sources more critically, to communicate our views effectively, and to maintain a positive mindset in an increasingly complex world.

We understand that the engaging and collaborative nature of the language classroom is the perfect place to develop and embed these key qualities and the Life Competencies framework supports teachers in this challenging area.



# What is the Cambridge Life Competencies Framework?

The Cambridge Life Competencies Framework has been created in response to educators who have asked for a way to understand how life skills, or 21<sup>st</sup> century skills, can be integrated into English language programmes. It is made up of six **Competencies** that describe how these essential skills develop and vary across different stages of education, as learners grow and change.

|                                |                                                                                                                                                                |
|--------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Creative Thinking</b>       | Learners actively participate in creative activities, generate new ideas and use them to solve problems.                                                       |
| <b>Learning to Learn</b>       | Learners develop practical skills to support and take control of their learning and reflect on their own progress.                                             |
| <b>Collaboration</b>           | Learners work well together in groups through actively taking part in group activities, listening to others, sharing tasks and finding solutions to problems.  |
| <b>Critical Thinking</b>       | Learners identify patterns and relationships, evaluate ideas and use these skills to solve problems.                                                           |
| <b>Communication</b>           | Learners choose the most appropriate language to use in different situations, manage conversations effectively and express themselves clearly and confidently. |
| <b>Social Responsibilities</b> | Learners recognise and describe different roles and responsibilities in a variety of groups and understand cultural and global issues.                         |

In addition, there are three **Foundation layers**. Foundation layers are not separate competencies. Instead, they act as underlying dimensions that support and strengthen every other competency. They provide the essential capacities that allow learners to develop and apply all other life competencies effectively.

|                              |                                                                                                                                   |
|------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Emotional Development</b> | Learners identify and understand emotions, manage their own emotions as well as develop empathy and relationship skills.          |
| <b>Digital Literacy</b>      | Learners create content, share and interact with others online and maintain their safety and wellbeing while using technology.    |
| <b>Discipline Knowledge</b>  | Learners' knowledge of the English language, as well as of other subjects, supports and strengthens their competency development. |



# The learning journey

The Cambridge Life Competencies Framework supports learners at all stages of their learning journey, from very young pre-primary learners right through to adults in education and at work. The framework maps out how learner behaviours typically found within each competency can change and develop as learners encounter new situations and circumstances in their lives both within and beyond the classroom.

The Cambridge Life Competencies Framework allows us to support learners throughout their education and into the careers of the future.

Pre-Primary

Primary

Secondary

Higher Education

At Work

## How the Cambridge Life Competencies Framework aligns with key themes in ELT

The Cambridge Life Competencies Framework consists of competencies that are strongly related to key themes in ELT such as:



AI Literacy



Global  
Citizenship



Mediation and  
Translanguaging



Oracy



Sustainability



Wellbeing

By developing the competencies in the framework, learners are also developing much of the knowledge, skills and attitudes they need to develop in the above areas.

This booklet will outline how the Social Responsibilities competency aligns with these themes. To find out more about any of the themes, see our series of mini booklets.



# Understanding the Cambridge Life Competencies Framework

The Cambridge Life Competencies Framework is made up of six **Competencies** – **Creative Thinking, Critical Thinking, Learning to Learn, Communication, Collaboration** and **Social Responsibilities**. Each broad competency is broken down into **Core areas** that describe these competencies in more detail. These are then analysed further into **Components** that, along with example **Can Do statements**, describe the observable behaviours that learners are likely to be able to demonstrate by the end of each stage of learning if they have had the opportunity to develop in these areas.



Linked to the competencies are the three foundation layers of the framework – **Emotional Development, Digital Literacy** and **Discipline Knowledge**. Development of skills in these foundation layers underpins all other competencies.

