

University of St Andrews



M.A. FOURTH LEVEL EXAMINATION

IT4004: COMMUNICATION SKILLS II

May 2003 - Time allowed: 3 hours

Candidates should answer **BOTH** questions

1. Leggi il seguente articolo e rispondi alle domande:

Never mind the job, some of us want a life

A senior record company executive made legal history by winning £9,000 compensation for being dismissed after he rejected a move that would have separated him from his wife and baby.

- (1) When James Whyte was told that he would have to spend 75 per cent of his working time abroad, he had, in his mind, little choice about the right thing to do. Mr Whyte, 32, a £40,000-a-year record company executive, told his boss at EMI that he could not accept the change. He had a one-year-old daughter, Emma, and his family had to come first. With EMI unwilling to budge, Mr Whyte threatened to resign and, to his surprise, found himself out of a job.
- (2) "I/

- (2) I was going to miss my lovely company car, a BMW coupé, the private health insurance and free CDs every month," said Mr Whyte. "I felt terrified, suddenly I had no money and a young family to feed. But if I didn't do it, I would never have seen my daughter starting to crawl, walk and recognise me as daddy."
- (3) It is a familiar story, though more usually it is women who make the hard choice. Coming back from maternity leave, they frequently encounter a rigid work culture that is incompatible with spending time with their children. So they leave.
- (4) This week, however, an important battle in the war to balance home and work was won, thanks to Mr Whyte. An industrial tribunal awarded him more than £9,000 for constructive dismissal. The tribunal concluded that EMI had made unreasonable demands upon Mr Whyte, who had already agreed to spend 40 per cent of his time working away from home.
- (5) This case, however, is just one sign of the family crises caused by the demands of work, particularly on dual-income couples. "The fundamental problem is sustaining relationships," says Penny De Valk, manager of Work/Life Directions, a consultancy which advises businesses on more family friendly policies.
- (6) "Travelling away from home can create terrible pressures on marriages when you might be away for half the time." One partner may be in a job that means going away for weeks at a time at short notice, shattering the carefully constructed system of nannies, baby-sitters and shared responsibilities. When the person returns home, it may be difficult for them to fit in again, because the home-based partner has ceased to rely on them and found other ways to manage.
- (7) Mr Whyte's wife, Jo, supported his decision, even though, she said, she was terrified when he came home and said that he would have no salary any more.
- (8) "I would rather that he had no job at all," she said, "than be travelling around the world the whole time. I would never have seen him and neither would Emma."
- (9) Concern about such problems is running high, particularly among professional groups, and it is shared equally by men and women, according to Ms De Valk. "Fast cars, fat-cat salaries and flashy penthouses are no longer enough for the young and upwardly mobile. What they really, really want is to get a life."
- (10) A/

- (10) A recent Mori poll found that a quarter of the male employees think that family life and career progression is incompatible with the position. One in five of all employees said they would accept a pay cut to have more free time. For all full-time employees the right balance between work and life ranked higher than the challenge of their job, the quality of their boss and even the opportunity of promotion, when they were asked about what made them feel committed to their employers.
- (11) Cary Cooper, professor of organisational psychology at UMIST, believes that the Whyte's generation is rebelling against what employers expect. "The average family has both partners working," he says, "so people are asking a lot of fundamental questions such as, does this really produce a good quality of life? There are people now with young families who worked very hard. These are the people now whom you would expect to be career-driven. But they saw what happened at the end of the Eighties and see what is happening now. They saw people being dumped by downsizing. Now they are being asked to work the longest hours in Europe, and they live in a country which has the highest divorce rate in Europe. So they are looking for a different way of life, where their values are respected.
- (12) Mr Whyte's case is representative of this attitude but maybe not representative of the wider panorama of people who have to juggle work's demands and families.
- (13) In fact the nine-to-five office job makes life hell for anyone with a school-age child. The standard professional nine-to-nine/10/11 job is, of course, even worse. Better, cheaper childcare facilities can fill some gaps, some of the time. But what happens when a child is ill, on holiday, disabled, distressed, in trouble at school? What happens if there's only one parent? The standard solution – the solution many schools and employers of my acquaintance promote – is for the "primary caretaker" to step out of the full-time workforce. Which is fine, perhaps, if you can afford it.
- (14) But most families can't. Sooner or later, most primary caretakers end up in the shadowy world of part-time, casual, short-contract employment. More often than not, they are women. The most recent figures from the Equal Opportunities Commission show that the pay gap is almost twice as wide for women working part-time as it is for women working full-time. Women in full employment earn 19 per cent per hour less than men; women in part-time jobs earn 40 per cent less. This doesn't just hurt them and their children, it also impacts on the parents, most of them men, who stay/

stay in full-time work. They have to work longer hours to make up the difference. And the more they work, the less time they have with their families. Et ita ad infinitum.

Jack O'Sullivan / Maureen Freely
The Independent (abridged)

Rispondi alle seguenti domande

- a) Riassumi il caso di James Whyte.
- b) Perché James Whyte fa notizia in questo tipo di situazione?
- c) Riassumi i paragrafi 5 e 6.
- d) Rendi in italiano 4 delle espressioni sottolineate.
- e) Qual è l'opinione espressa dal Prof. Cary Cooper?
- f) In che modo il caso del Sig. Whyte non è rappresentativo della situazione più generale di persone che lavorano e hanno una famiglia.
- g) Riassumi il paragrafo 14.
- h) Scrivi un tuo commento sulla problematica discussa nell'articolo (circa 60 parole).

2. Scrivi un tema in italiano su UNO dei seguenti argomenti (580-600 parole)

- a) L'importanza della religione in Italia e nel tuo paese. Discuti in particolare la diffusione delle nuove forme religiose in Italia.
- b) Il cinema non è solo un mezzo di fuga dalla realtà ma un potente strumento di denuncia di problemi sociali. Discuti questo aspetto del cinema facendo riferimento ai film che hai visto durante il tuo corso.
- c) Il mondo del lavoro in Italia oggi.
- c) La devoluzione cambierà il volto dell' Italia: discutene i pro e i contro.
