Practice Tests for the Cambridge Business English Certificate Level 2

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Introduction

TO THE STUDENT

This book is for people who are going to take the Business English Certificate Level 2 (BEC 2).

About the BEC examinations

The University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate (UCLES) Business English Certificate (BEC) examinations offer an English language qualification for learners who want to use English for international business. All the material in the examinations is based on real-world business situations. There are three levels: BEC 1, BEC 2 and BEC 3.

About BEC 2

BEC 2 is for candidates with English at the intermediate level who are one of the following: students preparing for a career in business; those already in business at the lower to middle management levels; middle and senior clerical staff.

Note: For a more detailed explanation of the BEC examinations, teachers should refer to the Teacher’s Handbook and other BEC documentation, available from UCLES.

About this book

This book is for candidates preparing for the BEC 2 examination. The aims of the book are:

- to give you practice in doing the BEC 2 examination
- to make you familiar with the texts, topics, tasks and test formats that you will meet in the examination
- to show you the level and kind of language tested in the BEC 2 examination.

Contents of the book

It contains the following:

- four complete practice BEC 2 examinations
- sample photocopiable OMR Answer Sheets
- transcripts of all the Listening material
- answer keys for the Reading and Listening tests
- sample answers for the Writing tests.

The accompanying 90-minute audio cassette contains four Listening tests and a complete example of the Speaking test.

The examination format

The BEC 2 examination consists of three tests – Reading and Writing, Listening and Speaking – and is completed in two stages as shown on the following page.

The Reading and Writing test

The Reading section of the test uses different kinds of texts with a business theme, including graphics, e.g. descriptions of products, job advertisements, newspaper articles and reports.

The Writing section of the test consists of two tasks. In the first task you are asked to write a note, message or memo and include three specific pieces of information given in the instructions. In the second task you are asked to produce an extended piece of writing such as a business letter or report.

Marking Parts 1 and 2 of the Writing test

For Part 1, you can get full marks (i.e. 10 marks) if you have communicated all three parts of the message in an appropriate style, and if your English is easy to understand and has no serious mistakes in it.

For Part 2, you can get full marks (i.e. 15
Introduction

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage One</th>
<th>Reading and Writing</th>
<th>50 minutes</th>
<th>6 parts, 45 marks</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Part 1 - four information texts, matching task</td>
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<td>Part 2 - single text, matching task</td>
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<td>Part 3 - single text, multiple matching</td>
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<td>Part 4 - single informational text, multiple choice</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>40 minutes</td>
<td>Part 5a - short text, error correction</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Part 5b - short text, error correction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listening</td>
<td></td>
<td>40 minutes</td>
<td>2 parts, 25 marks</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Part 1 - note or memo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Part 2 - letter or report</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stage Two</td>
<td>Speaking</td>
<td>12 minutes</td>
<td>3 parts, 30 marks</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(18 minutes for 3 candidates)</td>
<td>Part 1 - three telephone messages of conversations</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>Part 2 - 10 short monologues</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Part 3 - an extended conversation/monologue</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

40 minutes 2 parts, 25 marks
Part 1 - note or memo | 10 marks
Part 2 - letter or report | 15 marks

The Listening test

The Listening test uses different kinds of spoken texts with a business theme, e.g. messages, monologues, interviews, conversations and discussions. You hear each text twice. In the examination, at the end of the test, you are given 10 minutes to transfer your answers on to the OMR sheet.

For the Listening test, you have to:
- find the information from three short spoken texts and fill in three gapped texts
- match 10 (2 x 5) short texts to a set of items
- answer eight multiple choice questions on a longer spoken text.

Note: When working with the audio cassette which accompanies this book, you will need to rewind in order to hear each text twice.

Marking the Listening test

Each correct answer is given 1 mark. There are no half marks.

Speaking

The Speaking section of the test is an interview with two candidates (sometimes three candidates). There are two examiners: one examiner (the interlocutor) will talk to the candidates, and the other examiner just listens.

The test is in two parts. In Part 1 you have to talk about yourself. This part of the test lasts 3–4 minutes.

In Part 2 you have to find out information you need to complete a task. You and the other candidate are given ‘activity sheets’ which tell you what you have to talk to each other about. You have 30 seconds to read through your sheet and 2 minutes to ask and answer questions. In the Sample Speaking Test on the cassette, you can hear two candidates taking part in Speaking Test 1.

Marking the Speaking test

You are given a mark between 0 and 3 according to how well you used grammar and vocabulary; how well you organised what you said; how clear your pronunciation was; how well you worked with your partner.

