

ELT



Ireland bulletin

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Social Media Numbers by Joanne Mitten

Treasuring ELT Ireland by Liliana O'Reilly

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books that need to be purchased and this can be expensive. I would definitely advise getting in touch with former participants who may be willing to sell books or to pass on notes. There are also websites which can give you access to a lot of the documents you need (see resources below) and if you are doing the Distance Delta there is an online library which is good for articles but is rather limited for books.

The Delta does sort the men from the boys. It examines whether you are committed to a career in ELT. Love of teaching and the intricacies of language are huge pluses when doing this course. It can be done without them but I have no idea what circle of hell that would resemble. The course is tough but if you start, make your way through it, and keep going, it will be worth it in the end. The key is to do it for you. If your goal is personal achievement, it is certainly worth the price. Finally, there is some invaluable advice as passed on to me by former participants.

Be sure to choose your local tutor wisely. The preference would be for someone from your school, i.e. Director of studies or someone who has previously completed the Delta. There is always the option of getting someone from outside but from my experience internal is best. There are strict rules on what the local tutor can do for you but having them close at hand can be good for morale if nothing else.

Do not and this is worth repeating 'Do Not' ignore the Delta guidelines and believe that you can do things your own way. This will just lead to frustration and heartache. The first rule of Delta is to obey Delta guidelines, the second rule of Delta is to obey delta guidelines and remember there is no such thing as 'but'. If the format is not Delta, it is wrong. Make a timetable and stick to it. All other options will lead to misery.

If you genuinely cannot make a deadline, inform your course advisor. They are always willing to help.

Read, annotate, label. There is so much material to get through that you should have a system where you can record what you have read so that you can retrieve and use it without having to trawl through reams of paper to find what you need. This I learned to my cost early on.

Use the forum. The advice you receive on there could mean the difference between a pass and a fail.

Remember, the course is hard for everyone. There are no participants who find it easy, at least none I have ever met, so keep going. The end will come and when it does, the rewards will be worth it.

Further Reading

thedistancedelta.com

cambridgeenglish.org

tefl.net/tefl-courses/faq-cambridge-delta.htm

sandymillin.wordpress.com/delta/

scribd.com

The Delta exam rollercoaster

by James Duggan (Atlas Language School)

It's a cold but dry December morning at the exam centre. Six of us sit on the floor outside a classroom frantically looking over notes and flashcards. But we are not ELT students; we are, in fact, ELT teachers! Teachers, that have performed a dual role for the last few months studying for our own professional development and teaching to develop our students' potential. Each of us has been preparing to take the Cambridge Delta module one exam which begins in about half an hour. The cohort are representative of the ELT world in Dublin. We are all in our 20s and 30s, and divided 50/50 in terms of gender, three men and three women. We work in some of the many ELT schools in Dublin. Three of us have studied online and three did the course face to face. Soon, our phones are taken from us, the exam rules are read out and paper one begins!

Paper one begins with the task which focuses on terminology. We are given six descriptions of ELT terminology and we must say what they are e.g. A noun form of a verb formed by adding -ing to the stem. The trick



Hang on tight!

Pic by Pixbay

with this task is you either know it or you don't! I found about four of these were manageable with two more obscure references. If you are preparing for the exam, Scott Thornbury's *An A-Z of ELT* is a good place to start.

Task two is the opposite of task one. We are given four items of ELT terminology and have to write a definition for each. We must also include an example of that term. Like task one, this is easy if you know the term, but difficult otherwise. There's also a knack to writing definitions. Here, I found two of the terms are manageable while two are more obscure.

Task three presents us with a writing or speaking task from published ELT material. We have to decide what language items students at a particular level would need to complete that task. In our case it was a speaking activity. Students had to roleplay a conversation between a customer and a street vendor. This sounds easier than it is. The trick here is to go beyond grammar and vocabulary and think of features of written and spoken discourse. If preparing for the exam, try looking at tasks in the books you use and think about what your students might need to complete the task.

The next task is based on an authentic student text. The text can be written or spoken. Spoken texts are transcribed. We have to identify a total of four key strengths and weaknesses under headings such as task achievement, accuracy of grammar/lexis, range of grammar/lexis and, in the case of speaking, pronunciation features. Like task three, the key is to focus on features of discourse and not just grammar and lexis. We are relatively lucky here in that we are given a writing task, a letter inviting people to a party. Traditionally, marks are higher when candidates have to analyse a written text. When preparing, you can practice this by evaluating your own students' writing and speaking production. Generally, the group found this task quite manageable.

The final task in paper one carries half the marks for that paper. We are given an authentic text, unrelated to ELT. For us, it

“ the exam rollercoaster that is Delta module one has certainly been worthwhile”

is a selection of book reviews. Firstly, we have to name five features of the text that are representative of the genre. Then, we have to analyse the form, meaning, use and pronunciation of selected language from the authentic text. The key here is to state the obvious. For example, if you had to analyse He woke up you would get marks for stating 3rd person, singular, past simple, and so on. The three areas for our task are this and that, as, and word formation. There is also a final question on features of connected speech in one particular line of the text.

All too soon, the clock strikes 10.45am and paper one has come to an end. We shuffle away from the exam room, exhausted from our efforts. There is little reflection done at this stage as everyone knows we have yet to face paper two. There is a mixed reaction with different candidates finding different tasks more manageable. Before we know it, it's back in for paper two!

This paper opens with a question about testing. We are given a test or an extract from a test as well as the context in which it is being used. We must make six points about it, including both positive and negative points. We also have to say how these might relate to the learners in the context given. Usually, the test is a writing or speaking test, something akin to an IELTS test, but on this occasion it is a multiple choice grammar and vocabulary test from a coursebook workbook. This throws me a little. It's something that could technically come up but not something that has come up. However, I find it relatively manageable. Again, if preparing for the exam, try analysing the tests you use with your classes.

This next task is based on material from an ELT coursebook. Firstly, we have to identify the purposes of a selection of exercises within the material. Then we are given a second selection of exercises and have to say how they combine with the first set of exercises. Finally, we are given another set of exercises and must say what assumptions about language learning underpin these tasks. Like task one above, this particular task has an unusual slant in that the material we are given does not teach a particular grammar point but instead teaches students how to prepare presentations. While this throws me slightly, it is relatively manageable once I get to grips with it.

The final task, is a bit of a mixed bag. It can essentially be about anything. Usually, you are given a statement related to teaching methodology and you must make a minimum of 15 relevant points about it. Our question is on the advantages or disadvantages of translating in the classroom. Later, we all agree that this was a relatively manageable question.

Again, as if we had only started moments before, the clock strikes 1.00pm and we are finished. Papers are collected, phones handed back and we all breathe a sigh of relief. The general consensus is that paper one was more difficult than paper two. This is unusual as most of us thought the opposite prior to the exam. The exam officer at the centre meets us and congratulates us on completing the exam. As we start to make our way out of the building, we discuss our varying stages of Delta completion and plans for further study. Some of us are going to celebrate tonight, some are going straight home to savour a free afternoon in bed and some are going to school to prep the next day's lesson. Results are due in February. Regardless of the outcome, the rollercoaster that is Delta module one has certainly been a worthwhile learning experience.