Questions for workplace needs analysis surveys

Notes
1. These questions come from workplace basic skills surveys that include native-speakers.
2. Interviewers will need to reformulate questions according to local circumstances so it is important that the aim of each question is clear to the interviewer.
3. To help the interviewer and to aid quantifiable analysis, create tick-box answers wherever possible.
4. In selecting questions for inclusion in a survey, consider the report you aim to produce from the survey, but bear in mind that needs surveys serve several purposes:
   - collecting information about the learning needs of individuals and the organisation
   - offering the individual an opportunity to reflect constructively on their experience at work
   - helping the learning provider understand the organisation
   - building trust between the learning and individuals in the organisation
   - generating enthusiasm among staff for a learning programme, etc.
You may wish to include questions that will not generate information required for the report.
5. The content of informants’ answers are affected by the sequence of questions and also at which point in the interview they occur. Experience suggests native-speaker informants take about 40 minutes to give a full account of themselves. The initial ten minutes is spent building rapport, so start with factual questions. By the final ten minutes, the informant may be tiring so end with less demanding, more rewarding questions, e.g. what learning the informant would like to pursue.
6. Where the informant’s language skills are limited (and no translator is available), the interviewer will benefit from detailed knowledge of the informant’s context (i.e. their job role and the structure of the employer organisation). That detailed knowledge will help the interviewer understand and probe the informant’s answers.
7. It is likely that different informants will give different accounts of workplace practices and events.
8. Asking informants to consider the needs of their team or department, rather than their own needs, may elicit useful information.
About the interview
Interview time, date, location
Name of interviewer

Examples of introductory remarks
My name is X. I work for Y.
We are doing research to help improve opportunities for training and education in X.
We want to talk to as many people as possible about this.
Thank you for agreeing to help us with the research.
We hope you will find it a useful opportunity to think about what training or personal development you might find useful.
The information you give is confidential.
It will not be reported back to anyone in a way that will identify you.
I want to ask you some questions about yourself; then about your job; then about learning and development.
The whole conversation should take about X [e.g. 40] minutes.
I shall be making notes to help me remember what you say.
You are welcome to check what I write.
You don’t have to answer any question you don’t want to.
There are no right or wrong answers.
All we want is what you really think.
Would you like to ask me any questions first?

Examples of questions about personal information
Male Female
Date of birth
Age group:  16-19 20-24 25-35 36-44 45-54 55-65
Other (please specify):
Where were you born: UK Other (please specify):
Nationality: UK Other (please specify):
If non-UK national
Status: Permanent Temporary Asylum seeker
Arrived in UK
Main language at home: speaking reading writing
Other languages spoken: speaking reading writing
English: speaking reading writing
English classes attended (a) Where: [locality] Other UK Other overseas
Formal study of English
How long for? (a) School: < 1 year < 2 years > 2 years (b) Adult < 1 year < 2 years > 2 years
Do you have any English language qualifications? No Yes (specify)
What language(s) do you use at work? speaking reading writing
Do you have a disability? No Yes (please specify):

Do you consider you are dyslexic? No Yes

If ‘yes’, have you been assessed dyslexic by an educational psychologist? No Yes

If ‘yes’, when (in what year) (iv) Do you have a statement? No Yes

Ethnicity [ethnic monitoring for equality and diversity]:

**Examples of questions about job role**

Now I would like to ask you about your role here in the organisation.

What is your job title?

What is your department [etc]?

[Employment status] Do you work: Full time Part time Permanent Temporary Other (specify)

How many hours are you contracted to work per week?

How many hours overtime do you work in a typical week?

What shift pattern do you work? Days Evenings Nights Other (specify)

How long have you done this job? < 12 months < 18 months < 3 years < 5 years Other (specify)

Have you done other jobs here? (What?)

How long have you worked for [this employer]? < 12 months < 18 months < 3 years < 5 years Other (specify)

Why did you first decide to work here? type of work personal contact other (specify)

When you joined [this employer] how long did you plan to stay?

How long do you expect to stay now?

**Questions about what is done in the job**

Do you know the overall objective of your job? Yes No What is it?

What responsibilities do you have in your present job?

What are you personally responsible for in your job?

Do you have a job description? Yes No

Does it describe your job accurately? Yes No (How not?)

Is your job important to the organisation? (How / why not?) Yes No

Who reports to you? (How many?)

Do you manage/supervise any staff? No Yes How many?

Who do you report to? Supervisor: Manager:

Do you work in a team? No Yes How many in the team

[If ‘yes’] What is the team responsible for?

