

# Cambridge BEC Preliminary

**PRACTICE TESTS FROM THE  
UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE LOCAL  
EXAMINATIONS SYNDICATE**



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# Introduction

## TO THE STUDENT

This book is for candidates preparing for the University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate (UCLES) Business English Certificate Preliminary Level examination. It contains four complete tests which reflect the most recent specifications (introduced in March 2002).

### The BEC Suite

The Business English Certificates (BEC) are certificated examinations which can be taken on up to six fixed dates per 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.

### BEC Preliminary

Within the three levels, BEC Preliminary is at Cambridge Level 2.

Cambridge Level 4 BEC Higher
Cambridge Level 3 BEC Vantage
Cambridge Level 2 BEC Preliminary

The exam is based on the former Business English Certificate 1, which has been revised to keep pace with changes in business practice and language teaching and testing, and renamed.

The BEC Preliminary examination consists of three papers:

Reading and Writing	1 hour 30 minutes
Listening	40 minutes (approximately)
Speaking	12 minutes

### **Test of Reading and Writing (1 hour 30 minutes)**

The **Reading** section of the Reading and Writing paper consists of seven parts with 45 questions, which take the form of two multiple matching tasks, four multiple choice tasks, and a form-filling or note completion task. Part 1 contains five very short texts, Part 2 contains one short text and Part 3 contains graphs, charts or tables. Parts 4, 5 and 6 each contain one longer text. Part 7 contains two short texts. The texts are mainly 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.

For the **Writing** section of the Reading and Writing 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.

Candidates are asked to write 30 to 40 words for Part 1 and 60 to 80 words for Part 2. For Part 1, assessment is based on achievement of task. 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 four parts with 30 questions, which take the form of two multiple choice tasks and two note completion tasks. Part 1 contains eight very short conversations or monologues, Part 2 contains a short conversation or monologue, Part 3 contains a monologue, and Part 4 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 (12 minutes)**

The Speaking Test consists of three parts, which take the form of an interview section, a short talk on a business topic, and a discussion. 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 three BEC Preliminary papers total 120 marks, after weighting. Each skill (Reading, Writing, Listening and Speaking) is weighted to 30 marks. A candidate's overall grade is based on the total score gained in all three papers. It is not necessary to achieve a satisfactory level in all three papers in order to pass the examination. Pass grades are Pass with Merit and Pass, with Pass with Merit being the higher. Narrow Fail and Fail are failing grades. Every candidate is

provided with a Statement of Results which includes a graphical display of their performance in each skill. 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 50,000 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

PART	MAIN SKILL FOCUS	Input: Text type, content	Response	No. of Items /marks
1	Reading – understanding short, real world notices, messages, etc.	Notices, messages, timetables, adverts, leaflets, etc.	Multiple choice	5
2	Reading – detailed comprehension of factual material; skimming and scanning skills	Notice, list, plan, contents page, etc.	Matching	5
3	Reading – interpreting visual information	Graphs, charts, tables. etc. (The information may be presented in 8 separate graphics or combined into a single graphic.)	Matching	5
4	Reading for detailed factual information	Longer text (approx. 150–200 words): advert, business letter, product description, report, minutes, etc.	Right/Wrong/Doesn't say	7
5	Reading for gist and specific information	Longer text (approx. 300–400 words): newspaper or magazine article, advert, report, leaflet, etc.	Multiple choice	6
6	Reading – grammatical accuracy and understanding of text structure	Longer text (approx. 125–150 words): newspaper or magazine article, advert, leaflet, etc.	Multiple choice cloze	12
7	Reading and information transfer	Short memos, letters, notices, adverts, etc.	Form-filling, note completion	5

## **Reading Part One**

In this part there are five short texts, each of which is accompanied by a multiple choice question containing three options. In all cases the information will be brief and clear and the difficulty of the task will not lie in understanding context but in identifying or interpreting meaning.

A wide variety of text types, representative of the world of international business, can appear in this part. Each text will be complete and have a recognisable context.

### **Preparation**

In order to prepare for this part it would be useful to expose students to a wide range of notices and short texts taken from business settings. It is also useful to practise answering sample questions, asking students to explain why the answer is correct (and why the two incorrect options do not apply).