Along with this structured breakdown, we provide **example language** that learners may use to express the actions and behaviours found in each of the Core areas at each stage of learning. These have been informed by both our Functional Language Phrase Bank, a collection of spoken data from expert speakers of English from children to adults, and input from experienced ELT practitioners from around the world. See this example for one Core Area within Collaboration at the Primary stage:

| Competency              | Core areas                                                        | Components                                           | Example Can Do statements                                                                                                       | Example language                               |
|-------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------|
| Social Responsibilities | Understanding personal responsibilities as part of a social group | Understanding responsibilities within a social group | Describes roles and responsibilities they have as members of social groups (e.g. family, friendship groups, school class etc.). | At home, I clean my room.                      |
|                         |                                                                   | Fulfilling responsibilities within a social group    | Follows school rules and makes positive choices about behaviours.                                                               | I must [put up my hand in class/follow rules]. |

By clearly defining these areas of development in a structured and detailed way, we can ensure that our teaching and learning materials take a systematic approach to delivering and developing these skills in our learners, as they progress. This means that teachers can be assured that our resources bring out the best in their students, without creating extra work.

It should be noted that the framework was developed primarily from research and frameworks that centred neurotypical expressions of Competencies, as neurodiversity and neurodivergence were less well understood when the framework was first created. Users of the framework should therefore adapt the framework flexibly, recognising that learners may demonstrate Competencies in diverse ways beyond those described in the framework. Further guidance on this will be published in due course.

# What are Social Responsibilities?

How do we engage with other people in an increasingly globalised world? This competency looks at how we can help people develop the skills to contribute better to the social groups they engage with. As the groups they become part of change over time, they need to be able to think about their roles within them, and how they contribute positively to them. They also need to improve their ability to work and link up with people from very different backgrounds and cultures to their own. There is, in addition, the need to step back and see their social engagement from a more global perspective: what are the major issues affecting the world and how do they relate to their own lives?

We have identified three **Core areas** within Social Responsibilities:

|                         |                                                                              |
|-------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Social Responsibilities | Understanding personal and social responsibilities as part of a social group |
|                         | Showing intercultural awareness                                              |
|                         | Understanding global issues                                                  |

- **Understanding personal and social responsibilities as part of a social group** refers to identifying and perceiving the significance of personal and social responsibilities across different levels, ranging from the local to the global. This involves learners fulfilling their personal and social responsibilities as a member of a social group and/or as a global citizen, and taking responsibility for their own actions.
- **Showing intercultural awareness** refers to a learner being able to describe and analyse features of their own culture and of the culture of others, and to make comparisons in a positive and respectful way. It also includes being able to collaborate with people from other cultures. Culture in this context can relate to cultures of different countries or to cultures of different groups and organisation, e.g. workplaces.
- **Understanding global issues** includes identifying, discussing and understanding a range of perspectives on global issues, for example on topics related to health, human rights and the environment. Learners will be able to understand how their own behaviours can contribute positively or negatively to the identified issues.

Within these Core areas we break things down further, defining the components that make up each Core area:

|                         |                                                                   |                                                            |
|-------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------|
| Social Responsibilities | Understanding personal responsibilities as part of a social group | Understanding responsibilities within a social group       |
|                         |                                                                   | Fulfilling responsibilities within a social group          |
|                         | Showing intercultural awareness                                   | Understanding aspects of own culture                       |
|                         |                                                                   | Understanding aspects of other cultures                    |
|                         |                                                                   | Interacting with others across cultures                    |
|                         | Understanding global issues                                       | Engaging with a range of global issues                     |
|                         |                                                                   | Developing personal agency and sense of global citizenship |

# How do Social Responsibilities align with key themes in ELT?

Social Responsibility skills support the development of the following emerging themes in ELT:



**AI literacy:** The impact of AI is a global issue. Learners need to understand and actively engage with AI tools in order to use them responsibly and ethically.



**Global citizenship:** Learners explore multiple perspectives on global issues, recognise rights and responsibilities, and take informed, prosocial action.



**Mediation and translanguaging:** Mediation and translanguaging are key foundations to effective intercultural communication and cross-cultural collaboration.



**Oracy:** Strong Oracy skills enable learners to participate meaningfully in discussions about global issues, express diverse perspectives respectfully, and collaborate across cultures to develop solutions to shared challenges.



**Sustainability:** Learners connect environmental, social, and economic factors, evaluate personal and collective impact, and work with others toward practical solutions.



**Wellbeing:** Deepening understanding of others helps build respectful and inclusive communities which are positive for wellbeing.

See our series of mini booklets on these themes to find out more.