Describe a typical day at work

Do you train others (e.g. explain tasks, equipment)? Now Future informal, on the job training formal training courses If courses, specify:

Do you feel comfortable in this training role? (Why not?) Yes No

What’s the best thing about your job? Responsibility Tasks People Other (specify)
Is there anything that can make your job awkward?  Workload □ Specific tasks □ Colleagues □ Managers □ Customers □ Equipment □ Other □ (specify)  
What do you find most stressful about the job?  
Do you feel well-supported in your job [by the organisation / managers]? (How / why not?) Yes □ No □ development opportunities □ staff awards □ informal acknowledgement □ other □ (specify)  
Do you feel valued [by the organisation / your managers]? (How / why not?) Yes □ No □ development opportunities □ staff awards □ informal acknowledgement □ other □ (specify)  
Do you feel fairly rewarded (pay/conditions) for the work you do? (Why?) Yes □ No □  
Is there anything you would like to change about your job? (What?) Yes □ No □  

Questions about the organisation  
What is the organisation’s overall objective?  Don’t know □ What: □  
What is your department’s overall objective?  Don’t know □ What: □  
How does the organisation measure its overall performance / success? Don’t know □ How: □  
How does the organisation measure performance / success in your own area of work? Don’t know □ How: □  
Do you feel that overall the organisation does what it sets out to do well? (Why / why not?) Yes □ No □  
Do you feel that in your own area of work the organisation does what it sets out to do well? (Why / why not?) Yes □ No □  
Have you experienced change in your own area of work? (What?) Yes □ No □  
Have you experienced change in the organisation in general? (What?) Yes □ No □  
Have the changes been positive in your own area? (Why / why not?) Yes □ No □  
Have the changes been positive elsewhere in the organisation? (Why / why not?) Yes □ No □  
Have you found the changes stressful? (Which changes / why / why not?) Yes □ No □  
Who do you see as ‘senior management’?  
Does senior management keep you in touch with what it is doing? (How) Yes □ No □ briefings □ newsletter □ personal letter / e-mail □ global e-mail / intranet □ notice board □ other □ (specify) □  
Does senior management keep itself in touch with what you are doing? (How) Yes □ No □ briefings □ newsletter □ personal letter / e-mail □ global e-mail / intranet □ notice board □ other □ (specify) □  
Are you and your colleagues able to influence what happens here? (How / why not?) Yes □ No □  
Are you and your colleagues able to feed back to your manager and above? (How / why not?) Yes □ No □  
Would you like to be more involved in the decisions that affect you? (How / why not?) Yes □ No □  
Does your manager check you know what is expected of you in your job? (How / how often / why not?) Yes □ No □ formal appraisal □ informal review □ team briefing □ individual briefing □ other □ (specify) □  
Does your manager/supervisor ask you for your ideas about improving the job? (How / how often / why not?) Yes □ No □  
Is the workplace unionised? Yes □ No □ [name of union] □ other □ (specify) □  
Are you a union member? Yes □ No □ [name of union] □ other □ (specify) □  
Does the union play a helpful role? (How?) Yes □ No □ representation □ health and safety □ education □ other □ (specify) □  
Can you suggest any improvements in your area of work? (What / why not?) Yes □ No □  

Questions about communication in the job
Is communication important in your job? (Who with / why not?) Yes □ No
  customers □ colleagues □ supervisors/managers □ colleagues in other depts □ admin staff □ suppliers □ other (specify)
Where is communication most important in your job? (Why?) team-work □ managing own workload □ managing staff □ customer care □ other (specify)
What communication issues/problems typically arise in the job: None □ Don’t know □ Other (specify)

Spoken communication
Who do you have to talk to in the job? No one [Own dept] Co-workers □ Supervisors □ Admin □ [Other depts] Staff □ Supervisors □ Admin □ Managers □ External suppliers □ General public □ Other (specify)
Do you attend meetings at work? (Why?) Yes □ No □ formal □ informal □ daily □ weekly □ monthly □ other (specify)
Purpose of any meeting(s) identified:
Could meetings be used more effectively? (How?) Yes □ No □ agendas □ minutes □ chairing □ other (specify)

Written communication
Does your job involve paperwork? (What / why not?) Yes □ No □ record keeping □ report writing □ reading for info (e.g. H & S) □ (specify)
Is the paperwork important? (Why / why not?) Yes □ No □
Do you have to fill in any paperwork on a regular basis: No □ Yes (specify)
Is the paperwork easy to use: No □ Yes (specify)
What written information do you need to be aware of in this job? [check Safe working/H&S, Quality, Customer service, Team work, Materials/equipment]:
How do you keep up-to-date with it: [check access issues (physical and understanding)]