## **Reading Part Two**

This is a matching task comprising one text and five questions, which are often descriptions of people's requirements. Candidates are required to match each question to an appropriate part of the text labelled A–H. (As there are only five questions, some of the labels are redundant.) The testing focus of this part is vocabulary and meaning.

### **Preparation**

For preparation purposes, students need to be familiar with text types that are divided into lists, headings or categories; for example, the contents page of a directory or book, the plan of an office, the departments in a business or shop, the items in a catalogue, etc. Many of the questions in this part require a simple interpretation of what the parts of the text mean and preparation for this could involve setting students real-world tasks of this kind using authentic (but simple) sources.

## **Reading Part Three**

This task consists of eight graphs or charts (or a single chart or graph with 8 distinct elements) and five questions. Each question is a description of a particular visual and candidates are expected to match the questions to their corresponding graphs which are labelled A–H.

### **Preparation**

This part focuses on understanding trends and changes. Candidates need to be able to interpret graphic data and understand the language used to describe it. Expressions such as 'rose steadily', 'remained stable', 'decreased slowly', 'reached a peak' should be introduced to students, along with relevant topics, such as sales of goods, share price movement and monthly costs.

## **Reading Part Four**

This task is a text accompanied by seven, three-option multiple choice items. Each question presents a statement and candidates are expected to indicate

whether the statement is A 'Right' or B 'Wrong' according to the text, or whether the information is not given in the text (C 'Doesn't say'). Candidates will not be expected to understand every word in the text but they should be able to pick out salient points and infer meaning where words in the text are unfamiliar. The questions will refer to factual information in the text but candidates will be required to do some processing in order to answer the questions correctly.

#### Preparation

This can be a difficult task for candidates who are not familiar with the three choices represented by A, B and C, and who might not understand the difference between a statement that is incorrect and one that depends on information that is not provided in the text. Students need to be trained to identify a false statement which means that the opposite or a contradictory statement is made in the text and to recognise that this is not the same as a statement that is not sufficiently covered in the text (for which an alternative answer might be 'Don't know').

### **Reading Part Five**

This part presents a single text accompanied by six multiple choice comprehension items. The text is informative and is often taken from a leaflet, or from a newspaper or magazine article.

Candidates are expected to employ more complex reading strategies in this task, in that they should demonstrate their ability to extract relevant information, to read for gist and detail, to scan the text for specific information, and to understand the purpose of the writer and the audience for which the text is intended.

#### Preparation

In preparing candidates for this part, it would be a good idea to expose them to a variety of texts of a similar length. As texts become longer, slow readers are at a disadvantage and some practice in improving reading speed would be beneficial for this part. It would also be useful to discuss the following areas:

- the title
- the topic
- the writer's purpose
- the theme or main idea of each paragraph
- factual details that can be found in the text
- the writer's opinions (if they are evident)

### **Reading Part Six**

This is a multiple choice cloze test. Candidates have to select the correct word from three options to complete twelve gaps. This part has a predominantly grammatical focus and tests candidates' understanding of the general and detailed meaning of a text and in particular their ability to analyse structural patterns.



## Introduction

### Preparation

Any practice in the grammatical and structural aspects of the language is useful in preparing students for this part. However, it is equally important for students to analyse the structure and coherence of language within longer discourse so that they are encouraged to read for meaning beyond the sentence level. As tasks such as this typically focus on common grammatical difficulties, it is also useful to ask students to analyse the errors in their own work. Pairwork activities might be productive as students can often help each other in the areas of error identification and analysis.

### Reading Part Seven

Candidates are given two short texts, for example a memo and an advertisement, and are asked to complete a form based on this material. There are five gaps, which should be completed with a word, a number or a short phrase. In this part, candidates are tested on their ability to extract relevant information and complete a form accurately.

For this part, candidates need to transfer their answers in capital letters to an Answer Sheet.

### Marks

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

### TEST OF WRITING

PART	Functions/Communicative Task	Input	Response	Register
1	e.g. (re-) arranging appointments, asking for permission, giving instructions	Rubric only (plus layout of output text type)	Internal communication (medium may be note or message or memo or email) (30–40 words)	Neutral/informal
2	e.g. apologising and offering compensation, making or altering reservations, dealing with requests, giving information about a product	One piece of input which may be business correspondence (medium may be letter, fax or email), internal communication (medium may be note, memo or email) notice, advert, etc. (plus layout or output text type, unless a letter)	Business correspondence (medium may be letter or fax or email) (60–80 words)	Neutral/formal

For BEC Preliminary, 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;

- 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 letter, fax or email.

