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Introduction

TO THE STUDENT

This book is for candidates preparing for the Cambridge Business English Certificate Vantage examination. It contains four complete tests based on past papers.

The BEC Suite

The Business English Certificates (BEC) are certificated examinations which can be taken on various dates throughout the year at approved Cambridge BEC centres. They are aimed primarily at individual learners who wish to obtain a business-related English language qualification, and provide an ideal focus for courses in Business English. Set in a business context, BEC tests English language, not business knowledge. BEC is available at three levels – Preliminary, Vantage and Higher.

The BEC Suite is linked to the five ALTE/Cambridge levels for language assessment, and to the Council of Europe’s Framework for Modern Languages. It is also aligned with the UK Qualifications and Curriculum Authority’s National Standards for Literacy, within the National Qualifications Framework (NQF).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>BEC</th>
<th>Equivalent Main Suite Exam</th>
<th>Council of Europe Framework Level</th>
<th>UK NQF Level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BEC Vantage</td>
<td>Certificate of Proficiency in English (CPE)</td>
<td>C2 (ALTE Level 5)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BEC Higher</td>
<td>Certificate in Advanced English (CAE)</td>
<td>C1 (ALTE Level 4)</td>
<td>Level 2*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BEC Vantage</td>
<td>First Certificate in English (FCE)</td>
<td>B2 (ALTE Level 3)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>BEC Preliminary</td>
<td>Preliminary English Test (PET)</td>
<td>B1 (ALTE Level 2)</td>
<td>Entry 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Key English Test (KET)</td>
<td>A2 (ALTE Level 1)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* This represents the level typically required for employment purposes to signify the successful completion of compulsory secondary education in the UK.

BEC Vantage

The BEC Vantage examination consists of four papers:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Duration</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reading</td>
<td>1 hour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing</td>
<td>45 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listening</td>
<td>40 minutes (approximately)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speaking</td>
<td>14 minutes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Test of Reading (1 hour)

This paper consists of five parts with 45 questions, which take the form of two multiple-matching tasks, two multiple-choice tasks, and an error identification task. Part 1 contains four short texts or a longer text divided into four sections, and Parts 2, 3, 4 and 5 each contain one longer text. The texts are taken from newspapers, business magazines, business correspondence, books, leaflets, brochures, etc. They are all business-related, and are selected to test a wide range of reading skills and strategies.

Test of Writing (45 minutes)

For this paper, candidates are required to produce two pieces of writing. For Part 1, they write a note, message, memo or email to a colleague or colleagues within the company. For Part 2, they write a piece of business correspondence to somebody outside the company, a short report or a proposal. Candidates are asked to write 40 to 50 words for Part 1 and 120 to 140 words for Part 2.

Assessment is based on achievement of task, range and accuracy of vocabulary and grammatical structures, organisation, content, and appropriacy of register and format.

Test of Listening (approximately 40 minutes)

This paper consists of three parts with 30 questions, which take the form of a note-completion task, a multiple-matching task and a multiple-choice task. Part 1 contains three short conversations, Part 2 contains ten very short extracts, and Part 3 contains one longer text. The texts are audio recordings based on a variety of sources including interviews, telephone calls, face-to-face conversations and documentary features. They are all business-related, and are selected to test a wide range of listening skills and strategies.

Test of Speaking (14 minutes)

The Speaking test consists of three parts, which take the form of an interview section, a short presentation on a business topic, and a discussion. In the standard test format, candidates are examined in pairs by two examiners: an interlocutor and an assessor. The assessor awards a mark based on the following four criteria: Grammar and Vocabulary, Discourse Management, Pronunciation and Interactive Communication. The interlocutor provides a global mark for the whole test.