Information and communication technology
Do you use IT in your job? (How / why not?) Yes □ No □ equipment □ pc □ e-mail □ other (specify)
Do you use a computer at work: No □ Yes (If yes) work email address □ Intranet □ Internet □ Records □ Reports □ Other (specify)
[If no ] Can you access your employer’s intranet at work: No □ Yes
Do you use a computer at home: Email □ Internet □ Word □ Spreadsheets □ Other (specify)
Do you use any other kind of ICT[gloss as appropriate]: No □ Yes (specify)

Number skills
Does any of the work you do involve numbers or calculations: No □ Yes (specify)
[If ‘yes’] How straight-forward do you and your colleagues find this?

Where is communication most important in the job (Why?): Safe working/H&S □ Quality
Customer service  Team work  Resource management (e.g. materials, equipment)  Supervision  Management  Other  (specify)

Communication in the work area/department
Overall, how do you rate communication and information-sharing in the department? (Why?) Good  Room for improvement  Poor  No opinion
How could better communication improve dept'l performance (Why?): Don't know  or,

Question about work organisation
To help me understand what you have told me so far, I would like to ask about how work is organised. Thinking about the way you do things here, are there any changes you think could usefully be made?  No  Don't know  Yes  (specify)
Who is best placed to make these changes: Respondent  Colleagues  Supervisor  Managers  Employer  Other  (specify)
Here is a list of things. Please tell me if they happen here and, if so, how helpful they are (for doing a good job.)
(a) Regular contact with supervisor: No  Yes  Frequency:
How helpful:  Very  Quite  Not
(b) Feedback on performance: No  Yes  Frequency:
How helpful:  Very  Quite  Not
(c) Annual appraisal/6 month review: No  Yes  How helpful:  Very  Quite  Not
How helpful:  Very  Quite  Not
(d) Regular team meetings: No  Yes  Frequency:
How helpful:  Very  Quite  Not
(e) Regular updates from senior management: No  Yes  How:
Frequency:  How helpful:  Very  Quite  Not

Questions about morale, engagement, motivation
Here are six statements from the [employer] staff survey. [Show card 2] Do you agree with them?
(a) I find my job interesting
Agree  Neutral  Disagree
(b) My job makes good use of my skills and experience
Agree  Neutral  Disagree
(c) I have a clear understanding of what is expected of me in my job
Agree  Neutral  Disagree
(d) I have the opportunity to use my initiative in my job
Agree  Neutral  Disagree
(e) I feel I accomplish something worthwhile in my job
Agree  Neutral  Disagree
(f) Considering my duties and responsibilities, I feel my pay is fair
Questions about education, training and personal development

First, your education

How old were you when you left school/full-time education? Years

When you left full-time education, were you in: Primary Secondary (middle/high) Further
Higher Other (specify)

Did you leave full-time education with qualifications? No Yes (specify)

Would you describe your experience of full-time education as: Positive Negative (specify)

Have you gained any qualifications since leaving full-time education? No Yes (specify)
[national vocational qualification] (specify type/level) Other (specify)

Are you doing any courses now? No Yes (specify) Work-related Non-Work-related
Sponsored by employer Sponsored by union In work-time In own time

Have you done any courses in the last two years? No Yes (specify) Work-related Non-Work-related
Sponsored by employer Sponsored by union In work-time In own time

Now, about training and qualifications in your work here...

Training

Have you had any training offered to you within the last year? (What?) Yes No
Did you do the training? (Why not?) Yes No release problems low confidence

Do you have a Personal Development Plan? No Yes (specify)

Have you received any training in your current job? No Yes (specify) Induction Basic job training (i.e. initial training) H&S/risk management training Customer care training Other (specify)

When did you last receive training here? < 6 months ago < 12 months ago < 18 months ago < 24 months ago Other (specify)

Qualifications for work: Are qualifications important in the job you do now? No Yes
Entry requirement Regulation requirement Promotion requirement Other (specify)

Have you been offered a chance to gain a qualification in your current job? No Yes (specify)
Would you like the opportunity to gain a qualification in your current job? (Why?) No Yes (specify)

Questions about personal development

Do you have longer-term goals in your working life? (What / why not?) Yes No promotion sideways move job with another organisation other (specify)

Do you think it is important to have opportunities for training/development at work? (Why / why not?) Yes No

Could developing your knowledge and skills benefit you? (Why?) No Yes (specify) Improve performance

Take on new responsibilities Progress career Improve life outside work Other (specify)

Do you have enough opportunities in your job for training and career development? No Yes (specify)
How do you find out about training and development opportunities offered by [the employer]?