### **Writing Part One**

Candidates are asked to produce a concise piece of internal company communication of between 30 and 40 words, using a written prompt. The text will need to be produced in the form of a note, message, memo or email, and candidates are given guidance on the layout of memos and emails. The reason for writing and target reader are specified in the rubric and bullet points explain what content points have to be included. Relevant ideas for one or more of these points will have to be ‘invented’ by the candidate.

### **Writing Part Two**

Candidates are asked to produce an extended piece of business correspondence of between 60 and 80 words. This task involves the processing of a short text, such as a letter or advertisement, in order to respond to it. A number of bulleted content points below the text clearly indicate what should be included in the answer. Some of this information will need to be ‘invented’ by the candidate.

Although the use of some key words is inevitable, candidates should not ‘lift’ phrases from the question paper to use in their answers. This may be penalised.

### **Preparing for the Writing questions**

In preparing students for the Writing tasks it would be beneficial to familiarise them with a variety of business correspondence. Analysing authentic correspondence would help students understand better how to structure their answer and the type of language to use. When doing this, it would be useful to focus on the following areas:

- the purpose of the correspondence
- references to previous communication
- factual details
- the feelings and attitude of the writer
- the level of formality
- the opening sentence
- the closing sentence
- paragraphing
- the desired outcome.

If students are in a class, it might be possible to ask them to write and reply to each other’s correspondence so that they can appreciate the importance of accurate content.

In a similar fashion, internal company memos and messages might also be written and analysed in terms of the above so that students can recognise the different levels of formality involved. It is a necessary part of preparing for the test that students understand the uses of, and styles inherent in, different types of business communication so that they are aware of how and why different types of correspondence are used.

## Introduction

### Assessment

An impression mark is awarded to each piece of writing using a general mark scheme.

For Part 1, examiners use band descriptors to assess task achievement. Each piece of writing is assigned to a band between 0 and 5.

For Part 2, examiners use band descriptors to assess language and task achievement. Each piece of writing is assigned to a band between 0 and 5 and can be awarded one of two performance levels within that band.

Acceptable performance at BEC Preliminary level is represented by Band 3.

The general impression mark schemes are used in conjunction with task-specific mark schemes which focus on criteria specific to each particular task.

American spelling and usage is acceptable.

The band scores awarded are translated to a mark out of 5 for Part 1 and a mark out of 10 for Part 2. The total score for Writing is then weighted to 30 marks.

### General mark scheme for Writing Part 1

	Mark
<b>Very good attempt</b> at task, achieving all content points. <i>Minimal effort is required by the reader.</i>	5
<b>Good attempt</b> at task, achieving all content points. <i>Some effort may be required by the reader.</i>	4
<b>Satisfactory attempt</b> at task, achieving 2 content points.	3
<b>Inadequate attempt</b> achieving 1 content point and/or with noticeable omissions or irrelevance.	2
<b>Poor attempt</b> at task; no content points achieved, has little relevance; task possibly misunderstood.	1
No relevant response or too little language to assess.	0

**General mark scheme for Writing Part 2**

Band		Mark
5	<p>Full realisation of the task set.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● All four content points achieved.</li> <li>● Confident and ambitious use of language; errors are minor, due to ambition and non-impeding.</li> <li>● Good range of structure and vocabulary.</li> <li>● Effectively organised, with appropriate use of simple linking devices.</li> <li>● Register and format consistently appropriate.</li> </ul> <p>Very positive effect on the reader.</p>	9 or 10
4	<p>Good realisation of the task set.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Three or four content points achieved.</li> <li>● Ambitious use of language; some non-impeding errors.</li> <li>● More than adequate range of structure and vocabulary.</li> <li>● Generally well-organised, with attention paid to cohesion.</li> <li>● Register and format on the whole appropriate.</li> </ul> <p>Positive effect on the reader.</p>	7 or 8
3	<p>Reasonable achievement of the task set.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Three content points achieved.</li> <li>● A number of errors may be present, but are mostly non-impeding.</li> <li>● Adequate range of structure and vocabulary.</li> <li>● Organisation and cohesion is satisfactory, on the whole.</li> <li>● Register and format reasonable, although not entirely successful.</li> </ul> <p>Satisfactory effect on the reader.</p>	5 or 6
2	<p>Inadequate attempt at the task set.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Two or three content points achieved.</li> <li>● Numerous errors, which sometimes impede communication.</li> <li>● Limited range of structure and vocabulary.</li> <li>● Content is not clearly organised or linked, causing some confusion.</li> <li>● Inappropriate register and format.</li> </ul> <p>Negative effect on the reader.</p>	3 or 4
1	<p>Poor attempt at the task set.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● One or two content points achieved.</li> <li>● Serious lack of control; frequent basic errors.</li> <li>● Little evidence of structure and vocabulary required by task.</li> <li>● Lack of organisation, causing a breakdown in communication.</li> <li>● Little attempt at appropriate register and format.</li> </ul> <p>Very negative effect on the reader.</p>	1 or 2
0	<p>Achieves nothing. Either fewer than 25% of the required number of words or totally illegible or totally irrelevant.</p>	0