## Spotlight on Sustainability

Sustainability is about the knowledge, skills and attitudes needed to secure a fairer, brighter future for people and the natural world. It recognises the environmental, social and economic aspects of our lives and how closely these are connected.

Sustainability skills involve learners understanding global issues and human rights, recognising how beliefs and values shape behaviour, and developing the agency to take responsible action with others. It also involves recognising personal and shared responsibilities in class, school and community, and using systems thinking to understand how actions create impact.

Sustainability aligns strongly with all three core areas of the **Social Responsibilities** competency: **understanding personal responsibilities as part of a group, showing intercultural awareness, and understanding global issues.**

We have highlighted some of the **Example Can Do statements** from these areas of the framework that could be used to support Sustainability. Look out for the following icon in the pages that follow:

To find out more about how the Cambridge Life Competencies Framework supports Sustainability in ELT, see our mini booklet.

# Social Responsibilities across the learning journey

Core areas may be realised in different ways across the different stages of learning. In order to demonstrate this, each **Core area** and **Component** is contextualised by an example **Can Do statement**. This illustrates what kinds of behaviour students who are competent in this area might display by the end of each stage of learning. These example Can Do statements can be used as a starting point in the development of a curriculum, programme or assessment system and will vary in their suitability for learners in different contexts. The example language is provided for teachers to consider what kind of language they could encourage their students to use in these kinds of tasks.

## Pre-primary

| Core areas                                                        | Components                                                                                                                                     | Example Can Do statements                                                                                            | Example language               |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Understanding personal responsibilities as part of a social group | Understanding responsibilities within a social group          | Describes in basic terms positive behaviours in the school environment (e.g. helping others, picking up litter).     | I help [my friends]            |
|                                                                   | Fulfilling responsibilities within a social group                                                                                              | Recognises when they are behaving badly and corrects their behaviour.                                                | I'm sorry.                     |
| Showing intercultural awareness                                   | Understanding aspects of own culture                                                                                                           | Identifies and can name familiar places and landmarks in their environment (e.g. pre-school, playground, home, etc.) | This is my school.             |
|                                                                   | Understanding aspects of other cultures                                                                                                        | Compares food, festivals and music from different parts of the world.                                                | Our food/music is different.   |
|                                                                   | Interacting with others across cultures                                                                                                        | Asks other children for their opinions.                                                                              | What do you think?             |
| Understanding global issues                                       | Engaging with a range of global issues                      | Identifies whether someone is treated in a fair way or not (e.g. in a story).                                        | That's (not) fair.             |
|                                                                   | Developing personal agency and sense of global citizenship  | Describes ways they can safeguard the environment (e.g. save water, recycle, etc.).                                  | Recycle bottles/plastic/paper. |



## Primary

| Core areas                                                        | Components                                                                                                                                     | Example Can Do statements                                                                                                    | Example language                                                |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------|
| Understanding personal responsibilities as part of a social group | Understanding responsibilities within a social group          | Describes responsibilities they have to help people and protect the environment.                                             | I [clean my room] and [save water].                             |
|                                                                   | Fulfilling responsibilities within a social group                                                                                              | Follows school rules and makes positive choices about behaviours.                                                            | I must [put up my hand in class/ follow rules].                 |
| Showing intercultural awareness                                   | Understanding aspects of own culture                                                                                                           | Describes basic information about their own culture (e.g. language, food, entertainment and pastimes).                       | In my country we often eat ...                                  |
|                                                                   | Understanding aspects of other cultures                                                                                                        | Identifies similarities and differences between own and other countries (e.g. names, geographical location, languages etc.). | In my country we speak French. Also, people speak French in ... |
|                                                                   | Interacting with others across cultures                                                                                                        | Identifies similarities and differences in the way people from their own and other cultures communicate.                     | People bow when they say hello in ...                           |
| Understanding global issues                                       | Engaging with a range of global issues                        | Identifies and explains basic human rights (e.g. healthcare, education etc.)                                                 | [Going to school / Education] is a human right.                 |
|                                                                   | Developing personal agency and sense of global citizenship  | Takes positive actions to protect their local environment.                                                                   | I help pick up litter.                                          |