Is there a union learning representative (ULR) \(^1\) on site? No □ Yes □ (specify, including which union)

[If 'yes'] Have you had any personal contact with the ULR: No □ Yes □ (specify)

Would you agree or disagree with the following statements?

1. I want to develop my knowledge and skills at work. Agree □ Disagree □
2. Having the chance to learn at work makes the job more rewarding. Agree □ Disagree □
3. My employer actively supports me to learn at work. Agree □ Disagree □
4. Developing my knowledge and skills is a realistic way for me to get a better job in this organisation. Agree □ Disagree □

What barriers do you see to developing your knowledge and skills: No opportunity for release □ Age □ Shift patterns □ No personal time to learn □ Lack of confidence □ Caring responsibilities □ Cost □ Location/travel □ Lack of study skills □ Fear of exams □ No motivation □ Other □ (specify)

Questions about development of literacy, language and numeracy skills

Would you like free training in paid work time in any of the following?

**Communications** Customer care □ Assertiveness □ Influencing / Leadership skills □

Counselling skills □ Record keeping □ Report / letter writing □ General English (punctuation, grammar, spelling) □ English language training □ other □ (specify)

**Maths skills** Calculations □ Decimals, fractions / percentages □ Charts and Graphs □ Weights and measures □ 24 hour clock □ Money and finance □ other □ (specify)

**Computer skills** General intro □ Word processing □ Spreadsheets/ databases □ e-mail / internet □ Other □ (specify)

Do you have access to a computer (a) at work? Yes □ No □ now / soon □ (b) …at home? Yes □ No □ now / soon □

Would IT training help you at work? (How?) Yes □ No □ do job better □ confidence □ other □ (specify)

[Only for staff with English as an additional language] Can you give me an example of when you find it difficult to communicate at work in English?

(a) Speaking:

(b) Listening

(c) Reading:

(d) Writing:

Wants training to improve English: No □ Yes □

Did you know that there are national certificates in English for adults? Yes □ No □

Wants more information about these certificates: No □ Yes □ [take name, address on separate sheet]

Would be willing to pay for English classes: No □ Yes □ (If ‘yes’, how much per class): £

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\(^1\) A union official whose role is to encourage and support employee learning.
[For native speaker staff] How useful would training in **Spoken communication** [if possible, relate ‘spoken communication’ to work activity] be for

(a) the department? Very Quite Not useful
(b) you personally Very Quite Not useful
(c) Why?

How useful would training in **Written communication** [if possible, relate ‘written communication’ to work activity] be for

(a) the department? Very Quite Not useful
(b) you personally Very Quite Not useful
(c) Why?

How useful would training in **Maths** [if possible, relate ‘maths’ to work activity] be for

(a) the department? Very Quite Not useful
(b) you personally Very Quite Not useful
(c) Why?

How useful would training in **IT skills** [if possible, relate ‘IT skills’ to work activity] be for

(a) the department? Very Quite Not useful
(b) you personally Very Quite Not useful
(c) Why?

Did you know that there are national certificates for adults in maths and English? No Yes
Wants more information about these certificates: No Yes [**take name, address on separate sheet**]

What sort of training would work best for you: Classroom group E learning 1:1 coaching
At work: Away from the job Near the job Support on-the-job At college At home (distance learning)
Own time Work time Start of shift During shift End of shift

**Learning for life outside work**
Thinking about your life outside work, could learning help you do any of the things you want to do now or in the future? No Yes (specify)
Would you like any other kind of information about education or training? No Yes Specify
[**If yes, take name, postal address and contact phone number on separate sheet**]

**Section for informant to complete**
What is your date of birth? _ _ / _ _ / _ _
When you came to work here, how long did you plan to stay?
How long do you expect to stay now?
How might free training in communications, IT and/or maths benefit you and your colleagues?
Ending the interview

[Note to interviewer] At this point summarise and reflect back the learning goals that the employee has mentioned in the course of the interview. If more than one learning goal has been identified:

What do you feel is the order of priority for developing these skill areas for your work or home life?

What would be the best thing you could get out of the training?

How do you feel about working in a small group?

Do you have any other concerns about the training?

Best time(s) of day for you to attend the training: Bad time(s) of day for you to attend the training:

Questions about this interview

Have you found this interview worthwhile?  No  Yes  Specify

Any other comments: No  Yes  Specify

That’s all! Many thanks for taking part in this survey.