## TEST OF LISTENING

PART	MAIN SKILL FOCUS	Input	Item type	No. of Items
1	Listening for specific information	Short conversations/ monologues (40–60 words)	3-option multiple choice	8
2	Listening for specific information	Short telephone conversation/ prompted monologue (200 words)	Gap filling (numbers and spellings)	7
3	Listening for specific information	Monologue (320 words)	Note-taking (content words inc. one date)	7
4	Listening for gist/specific information	Conversation/Interview/ Discussion 2 (or 3) speakers (600 words)	3-option multiple choice Stems can be questions or stem completion	8

### Listening Part One

The eight questions in this part of the paper are three-option multiple choice questions. For each question, candidates hear a short conversation or monologue, typically lasting around 15 to 30 seconds. Each monologue or dialogue is repeated on the tape in order to give candidates a chance to check their answer. The multiple choice options may be textual or they may be in the form of pictures, graphs or diagrams.

In the extracts in Part One candidates are being tested on their understanding of spoken English used in a range of situations and on their ability to extract factual information. They may need to pick out a name or time or place.

Alternatively, they may have to identify a trend in a graph or a place on a map or the location of an object in a room. In every case it will be necessary for candidates to follow the conversation closely.

### Listening Part Two

This part consists of a short conversation or monologue, typically lasting around a minute and a half, which contains factual information. On the question paper there is a form, table, chart or set of notes with seven gaps where information is missing. Candidates have to complete each of the gaps. This part has a numerical focus and the answers may include dates, prices, percentages or figures.

### Listening Part Three

Candidates hear a monologue. On the question paper there is a set of notes or a form with gaps. There are seven gaps to complete and the answers may be one or two words.

### Listening Part Four

This part, which lasts about three minutes, contains a longer listening text which generally takes the form of an interview, or a discussion between two or

possibly more speakers. There are eight, three-option multiple choice questions on the question paper and these are always in a written format. In this part of the Listening component candidates are being tested on their ability to understand the gist of a longer text and extract detailed and specific information as required by the questions. They may also be tested on the speakers' opinions.

At the end of the Listening Test, candidates have ten minutes to transfer their answers to their Answer Sheet.

### **Preparing for the Listening Paper**

The Listening component is carefully paced and candidates are tested on short extracts in Part One so that they can gradually 'tune in' to the spoken language and improve their listening skills without losing their place in the test.

Listening can be a very demanding activity and candidates should practise their listening skills regularly using a wide variety of listening sources.

Candidates who enter the Listening test having done this will be at an advantage.

At BEC Preliminary level, it is advisable to collect as much listening material as possible that is suitably paced and of an appropriate length. Native speakers speak at many different speeds and some speak much more clearly than others. If it is possible to collect a bank of authentic material that is carefully chosen, this would prove useful practice for students. Otherwise it might be better to make use of specially designed materials for this level.

For Part One, candidates should try to listen to short extracts of speech concentrating on understanding the general idea or main points of what is said. For Parts Two and Three, practice should be given in note-taking. Prior to hearing tapes or audio materials, students should be given details of the information they need to listen for. Teachers should discuss the task with the students beforehand and encourage them to listen for clues and prompts that will help them identify the points they need to find. When listening to longer texts, it would also be useful to discuss areas such as:

- the purpose of the speech or conversation
- the speakers' roles
- the speakers' opinions
- the language functions being used
- factual details
- conclusions.