## Secondary

| Core areas                                                        | Components                                                                                                                                     | Example Can Do statements                                                                 | Example language                                                                                                    |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Understanding personal responsibilities as part of a social group | Understanding responsibilities within a social group          | Recognises their responsibility to prevent and respond to bullying at school.             | If I [see bullying], I should [tell a teacher].                                                                     |
|                                                                   | Fulfilling responsibilities within a social group                                                                                              | Takes an active role in defining collective rights and responsibilities in school.        | In my opinion, we all have a responsibility to [welcome new kids to our school/support kids who are being bullied]. |
| Showing intercultural awareness                                   | Understanding aspects of own culture                                                                                                           | Appreciates their own culture and its value.                                              | I think it's really good that we ... here.                                                                          |
|                                                                   | Understanding aspects of other cultures                                                                                                        | Makes informed comparisons between their own society and other societies.                 | In [Scotland] ... whereas in [Brazil] ...                                                                           |
|                                                                   | Interacting with others across cultures                                                                                                        | Uses their understanding of differences between cultures to help avoid misunderstandings. | I hope I didn't seem rude.                                                                                          |
| Understanding global issues                                       | Engaging with a range of global issues                        | Can explain how environmental, social and economic issues are connected.                  | Some fast fashion factories use harmful chemicals that make their workers ill so they cannot work and earn money.   |
|                                                                   | Developing personal agency and sense of global citizenship  | Takes concrete actions to create a more sustainable future.                               | I buy [Fairtrade chocolate].                                                                                        |

## Higher education

| Core areas                                                        | Components                                                                                                                                     | Example Can Do statements                                                                                                                         | Example language                                                                           |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Understanding personal responsibilities as part of a social group | Understanding responsibilities within a social group          | Evaluates which social and environmental responsibilities should be individual and which should be taken on by particular groups.                 | The responsibility for [issue] should lie with [the government/businesses].                |
|                                                                   | Fulfilling responsibilities within a social group                                                                                              | Recognises and challenges behaviour such as prejudice and discrimination.                                                                         | The way he/she ... was unfair.                                                             |
| Showing intercultural awareness                                   | Understanding aspects of own culture                                                                                                           | Analyses key aspects of own culture, including common values and beliefs.                                                                         | I wonder why we ... ?                                                                      |
|                                                                   | Understanding aspects of other cultures                                                                                                        | Makes an analytical comparison between different cultures or societies.                                                                           | When it comes to [gestures, art], ...                                                      |
|                                                                   | Interacting with others across cultures                                                                                                        | Uses their awareness of potential sites of difference/conflict in cultural values to communicate effectively with others from different cultures. | This might be seen as honest in one culture, but disrespectful in another.                 |
| Understanding global issues                                       | Engaging with a range of global issues                        | Evaluates how different belief systems and values influence environmental behaviours.                                                             | [Indigenous] cultures that value [land as sacred] may [have better conservation practices] |
|                                                                   | Developing personal agency and sense of global citizenship  | Collaborates with others to design solutions for complex sustainability challenges.                                                               | What are the barriers to [action] and how do we overcome them?                             |

## At work

| Core areas                                                        | Components                                                                                                                                     | Example Can Do statements                                                                                                                        | Example language                                                                                       |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Understanding personal responsibilities as part of a social group | Understanding responsibilities within a social group          | Identifies personal responsibilities for social and environmental issues in the workplace.                                                       | I'm responsible for creating a psychologically safe environment in my team where everyone is included. |
|                                                                   | Fulfilling responsibilities within a social group                                                                                              | Assumes accountability for own actions and decisions.                                                                                            | That was my mistake.                                                                                   |
| Showing intercultural awareness                                   | Understanding aspects of own culture                                                                                                           | Describes business culture within their own organisation                                                                                         | Everyone is welcome to [contribute ideas].                                                             |
|                                                                   | Understanding aspects of other cultures                                                                                                        | Demonstrates understanding of how colleagues and customers bring different cultural backgrounds to the workplace and the effects these can have. | Making eye contact [is really important/can be seen as confrontational] in ...                         |
|                                                                   | Interacting with others across cultures                                                                                                        | Uses strategies for increasing inclusivity in the workplace.                                                                                     | Everyone should feel welcome here, regardless of ...                                                   |
| Understanding global issues                                       | Engaging with a range of global issues                        | Analyses and evaluates interconnections between global issues and the world of business.                                                         | Our [automation technology] may contribute to [rising unemployment rates].                             |
|                                                                   | Developing personal agency and sense of global citizenship  | Implements concrete actions to improve aspects of sustainability at work.                                                                        | I've introduced a new initiative which aims to ...                                                     |

