

CLARIFYING AND CHECKING UNDERSTANDING

B2-C1 | Functional language for clarifying meaning, scope and next steps

1 Useful phrase patterns

Use these phrases to check details precisely and avoid misunderstanding.

Could you clarify what you mean by ...?

Could you clarify what you mean by 'urgent'?

Just so I'm clear, ...

Just so I'm clear, you need it by Friday?

When you say ..., do you mean ...?

When you say 'local', do you mean this area?

Could I check my understanding?

Could I check my understanding before we proceed?

Am I right in thinking that ...?

Am I right in thinking that the budget is fixed?

What would that involve in practice?

What would that involve in practice for staff?

Could you be more specific about ...?

Could you be more specific about the expected results?

To confirm, ...

To confirm, who is responsible for the next step?

2 Respond to the situations

Write one professional question to clarify or check understanding in each situation.

1. A client says they need a major change 'as soon as possible', but you need a realistic deadline.

2. A manager says the project should have a local focus. You need to know which area they mean.

3. A colleague says the new policy will affect everyone. You want to know which departments are included.

4. Your team has agreed on an idea, but you need to check who will complete each task.

5. A client says they expect better results. You need to know how they will measure success.

6. A manager asks for a more flexible approach. You need to know what changes they expect in practice.

7. Someone says the budget is limited, but you need to know whether the amount can change.

8. A colleague says they will send the information later. You need to know when and in what format.

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B2-C1 | Suggested answers

3 Possible answers

These are examples only. Other accurate and suitable responses are also correct.

Encourage students to choose a phrase that suits the relationship and situation.

1. Could you clarify what deadline you have in mind when you say 'as soon as possible'?

2. When you say 'local', do you mean this city or a wider area?

3. Could you be more specific about which departments will be affected?

4. To confirm, who is responsible for each next step?

5. Could I check my understanding? How will success be measured?

6. What would a more flexible approach involve in practice?

7. Am I right in thinking that the budget amount may change?

8. Just so I'm clear, when will you send the information and in what format?