### **Marks**

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

## TEST OF SPEAKING

PART	Format and Focus	Time	Candidate Focus
1	Conversation between the interlocutor and each candidate  General interaction and social language	About 2 minutes	The interlocutor encourages the candidates to give information about themselves and to express personal opinions
2	A 'mini presentation' by each candidate on a business theme  Organising a larger unit of discourse  Giving information and expressing opinions	About 5 minutes	The candidates are given prompts which generate a short talk on a business-related topic
3	Two-way conversation between candidates followed by further prompting from the interlocutor.  Expressing opinions, agreeing and disagreeing	About 5 minutes	The candidates are presented with a scenario supported by visual or written prompts which generates a discussion  The interlocutor extends the discussion with further spoken prompts

### Speaking Part One

In the first part of the test, the interlocutor addresses each candidate in turn and asks questions about where they work or study, where they live or what they do in their free time. The questions will be slightly different for each candidate and candidates will not be addressed in strict sequence. This part of the test lasts about two minutes and during this time, candidates are being tested on their ability to talk about themselves; to provide information on subjects such as their home, hobbies and jobs, and to perform simple functions such as agreeing and disagreeing and expressing preferences.

### Speaking Part Two

The second part of the test is a 'mini presentation'. Candidates are asked to speak for about one minute on a business related topic. At Preliminary level candidates are given two topics from which they should choose **one**. Each topic is presented as a main focus with three bullet points. Candidates may choose to expand on some or all of the bullet points but should be aware of the need to speak for at least 45 seconds. Candidates are given one minute to prepare the talk (both candidates or group of three prepare at the same time). After each candidate finishes speaking the next candidate is asked a question related to the talk. This part of the test focuses on the candidate's ability to present basic ideas and organise a longer piece of discourse.

### **Speaking Part Three**

The third part of the test is a two-way conversation (three-way in a three candidate format) between candidates. The interlocutor outlines a scenario and provides prompts by way of black and white pictures or written prompts to help the candidates. The candidates are asked to speak for about two minutes. The interlocutor will support the conversation as appropriate and then ask further questions related to the main theme. This part of the test focuses on the candidate's ability to interact appropriately using a range of linguistic skills.

### **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 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. In the second part candidates are given the opportunity to produce an extended piece of discourse and to demonstrate an ability to maintain a longer piece of speech. In the third part they are required to interact more actively, taking turns appropriately, asking and answering questions and negotiating meaning. To prepare for this part, it is a good idea to encourage students to change partners in class so that they grow accustomed to interacting with a variety of people, some of whom they do not know well.

For all parts of the test students need to practise the exchange of personal and non-personal information and prompt materials will be needed to help them do this. Teachers could prepare a selection of these for each part of the test. Students could discuss the materials as a class group prior to engaging in pairwork activities. Such activities would 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.

### **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 Cambridge Level 2. Assessment is based on performance in the whole 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 Preliminary, a range of grammar and vocabulary is needed to deal with the tasks. At this level candidates may make frequent minor



## *Introduction*

errors and use some inappropriate vocabulary, but this should not obscure 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 tasks. At times, candidates' utterances may be inappropriate in length and some utterances may lack coherence.

### **Pronunciation**

This refers to the candidate's ability to produce comprehensible utterances. At BEC Preliminary, most meanings are conveyed through the appropriate use of stress, rhythm, intonation and clear individual sounds, although there may be some strain on the listener.

### **Interactive Communication**

This refers to the candidate's ability to take an active part in the development of the discourse. At BEC Preliminary, candidates are able to take turns and sustain the interaction by initiating and responding appropriately. Hesitation may demand patience of the listener.

### **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 UCLES and marking is complete. This is approximately five weeks after the examination. There are two main stages: grading and awards.

#### **Grading**

The three papers total 120 marks, after weighting. Each skill represents 25% of the total marks available.

The grade boundaries (Pass with Merit, Pass, Narrow Fail and Fail) 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 Chief 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 three papers. It is not necessary to achieve a satisfactory level in all three 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 two passing grades (Pass with Merit and Pass) and two failing grades (Narrow Fail and Fail). Candidates are given statements of results which, in addition to their grades, show 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 statements of results and there is no limit on the validity of the certificate.

### **Further information**

For more information about BEC or any other UCLES examination write to:

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