Marks and results

The four BEC Vantage papers total 120 marks, after weighting. Each paper is weighted to 30 marks. A candidate’s overall grade is based on the total score gained in all four papers. It is not necessary to achieve a satisfactory level in all four papers in order to pass the examination. Certificates are given to candidates who pass the examination with grade A, B or C. A is the highest. The minimum successful performance in order to achieve a grade C corresponds to about 60% of the total marks. You will also be informed if you do particularly well in any individual paper. D and E are failing grades. Every candidate is provided with a
Introduction

Statement of Results, which includes a graphical display of their performance in each paper. These are shown against the scale Exceptional – Good – Borderline – Weak and indicate the candidate’s relative performance in each paper.

TO THE TEACHER

Candidature

Each year BEC is taken by over 120,000 candidates throughout the world. Most candidates are either already in work or studying in preparation for the world of work.

Content, preparation and assessment

Material used throughout BEC is as far as possible authentic and free of bias, and reflects the international flavour of the examination. The subject matter should not advantage or disadvantage certain groups of candidates, nor should it offend in areas such as religion, politics or sex.

TEST OF READING

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Part</th>
<th>Main Skill Focus</th>
<th>Input</th>
<th>Response</th>
<th>No. of Questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Reading – scanning and gist</td>
<td>One longer or four shorter informational texts (approx. 250–350 words in total)</td>
<td>Matching</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Reading – understanding text structure</td>
<td>Single text: article, report, etc. with sentence-length gaps (text plus seven option sentences approx. 450–550 words in total)</td>
<td>Matching</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Reading for gist and specific information</td>
<td>Single text (approx. 450–550 words)</td>
<td>4-option multiple choice</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Reading – vocabulary and structure information</td>
<td>Single informational text with lexical gaps (text including gapped words approx. 200–300 words)</td>
<td>4-option multiple-choice cloze</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Reading – understanding sentence structure / error identification</td>
<td>Short text (150–200 words) Identification of additional unnecessary words in text</td>
<td>Proof-reading</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Reading Part One

This is a matching task. There are four short texts on a related theme (for example, descriptions of a group of products, or advertisements for jobs) or a single text divided into four sections. Although the context of each text will be similar, there will also be information that is particular to each text. The texts are labelled A–D. Candidates are presented with a set of seven items which are
statements related to the texts. They are expected to match each statement with
the relevant text. Questions in this part tend to focus mostly on the
identification of specific information and detail. However, an item could focus
on gist by testing areas such as the target reader or the topic.

Preparation
In order to prepare for this part, it would be useful to familiarise students with
sets of short texts that have a similar theme. Newspapers, magazines and
catalogues are useful sources in which to find such texts. Students should be
encouraged to look closely at all the information, particularly as short texts
often include additional snippets of information on separate lines (such as
prices, dates, titles, measurements, etc.) that can easily be overlooked.

Students could be set questions which test global reading skills prior to
reading the texts, so that they are trained to think automatically for whom a
text is written and why it has been written.

Reading Part Two
This is a matching task, comprising a text that has had six sentences removed
from it and a set of seven sentences labelled A–G. Candidates are required to
match each gap with the sentence which they think fits in terms of meaning
and structure. The first gap is always given as an example so that candidates
have five gaps left to complete. When they have finished this part, there will be
one sentence left which they have not used.

The texts for this part will have been chosen because they have a clear line of
thought or argument that can still be discerned by the reader even with the
sentences removed. When doing the task, therefore, students should be trained
to read through the gapped text and the list of sentences first, in order to get an
idea of what it is about. Having done that, they should be reassured that there
is only one sentence that fits each gap.

This part is a test of text structure as well as meaning, and the gaps will be
reasonably far apart, so that candidates can successfully anticipate the
appropriate lexical and grammatical features of the missing sentence.
Candidates can be expected to be tested on a variety of cohesive features with
both a backward and forward reference, sometimes going beyond the sentence
level. Thus, while selecting the appropriate sentence for a gap, they should read
before and after the text to ensure that it fits well. At the end of this part, they
should read through the entire text, inserting the gapped sentences as they go
along, to ensure that the information is coherent.