Both examiners will mark you, and this will result in a final grade of 1, 2 or 3 (where 1 is the highest).
What is the pass mark for the examination?

For Stage 1 (Reading/Writing and Listening), you are awarded a grade: A, B, C, D or E. Only candidates with grades A–D will receive a BEC Certificate. In percentage terms, the pass marks at each grade are roughly as follows:
A 80+%  B 70–79%  C 60–69%  D 50–59%  E less than 50%.

For Stage 2 (Speaking), you are awarded a separate grade: 1, 2 or 3. Grades 1 and 2 are added to the BEC certificate. For grade 3, the words ‘No Grade’ for Speaking are added to your certificate.

How to use the OMR Answer Sheets

In the BEC 2 examination, you will write your answers on OMR Answer Sheets (see pp. 103–108). Use a 2B pencil, have an eraser to erase any mistakes.

The OMR is divided into three sections:
● the first (top) section is for your examination number
● the second section is for entering your answers to the Reading section
● the third section is for entering your answers to the Writing section.

Enter your response by shading out the appropriate square. If you make a mistake, erase the incorrect response and then enter the correct response.

Important note: If you enter more than one answer to a question, you will get no marks for that question, even if one of the answers is correct.

You write complete words, numbers or sentences in this section. Do not shade out the squares.

Enter your responses by writing the word(s), numbers or sentences on the lines provided.

TO THE TEACHER

The preceding notes to the student give an outline of the different parts of the BEC 2 exam, including information on the mark allocation and on using the OMR (Optical Mark Reader) sheet. UCLES makes past question papers available for a fee. Please contact UCLES centres for details.

The Speaking test

The speaking tests in this book give your students the chance to familiarise themselves with the structure and procedure of the test, and to learn what to expect and how to perform under interview conditions. If you test the students on your own, make them aware that there are always two examiners present in the real examination. They should also be made aware they might do the test in a group of three (although the communication activity will only be with one other student).

Notes on conducting the Speaking test

The test is in two parts. In Part 1 you ask each student about themselves. Ask each student slightly different questions. Sometimes it is possible to ask a student two or three consecutive questions, but try to make sure that each student has the same number of questions. This part of the test lasts 3–4 minutes. The aim is to test the student on their ability to give personal information about themselves, their homes, interests and jobs and to show that they can agree or disagree and express preferences.

In Part 2 there are two communication activities for the students. Give the students time to read through their activity sheets, so they understand what they have to do, and then each student in turn asks the other student three questions using the prompts on their sheets. Each student has 2 minutes to complete the questioning task.

The activity sheets lead into a short discussion on the topic. The discussion topic is given on the activity sheets. Give the students about 30 seconds to prepare for the discussion. They should not make any notes. The discussion lasts about 3 minutes.

This book contains four practice speaking tests, showing the kind of questions that you can ask the students in the test. The Speaking test from
Test 1 is also recorded on the cassette as an example.

**Marking the Speaking test**

BEC 2 examiners give candidates a mark for each of the following criteria and for overall performance:

- **pronunciation:**
  - control of both individual sounds and prosodic features such as stress, rhythm and intonation
- **grammar and vocabulary:**
  - accuracy and appropriacy of candidate’s structures and vocabulary
- **discourse management:**
  - ability to use English beyond sentence level: coherence and organisation, fluency over several utterances, appropriate complexity of structures
- **interactive communication:**
  - ability to interact, taking turns, imitating and responding, positively contributing, amount of assistance required.

The marks for these criteria are translated into total scores, which are then graded. Use these grade descriptors:

- **Pronunciation**
  - 5 easy to understand
  - 3 occasionally difficult to understand
  - 1 sometimes difficult to understand

- **Grammar and vocabulary**
  - 5 meaning is conveyed with few errors
  - 3 meaning is conveyed with some minor errors
  - 1 meaning is generally conveyed, despite errors

- **Discourse management**
  - 5 no strain on the listener
  - 3 occasional strain on the listener
  - 1 some strain on listener

- **Interactive communication**
  - 5 independent communicator
  - 3 fairly independent communicator
  - 1 sometimes dependent

**Marking Parts 1 and 2 of the Writing test**

Part 1, question 46, requires candidates to write a memo of about 40 words. Typically, candidates get full marks if they provide all the required information, and in language which is free of serious errors. Candidates should be careful not to exceed the recommended number of words.

Part 2, question 47, requires candidates to produce a continuous piece of writing, usually about 120 words, often in the form of a report or letter. Typically, candidates are awarded marks for their performance in two areas: completion of the task, i.e. content, and quality of language. It is important not to exceed the recommended number of words.