# Social Responsibilities in the classroom

The changing nature of the societies in which today's learners live means certain issues need to be addressed in lessons, which will enable them to successfully negotiate the opportunities and challenges of a fast-paced, multicultural world. In this way, teachers can help learners to understand and implement their rights and responsibilities in their home country and the wider global community. Teachers also need to support them in understanding and interacting with cultures worldwide. Furthermore, time should be taken in lessons to help learners engage with global issues and explore how their general behaviour contributes positively or negatively to that particular issue.

The English language classroom is uniquely placed to provide an environment in which social responsibilities can be examined. Teachers may have a certain degree of flexibility when it comes to selecting topics in order to practise target language. For this reason, social responsibility competencies can be incorporated into weekly lesson planning, as they offer a stimulating and relevant context for meaningful language practice.

Teachers have a vital part to play in terms of being an effective role model when dealing with topics related to social responsibilities: maintaining an impartial view on topics, handling discussions in a fair and balanced way, encouraging learners to respect diversity of opinions and allowing learners to come to their own opinions rather than imposing the teacher's own.

## Suggestions for classroom practice

The ideas presented here are intended as a general indication of the types of activity that might develop this competency in the classroom, and are not a definitive list.

### General suggestions

#### Classroom behaviours

All of these activities should include the following in order to ensure that social responsibilities competencies are understood and practised:

| Core Areas                                                                   | Classroom behaviours                                                                                                                                                                                          |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Understanding personal and social responsibilities as part of a social group | Personal identification with the topic and an examination of how each learner can take responsibility for their actions in relation to that topic.                                                            |
| Showing intercultural awareness                                              | Opportunities for learners to appraise their own culture and explore values and attitudes shared by other cultures without discrimination or prejudice.                                                       |
| Understanding global issues                                                  | Awareness-raising tasks that sensitise learners to issues around human rights, the protection and sharing of natural resources, the importance of international cooperation and solutions to global problems. |



## Topics

Learners often enjoy discussing social responsibility topics because they see the clear relationship between them and the real world. These topics provide a context which is stimulating, motivating and one in which learners can deploy their English language skills not only to improve their ability to communicate, but also to develop themselves as people with a stake in their local and global communities. Nevertheless, topics need to be selected with care (preferably in consultation with learners) and their presentation in class should be handled with sensitivity.

The most effective way of incorporating these competencies into our lessons with learners of all age groups is to find a topic that will interest them. Global issues include everything from children's rights, to disposable fashion, to the problems of single-use plastics, so it could be helpful to conduct a brief survey at the beginning of term on what topics appeal to the class. Then when the topic has been established, you are ready to start thinking about how you might engage your learners with practical activities that enhance their knowledge and develop their competencies.

## Supportive/non-judgemental environment

Learners have a right to their own opinion, but creating a non-judgmental atmosphere is key to successful lesson delivery. For primary learners this can be framed as a 'golden agreement' and in secondary and adult environments as a 'working' agreement. Both could include codes of conduct related to expressing opinions, respecting differences of opinion, listening actively and interrupting politely.

## Activity cards

For more ideas on integrating the development of Social Responsibility skills into your classroom, see our Cambridge Life Competencies **activity card** packs. We've created a pack of cards for each stage of learning, and each individual card tackles a component from one of the core Cambridge Life Competencies. The activities are designed for you to use together with your coursebook or teaching materials, to tweak or supplement tasks. Download this and other activity cards at [cambridge.org/clcf](https://cambridge.org/clcf).