Preparation
This can be quite a difficult task, especially for candidates who are unfamiliar
with such an exercise. In preparing them for this part, it would be a good idea
to select a number of graded texts that have clear, familiar ideas and evident
cohesive features. Texts can be cut up, as they are in the test, or simply
discussed in their entirety. In this way, students can work up to dealing with
more complex material and identifying the many different ways that ideas are
connected. It would also be useful when doing gapped texts to look at
sentences that do not fit the gaps and discuss the reasons for this. Sometimes it
Introduction

is possible to make a sentence fit a gap by simply changing a few words. Discussion on areas such as this would also be fruitful.

Reading Part Three

This task consists of a text accompanied by four-option multiple-choice items. The stem of a multiple-choice item may take the form of a question or an incomplete sentence. There are six items, which are placed after the text. The text is 450 to 550 words long. Sources of original texts may be the general and business press, company literature, and books on topics such as management. Texts may be edited, but the source is authentic.

Preparation
- Multiple-choice questions are a familiar and long-standing type of test; here, they are used to test opinion and inference rather than straightforward facts.
- Correct answers are not designed to depend on simple word-matching, and students’ ability to interpret paraphrasing should be developed.
- Students should be encouraged to pursue their own interpretation of relevant parts of the text and then check their idea against the options offered, rather than reading all the options first.
- It could be useful for students to be given perhaps one of the wrong options only, and for them to try to write the correct answer and another wrong option.

Reading Part Four

This is a multiple-choice cloze test with 15 gaps, most of which test lexical items, and may focus on correct word choice, lexical collocations and fixed phrases. The texts chosen for this part will come from varied sources, but they will all have a straightforward message or meaning, so that candidates are being tested on vocabulary and not on their comprehension of the passage.

Preparation
Candidates are usually familiar with this type of task, and so it is most important to try and improve their range of vocabulary. The options provided in each item in the test will have similar meanings, but only one word will be correct within the context provided. Familiarity with typical collocations would be especially useful. The language of business is often very precise, and so it is worth spending time looking at the vocabulary used in different types of text, getting students to keep a vocabulary list and encouraging them to make active use of the lexical items that are new to them.

Reading Part Five

This is an error-correction or proof-reading task based on a text of 150 to 200 words, with 12 items. Candidates identify additional or unnecessary words in a text. This task can be related to the authentic task of checking a text for errors, and suitable text types are therefore letters, publicity materials, etc. The text is presented with 12 numbered lines, which are the lines containing the items. Further lines at the end may complete the text, but they are not numbered.
Preparation

- Students should be reminded that this task represents a kind of editing that is common practice, even in their first language.
- Any work on error analysis is likely to be helpful for this task.
- It may well be that photocopies of students’ own writing could provide an authentic source for practice.
- A reverse of the exercise (giving students texts with missing words) might also prove beneficial.

Marks

One mark is given for each correct answer. The total score is then weighted to 30 marks for the whole Reading paper.

TEST OF WRITING

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Part</th>
<th>Functions/Communicative Task</th>
<th>Input</th>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Register</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>e.g. giving instructions, explaining a development, asking for comments, requesting information, agreeing to requests</td>
<td>Rubric only (plus layout of output text type)</td>
<td>Internal communication (medium may be note, message, memo or email) (40–50 words)</td>
<td>Neutral/informal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Report: describing, summarising Correspondence: e.g. explaining, apologising, reassuring, complaining Proposal: describing, summarising, recommending, persuading</td>
<td>One or more pieces of input from: business correspondence (medium may be letter, fax or email), internal communication (medium may be note, memo or email), notice, advert, graphs, charts, etc. (plus layout if output is fax or email)</td>
<td>Business correspondence (medium may be letter, fax or email) or short report or proposal (medium may be memo or email) (120–140 words)</td>
<td>Neutral/formal</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For BEC Vantage, candidates are required to produce two pieces of writing:

