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Choosing Teaching Materials for UNlcert®-Courses

It's a constant challenge for all language teachers: a plethora of teaching materials is available in some languages. Conversely, few or no materials might be available in other languages (or areas).

It's important to keep in mind that there is not *the* course book or *the* material. UNlcert® won't issue general advice on which books to use. Materials need to fit the needs and demands of YOUR students (which you know best).

When choosing materials, following these steps might help you:

1. Determine what principles of foreign language learning are important to your teaching. (e.g.: "Using authentic materials.")
2. Create your own checklist using these principles.
3. Using your checklist, evaluate the materials. Determine if the materials are suitable for the teaching situation. Then you can
 - a. use the materials as they are
 - b. adapt the materials in some way
 - c. use the materials and supplement them
 - d. reject the materials.

The key to choosing suitable material is that you're teaching graduates. UNlcert® is specifically designed for higher education institutions and this should be reflected in content and form. Remember that your students

- have been learning foreign languages for many years
- usually need a more cognitive approach to learning
- are used to a fast-paced progression in the classroom and to working independently when preparing for exams
- have a quickly-increasing knowledge of their subject area that needs room to grow.

How can you integrate course books that do not fulfill your requirements?

Course books provide a basis that needs to be supplemented by current and authentic material, *also for beginners*, and shouldn't be followed blindly. Although some course books might follow your ideas of teaching, others do not. Even if your course book does not fulfill your requirements, e.g. if it's not as task-based-oriented as you'd like it to be, it is still possible to integrate it into your lessons. Here are some ways of doing that:

- Assign relevant course book chapters or exercises as homework. Check the homework in class. Use the rest of class time for more task-based work.
- Choose course book activities that are the closest to your approach. Replace unsuitable course book activities (e.g. with task-based activities) or simply skip unsuitable activities altogether.
- Supplement course book activities. For example, use course book activities as build-up activities for task-based work.
- Adapt certain activities in the book to make them more task-based. Willis (2009) gives teachers easy ways of making course book activities more task-based:
Willis, Jane. "Criteria for Identifying Tasks for TBL." *British Council Teaching English*. 2009.
<https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/article/criteria-identifying-tasks-tbl>