The image displays a collection of activity cards from the Cambridge Life Competencies pack for teenage learners. The main card is titled 'Activity cards' and 'Teenage learners', featuring the Cambridge logo and the 'Cambridge Life Competencies' branding. It includes a section titled 'Understanding personal responsibilities as part of a social group' with a description: '...out a task in the coursebook, ask them to work ...nt their finished project to the class (e.g. in a ...ce learners have decided what they want to ...y need to follow to do the task. ...project encourages learners to take an active role ...develop independence. Watch our **Teaching ...ning blog**, on helping learners take ownership of ...'. Below this, there is a section titled 'Teaching online?' with the text 'Try using a digital portfolio to 'display' learners' presentations, posters, videos, etc.' and a 'Teen' label. The cards are designed with a modern, abstract background of teal, orange, and dark blue shapes.

## Primary

The Cambridge Life Competencies Framework offers a good starting point in ensuring that young learners come away from a lesson better informed and equipped with new skills for interacting with the world around them.

### Role play

The following is an example of a role play activity that can be used to integrate the topic of personal responsibilities in society into an English class. Learners could be introduced to their roles through visual cues (brother or sister/son or daughter/classmate/friend/team member) and match these to the responsibilities of each role (the responsibility to share, be considerate of other's feelings, be fair, respect others' opinions, help the more vulnerable, follow rules, etc.). Learners could work in pairs or groups to role-play a situation, such as the following:

- A classmate at school or family member at home is not fulfilling their duties responsibly;
- Learners imagine they are leaders of their country and brainstorm a list of the roles and responsibilities they would give to people in their country.

### Comparing cultures

Another area of Social Responsibilities that affords learners opportunities for exploration and discussion is that of cultural awareness. A country that is a contrast to the learners' own is a good starting point: for example, learners in Germany could focus on Bangladesh and vice versa. The lesson could begin with learners adding details to a map of the focus country (capital city, rivers, mountains, etc.) using online resources to help them. Learners then read a short text about a child of a similar age, entitled 'A day in the life of ...' This can spark a number of creative activities such as:

- Writing a diary entry from the point of view of that child which might include his/her thoughts, feelings and hopes for the future.
- Learners work in groups to look at pictures which show different problems that the child faces in their everyday lives. Each group could discuss the problem (in their mother tongue if necessary) and prepare a short presentation for the rest of the class on how they would resolve it.

## Activity card idea

Try out this activity from our Young Learners activity card pack (page 63). Learners draw themselves in the centre of a page and add pictures or words around them to show their responsibilities for global issues like recycling or climate change. It's a simple, creative way to encourage reflection and discussion. To download this and other activity cards, go to [cambridge.org/clcf](https://cambridge.org/clcf).

### Social Responsibilities

  **Developing personal agency and sense of global citizenship**

**Your responsibilities**

When coursebook content refers to global issues, such as recycling or global warming, ask learners to draw a picture of themselves in the middle of a piece of paper. Next, ask them to consider their own responsibilities in relation to the issue, and to brainstorm and draw their ideas around the drawing of themselves on their paper. Use learners' drawings for further discussion of their responsibilities.

**Teaching online?**

Learners could use a digital drawing site, such as **Sketchpad**, to draw themselves and their responsibilities, and share their pictures in a digital portfolio.

**Understanding global issues**

**Young**

### Over to you ...

1. Choose one of the example activities in this section and try it out with your class.
  - Following the activity, reflect on what worked well and what could be improved next time, particularly focusing on the extent to which learners were able to develop their skills related to Social Responsibilities.
2. Using your course book or other materials, choose a few activities you may be using or topics that you may be teaching in your classes in the next week or so. Consider how you could use these to build on your students' Social Responsibilities skills.

## Secondary

Through their increased awareness of the world around them and their exposure to other subjects in the curriculum, learners at secondary-school level are now in a position to dig more deeply into issues related to themselves as people, their immediate community and their place in a global society.