- an internal company communication; this means a piece of communication with a colleague or colleagues within the company on a business-related matter, and the delivery medium may be a note, message, memo or email;
- one of the following:
  - a report; this means the presentation of information in relation to a specific issue or event. The report will contain an introduction, main body of findings and conclusion; it is possible that the delivery medium may be a memo or an email;
  - a piece of business correspondence; this means correspondence with somebody outside the company (e.g. a customer or supplier) on a business-related matter, and the delivery medium may be a letter, fax or email;
  - a proposal; this has a similar format to a report, but unlike the report, the focus of the proposal is on the future, with the main focus being on recommendations for discussion; it is possible that the delivery medium may be a memo or an email.
Introduction

Writing Part One

In the first task, candidates are presented with the context in the task rubric. This explains the role the candidate must take in order to write a note, message, memo or email of around 40 to 50 words using a written prompt. It also identifies who the message is to be written to. The prompt will be included in the instructions in the rubric and will be in the form of bullet points clearly stating the pieces of information that must be incorporated into the answer.

Writing Part Two

In the second Writing task, candidates are required to write 120 to 140 words, which will be in the form of business correspondence, a short report or proposal. There will be an explanation of the task and one or more texts as input material. These texts may contain visual or graphic material, and have ‘handwritten’ notes on them.

Preparing for the Writing paper

Students should have practice in the clear and concise presentation of written information. Exposure to, and discussion of, as wide a range as possible of relevant texts would be beneficial. Students should be trained to consider:

- the target reader
- references to previous communication
- the purpose of writing
- the requirements of the format (e.g. letter, report)
- the main points to be addressed
- the approximate number of words to be written for each point
- suitable openings and closings
- the level of formality required.

It is important that students are aware of the need to reformulate the wording of the content points/handwritten notes given in the task, in order to include original vocabulary and structures, since evidence of a range of structures and vocabulary is one of the marking criteria.

Assessment

An impression mark is awarded to each piece of writing. The General Impression Mark Scheme is used in conjunction with a task-specific mark scheme, which focuses on criteria specific to each particular task. This summarises the content, organisation, register, format and target reader indicated in the task.

The band scores awarded are translated to a mark out of 10 for Part 1 and a mark out of 20 for Part 2. A total of 30 marks is available for Writing.

The General Impression Mark Scheme is interpreted at Council of Europe Level B2.

A summary of the General Impression Mark Scheme is reproduced opposite. Examiners work with a more detailed version, which is subject to regular updating.
# Introduction

## General Impression Mark Scheme – Writing

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Band</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 5 | Full realisation of the task set.  
- All content points included and expanded upon where the task allows.  
- Controlled, natural use of language; minimal errors, which are minor.  
- Wide range of structures and vocabulary.  
- Effectively organised, with appropriate use of cohesive devices.  
- Register and format consistently appropriate.  
Very positive effect on the reader. |
| 4 | Good realisation of the task set.  
- All content points adequately dealt with.  
- Generally accurate; errors when complex language is attempted.  
- Good range of structures and vocabulary.  
- Generally well organised, with attention paid to cohesion.  
- Register and format on the whole appropriate.  
Positive effect on the reader. |
| 3 | Reasonable achievement of the task set.  
- All major content points included; some minor omissions.  
- A number of errors will be present, but they do not impede communication.  
- Adequate range of structures and vocabulary.  
- Organisation and cohesion are satisfactory, on the whole.  
- Register and format reasonable, although not entirely successful.  
Satisfactory effect on the reader. |
| 2 | Inadequate attempt at the task set.  
- Some major content points omitted or inadequately dealt with; some irrelevance is likely.  
- Errors sometimes obscure communication, are numerous, and distract the reader.  
- Limited range of structures and vocabulary.  
- Content is not clearly organised or linked, causing some confusion.  
- Inappropriate register and format.  
Negative effect on the reader. |
| 1 | Poor attempt at the task set.  
- Notable content omissions and/or considerable irrelevance, possibly due to misinterpretation of the task set.  
- Serious lack of control; frequent basic errors.  
- Little evidence of structures and vocabulary required by task.  
- Lack of organisation, causing a breakdown in communication.  
- Little attempt at appropriate register and format.  
Very negative effect on the reader. |
| 0 | Achieves nothing. Either fewer than 25% of the required number of words or totally illegible or totally irrelevant. |
TEST OF LISTENING

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Part</th>
<th>Main Skill Focus</th>
<th>Input</th>
<th>Response</th>
<th>No. of Questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Listening for writing short answers</td>
<td>Three telephone conversations or messages</td>
<td>Gap-filling</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Listening; identifying topic, context, function, etc.</td>
<td>Short monologue; two sections of five ‘snippets’ each</td>
<td>Multiple matching</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Listening</td>
<td>One extended conversation or monologue; interview, discussion, presentation, etc.</td>
<td>Multiple choice</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Listening Part One

In this part, there are three conversations or answering-machine messages, with a gapped text to go with each. Each gapped text provides a very clear context and has four spaces which have to be filled with one or two words, or a number. The gapped texts may include forms, diary excerpts, invoices, message pads, etc. Candidates hear each conversation or message twice and as they listen they are required to complete the gapped text.

This part of the Listening test concentrates on the retrieval of factual information and it is important for candidates to listen carefully using the prompts on their question paper in order to identify the missing information. For example, they may have to note down a person’s name, and if names on the recording are spelt out, those answers must be spelt correctly. Alternatively, they may have to listen for a room or telephone number, or an instruction or deadline. Answers to this part are rarely a simple matter of dictation and some reformulation of the prompt material will be required in order to locate the correct answer.

Listening Part Two

This part is divided into two sections. Each section has the same format: candidates hear five short monologues and have to match each monologue to a set of items, A–H. In each section, the eight options will form a coherent set and the overall theme or topic will be clearly stated in the task rubric. For example, candidates may hear five people talking and have to decide what sort of jobs the people do. Hence, the set of options A–H will contain a list of jobs. Alternatively, the set of options may consist of eight places/topics/addressees/purposes, etc. The two sections will always test different areas and so, if the first section focuses on, say, topics, the second section will focus on something else, such as functions.

In this part of the Listening test, candidates are being tested on their global listening skills and also on their ability to infer, extract gist and understand main ideas. In order to answer the questions successfully, they will need to work out the answer by developing ideas, and refining these as the text is heard. It will not be possible to ‘word-match’ and candidates should not expect...
to hear such overt cues. However, there will always be a ‘right’ answer and candidates are not expected to opt for the ‘best’ answer.

Listening Part Three

A longer text is heard in this part, usually lasting approximately four minutes. The text will typically be an interview, conversation or discussion with two or more speakers, or possibly a presentation or report with one speaker. There are eight, three-option multiple-choice questions that focus on details and main ideas in the text. There may be questions on opinions and feelings but these will be relatively straightforward and will not require candidates to remember long or complex pieces of information.

Preparing for the Listening paper

All listening practice should be helpful for students, whether authentic or specially prepared. In particular, discussion should focus on:

- the purpose of speeches and conversations or discussions
- the speakers’ roles
- the opinions expressed
- the language functions employed
- relevant aspects of phonology such as stress, linking and weak forms, etc.

In addition, students should be encouraged to appreciate the differing demands of each task type. It will be helpful not only to practise the task types in order to develop a sense of familiarity and confidence, but also to discuss how the three task types relate to real-life skills and situations:

- the first is note-taking (and therefore productive), and students should reflect on the various situations in which they take notes from a spoken input. They should also be encouraged to try to predict the kinds of words or numbers that might go in the gaps;
- the second is a matching (with discrimination) exercise, and reflects the ability to interrelate information between reading and listening and across differing styles and registers;
- the third involves the correct interpretation of spoken input, with correct answers often being delivered across different speakers.