### Encouraging practical action outside of the classroom

One crucial topic that has assumed increasing importance in the media lately is that of climate change. This topic can be explored through a wide variety of activities centred on:

- reading texts
- quizzes
- discussions
- competitions

However, in order to further involve learners and develop their competencies, a clear call for action could be added to the activities listed above. In other words, any activities that are carried out in the classroom could be linked to practical action outside it.

| Classroom activity                                                                         | Examples                                                       | Personal actions                                                                                                              |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Write down 3 personal actions you want to take to support the fight against climate change | Encourage family and friends to recycle more                   | Write an email to a national or world leader calling for urgent action on the climate crisis                                  |
|                                                                                            | Conserve resources like water and energy at home and in school | Link up with people in other countries (via Skype or ZOOM) to devise strategies and share tips on tackling the climate crisis |

## Activity card idea

Take a look at the “What’s it got to do with me?” activity from our Teenage Learners activity card pack (page 63). Learners move through four prompts that link a global issue (e.g., recycling, climate change, poverty) to personal impact: what it means for them, how it affects others, and how their lifestyle contributes. They finish by noting one action they can take. It’s ideal for carousel discussions or online breakout rooms. Download this and other activity cards at [cambridge.org/clcf](https://cambridge.org/clcf).

### Social Responsibilities

  **Developing personal agency and sense of global citizenship**

What’s it got to do with me?

When learners encounter a topic related to global issues in the coursebook (e.g. recycling, climate change, poverty), ask them to discuss the following questions:

- What’s this got to do with me?
- How does it impact me?
- How does it impact others?
- How does my lifestyle and behaviour impact on this issue?

**Teaching online?**

Try setting up one breakout room for each of the questions, and have learners spend a short time in each room to discuss the question before moving to the next room.

Understanding global issues

Teen

### Over to you ...

1. Choose one of the example activities in this section and try it out with your class.
  - Following the activity, reflect on what worked well and what could be improved next time, particularly focusing on the extent to which learners were able to develop their skills related to Social Responsibilities.
2. Using your course book or other materials, choose a few activities you may be using or topics that you may be teaching in your classes in the next week or so. Consider how you could use these to build on your students’ Social Responsibilities skills.

## Adult

Adult learners may be aware of a number of global issues but might simply be too busy with work, studies and/or family to give them the due consideration they deserve.

### Engaging with complex issues

At this stage of learning, learners are able to handle more complex issues (which may, nevertheless, have to be presented in linguistically appropriate terms depending on the language level of the class) through different activities such as:

- case studies
- film and video clips
- drama/role play
- primary research tasks

These could be used to explore causes, effects and potential solutions to global issues. The following example shows a classroom activity based on the topic of 'ethical' smartphones:

| Classroom activity                                                                                                                                                                   | Tasks                                                                | Practical actions                                                                                                         |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Watch a video clip about an ethical smartphone<br><br>or<br><br>Explore a website about an ethical smartphone (e.g. <a href="http://www.fairphone.com/en">www.fairphone.com/en</a> ) | Comprehension questions                                              | Write a formal email to a company asking questions about the ethical aspects of its supply chain.                         |
|                                                                                                                                                                                      | True/False statements                                                | Create a campaign to raise awareness of the impact on developing countries of mining conflict materials.                  |
|                                                                                                                                                                                      | Information transfer (fill in a grid with key details from the text) | Design a survey to find out how aware colleagues are about the sources of the goods they buy (e.g. fair trade coffee/tea) |
|                                                                                                                                                                                      | Vocabulary development                                               |                                                                                                                           |
|                                                                                                                                                                                      | Grammatical focus on recently learn structures                       |                                                                                                                           |

Enabling adult learners to analyse the impact of their consumer behaviour in a global context allows them to explore how companies can affect communities and the environment. At the same time, it encourages them to plan strategies for practical action that make their organisations and personal choices more socially and environmentally responsible.



## Activity card idea

Why not explore the “Cultural Communications” activity from our Adult Learners activity card pack (page 61)? Learners research how communication styles differ across cultures—such as greetings, directness, or emailing—and then share practical tips with the group. It’s a useful way to build cultural awareness and responsibility in Business English or general adult classes. Download this and other activity cards at [cambridge.org/clcf](https://cambridge.org/clcf).

### Social Responsibilities

 **Interacting with others across cultures**

Cultural communications

When a coursebook topic relates to business communication (e.g. telephoning, emailing), ask learners to consider how the communication style might vary across different cultures. In classrooms where learners are studying English for work, allocate each learner a different national culture, and set them the task of researching the business communication style in that culture, and sharing their findings with the group.

**Showing intercultural awareness**

**Teaching online?**

Encourage learners to source online videos of people doing business in different cultures.