In all three tasks, successful listening depends on correct reading, and students should be encouraged to make full use of the pauses during the test to check the written input.

Marks

One mark is given for each correct answer, giving a total score of 30 marks for the whole Listening paper.
TEST OF SPEAKING

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Part</th>
<th>Format/Content</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Interaction Focus</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Conversation between the interlocutor and each candidate Giving personal information; talking about present circumstances, past experiences and future plans, expressing opinions, speculating, etc.</td>
<td>About 3 minutes</td>
<td>The interlocutor encourages the candidates to give information about themselves and to express personal opinions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>A ‘mini presentation’ by each candidate on a business theme Organising a larger unit of discourse Giving information and expressing and justifying opinions</td>
<td>About 6 minutes</td>
<td>Each candidate is given prompts which they use to prepare and give a short talk on a business-related topic.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Two-way conversation between candidates followed by further prompting from the interlocutor Expressing and justifying opinions, speculating, comparing and contrasting, agreeing and disagreeing, etc.</td>
<td>About 5 minutes</td>
<td>The candidates are presented with a business-related situation to discuss. The interlocutor extends the discussion with prompts on related topics.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Speaking test is conducted by two oral examiners (an interlocutor and an assessor), with pairs of candidates. The interlocutor is responsible for conducting the Speaking test and is also required to give a mark for each candidate’s performance during the whole test. The assessor is responsible for providing an analytical assessment of each candidate’s performance and, after being introduced by the interlocutor, takes no further part in the interaction.

The Speaking test is designed for pairs of candidates. However, where a centre has an uneven number of candidates, the last three candidates will be examined together.

**Speaking Part One**

In the first part of the test, the interlocutor addresses each candidate in turn and asks first general, then more business-related questions. Candidates will not be addressed in strict sequence. This part of the test takes about three minutes and during this time candidates are tested on their ability to talk briefly about themselves, and to perform functions such as agreeing and disagreeing, and expressing preferences.

**Speaking Part Two**

The second part of the test is a ‘mini presentation’. In this part, the candidates are given a choice of topic and have a minute to prepare a presentation of approximately one minute. After each candidate has spoken, their partner is invited to ask a question about what has been said.
Speaking Part Three

The third part of the test is a discussion between candidates. The interlocutor gives candidates a business-related situation to discuss. The candidates are asked to speak for about three minutes. The interlocutor will support the conversation as appropriate and then ask further questions related to the main theme.

Preparing for the Speaking test

It is important to familiarise candidates with the format of the test before it takes place, by the use of paired and group activities in class. Teachers may need to explain the benefits of this type of assessment to candidates. The primary purpose of paired assessment is to sample a wider range of discourse than can be elicited from an individual interview.

In the first part of the test, candidates mainly respond to questions or comments from the interlocutor. Students need practice in exchanging personal and non-personal information; at Vantage level, it may be possible for students to practise talking about themselves in pairs or groups with or without prompts (such as written questions). However, prompt materials are necessary for Parts Two and Three, and students could be encouraged to design these themselves or may be provided with specially prepared sets. In small classes, students could discuss authentic materials as a group prior to engaging in pairwork or group activities. Such activities can familiarise students with the types of interactive skills involved in asking and providing factual information, such as: speaking clearly, formulating questions, listening carefully and giving precise answers.

In the 'mini presentation', candidates are asked to show an ability to talk for an extended period of time. Discussion activities, as well as giving short talks or presentations, can help to develop this skill.

In the final discussion in the Vantage Speaking test, candidates are also tested on their ability to express opinions, to compare and contrast, to concede points and possibly to reach a conclusion (although it is perfectly acceptable for candidates to agree to differ). Any discussion activities on a business theme that encourage students to employ these skills are likely to be beneficial. Group or class discussions can be valuable ways of developing these skills.