**Adult**

### Over to you ...

1. Choose one of the example activities in this section and try it out with your class.
  - Following the activity, reflect on what worked well and what could be improved next time, particularly focusing on the extent to which learners were able to develop their skills related to Social Responsibilities.
2. Using your course book or other materials, choose a few activities you may be using or topics that you may be teaching in your classes in the next week or so. Consider how you could use these to build on your students' Social Responsibilities skills.

# Further reading

For more information on this topic, please see:

Bourn, D. (2016). *Global citizenship and youth participation in Europe*. London: University College London. Available at: [http://www.sustainabilityexchange.ac.uk/files/sfyouth\\_transnational\\_report\\_final\\_docx\\_002\\_2.pdf](http://www.sustainabilityexchange.ac.uk/files/sfyouth_transnational_report_final_docx_002_2.pdf)

British Council. (2008). *Global citizenship in the English language classroom*. London: British Council.

Budden, J. (2010). *Lesson plan: Climate change*. Available at: <https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/article/climate-change>

Cabezudo, A., Christidis, C., Carvalho da Silva, M., Demetriadou-Saltet, V., Halbartschlager, F., & Mihai, G.-P. (2012). *Global education guidelines: A handbook for educators to understand and implement global education (updated version)*. Lisbon: North-South Centre of the Council of Europe. Available at: <https://rm.coe.int/168070eb85>

Council of Europe. (2002). *The Maastricht global education declaration: European strategy framework for improving and increasing global education in Europe to the year 2015*. Available at: <https://rm.coe.int/168070e540>

Corbett, J., & Thornbury, S. (2010). *Intercultural language activities* (Cambridge handbooks for language teachers). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Goren, H., & Yemini, M. (2017). Citizenship education redefined – A systematic review of empirical studies on global citizenship education. *International Journal of Educational Research*, 82, 170–183.

Micalay-Hurtado, M. & Poole, R. (2022). Eco-critical language awareness for English language teaching (ELT): Promoting justice, wellbeing, and sustainability in the classroom. *Journal of World Languages*, 8(2), 371–390. <https://doi.org/10.1515/jwl-2022-0023>

New Internationalist, [Online]. *Mobile phones: ready lesson, intermediate*. Available at: [https://eewiki.newint.org/images/f/fa/Mobile\\_phones.pdf](https://eewiki.newint.org/images/f/fa/Mobile_phones.pdf)

OECD. (2016). *Global competency for an inclusive world*. Paris: OECD. Available at: <https://www.oecd.org/education/Global-competency-for-an-inclusive-world.pdf>

Oxfam. (2015). *Global citizenship in the classroom: a guide for teachers*. Oxford: Oxfam GB. Available at: <https://www.oxfam.org.uk/education/resources/global-citizenship-in-the-classroom-a-guide-for-teachers>

Primary Resources [Online]. *Citizenship resources*. Available at: [www.primaryresources.co.uk/pshe/pshe.htm#thinking](http://www.primaryresources.co.uk/pshe/pshe.htm#thinking)

Puerto Zabala, P. Y., & Rojas Muriel, P. A. (2025). Incorporating Global Citizenship Education into English Language Teaching in Secondary Education: Possibilities from the Teachers' Perspective. *Latin American Journal of Content & Language Integrated Learning*, 16(1), e1613. <https://doi.org/10.5294/lacil.2023.16.1.3>

UNESCO. (2016). *The ABCs of global citizenship education*. Paris: UNESCO. Available at: <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0024/002482/248232e.pdf>

United Nations. (2015). *Transforming our world: the 2030 agenda for sustainable development*. New York: United Nations. Available at: <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/post2015/transformingourworld>



## Notes



You can find information about the other competencies and the foundation layers of the Cambridge Life Competencies Framework at [cambridge.org/clcf](https://cambridge.org/clcf)

- ✓ Creative Thinking
- ✓ Critical Thinking
- ✓ Learning to Learn
- ✓ Collaboration
- ✓ Communication
- ✓ Social Responsibilities
- ✓ Emotional Development
- ✓ Digital Literacy

Find out more at  
[cambridge.org/english](https://cambridge.org/english)

We believe that English can unlock a lifetime of experiences and, together with teachers and our partners, we help people to learn and confidently prove their skills to the world.

*Where your world grows*