Assessment

Candidates are assessed on their own performance and not in relation to each other according to the following analytical criteria: Grammar and Vocabulary, Discourse Management, Pronunciation and Interactive Communication. These criteria are interpreted at Vantage level. Assessment is based on performance in the whole test and is not related to particular parts of the test.

Both examiners assess the candidates. The assessor applies detailed analytical scales, and the interlocutor applies a Global Achievement Scale, which is based on the analytical scales. The analytical criteria are further described below.

Grammar and Vocabulary

This refers to range and accuracy as well as the appropriate use of grammatical and lexical forms. At BEC Vantage level, a range of grammar and vocabulary is
needed to deal with the tasks. At this level, candidates should be accurate enough, and use sufficiently appropriate vocabulary, to convey their intended meanings.

**Discourse Management**
This refers to the coherence, extent and relevance of each candidate’s individual performance. Contributions should be adequate to deal with the BEC Vantage level tasks.

**Pronunciation**
This refers to the candidate’s ability to produce comprehensible utterances. At BEC Vantage level, meanings are conveyed through the appropriate use of stress, rhythm, intonation and clear individual sounds.

**Interactive Communication**
This refers to the candidate’s ability to take an active part in the development of the discourse. At BEC Vantage level, candidates should be sensitive to turn-taking and sustain the interaction by initiating and responding appropriately.

**Global Achievement Scale**
This refers to the candidate’s overall performance throughout the test. Throughout the Speaking test, candidates are assessed on their language skills and, in order to be able to make a fair and accurate assessment of each candidate's performance, the examiners must be given an adequate sample of language to assess. Candidates must, therefore, be prepared to provide full answers to the questions asked by either the interlocutor or the other candidate, and to speak clearly and audibly. While it is the responsibility of the interlocutor, where necessary, to manage or direct the interaction, thus ensuring that both candidates are given an equal opportunity to speak, it is the responsibility of the candidates to maintain the interaction as much as possible. Candidates who take equal turns in the interchange will utilise to best effect the amount of time available.

**Grading and results**
Grading takes place once all scripts have been returned to Cambridge ESOL and marking is complete. This is approximately five weeks after the examination. There are two main stages: grading and awards.

**Grading**
The four papers total 120 marks, after weighting. Each skill represents 25% of the total marks available. The grade boundaries (A, B, C, D and E) are set using the following information:
- statistics on the candidature
- statistics on the overall candidate performance
statistics on individual items, for those parts of the examination for which this is appropriate (Reading and Listening)

- the advice of the Principal Examiners, based on the performance of candidates, and on the recommendation of examiners where this is relevant (Writing)

- comparison with statistics from previous years’ examination performance and candidature.

A candidate’s overall grade is based on the total score gained in all four papers. It is not necessary to achieve a satisfactory level in all four papers in order to pass the examination.

Awards

The Awarding Committee deals with all cases presented for special consideration, e.g. temporary disability, unsatisfactory examination conditions, suspected collusion, etc. The Committee can decide to ask for scripts to be re-marked, to check results, to change grades, to withhold results, etc. Results may be withheld because of infringement of regulations or because further investigation is needed. Centres are notified if a candidate’s results have been scrutinised by the Awarding Committee.

Results

Results are reported as three passing grades (A, B and C) and two failing grades (D and E). The minimum successful performance which a candidate typically requires in order to achieve a Grade C corresponds to about 60% of the total marks. Candidates are given a Statement of Results which, in addition to their grades, shows a graphical profile of their performance on each paper. These are shown against the scale Exceptional – Good – Borderline – Weak and indicate the candidate’s relative performance in each paper. Certificates are issued to passing candidates after the issue of the Statement of Results and there is no limit on the validity of the certificates.

Further information

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In some areas, this information can also be obtained from the British Council.