

International ESOL

An overview of assessment
A guide for centres and candidates



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1 Overview of Assessment for International ESOL

1.1 Introduction

The purpose of this document is to provide more detailed information to Centres and Candidates about the assessment methods used in the new International ESOL suite of examinations.

These new examinations are based around the Council of Europe: Common European Framework. Details of the CEF descriptors for Writing are given on Pages 7 and 8. These descriptors have been used as a basis for the examination-specific descriptors shown here for each level, and against which all candidate performance in writing will be assessed.

A detailed Syllabus and skill descriptors are provided for each level in the International ESOL qualification handbook.

The International ESOL suite

The City & Guilds International ESOL suite of examinations is closely allied to the levels of the Common European Framework produced by the Council of Europe, details of which are available on www.coe.int/lang

For details of the City & Guilds levels and the CEF levels, please refer to the International ESOL qualification handbook.

1 Overview of Assessment for International ESOL

1.2 Assessment of the IESOL examination paper

International ESOL examinations are stringently assessed against the criteria as detailed in the syllabus. The grades awarded will be either **First Class Pass, Pass** or **Fail**.

- marks are awarded for the Listening and Reading Sections; the breakdown of these is shown for each level, together with the minimum requirements for First Class and Pass
- the free writing questions in the Writing Section are graded using two scales to determine whether candidates are *at*, *above* or *below* the standard required for the particular level as identified by the performance descriptors for Pass.

These scales are:

A **Global communication scale**: this shows how well the candidate achieves each task set at the level expected, how the text affects the target reader and how the candidate gets his/her message across. See Page 4 for details of the CEF Written Assessment Criteria grid which is used as a basis for the assessment.

An **Analytical scale**: this shows the overall levels of performance in each of three categories and is used to check the global communication grade

Accuracy: the command a candidate has of structure, verb form and pattern, parts of speech, spelling and punctuation

Range: the ability to vary the structure, lexis and formality in the text

Organisation: the candidate's use of cohesion, layout and paragraphing

Candidate requirements

The syllabus requirements for each level of International ESOL and for each of the skills are detailed in the International ESOL qualification handbook; please refer to this handbook for details of performance requirements for Listening and Reading. The requirements for candidate performance in Writing are summarised here on Pages 7-8. Language teachers must therefore assess the level of each candidate in accordance with the descriptors shown:

- A candidate who is able to perform at the level shown will be awarded a Pass
- Performance exceeding that expected for the level will be awarded a First Class Pass
- A candidate who is unable to perform at the level shown will be awarded a Fail;
Weakness Codes will be indicated as before to assist a candidate in preparing to retake the examination (see page 15).

City & Guilds Marking Examiners

All Examiners are approved by City & Guilds and undergo rigorous and frequent training and moderation, to ensure that grades are awarded strictly in accordance with CEF levels and City & Guilds examination requirements.

2 Common European Framework

2.1 Written Assessment Criteria Grid

	Overall	Range	Coherence	Accuracy	Description	Argument
C2	Can write clear, highly accurate and smoothly flowing complex texts in an appropriate and effective personal style conveying finer shades of meaning. Can use a logical structure which helps the reader to find significant points	Shows great flexibility in formulating ideas in differing linguistic forms to convey finer shades of meaning precisely, to give emphasis and to eliminate ambiguity. Also has a good command of idiomatic expressions and colloquialisms.	Can create coherent and cohesive texts making full and appropriate use of a variety of organizational patterns and a wide range of connectors and other cohesive devices.	Maintains consistent and highly accurate grammatical control of even the most complex language forms, Errors are rare and concern rarely used forms.	Can write clear, smoothly flowing and fully engrossing stories and descriptions of experience in a style appropriate to the genre adopted.	Can produce clear, smoothly flowing, complex reports, articles and essays which present a case or give critical appreciation of proposals or literary works. Can provide an appropriate and effective logical structure which helps the reader to find significant points.
C1	Can write clear, well-structured and mostly accurate texts of complex subjects. Can underline the relevant salient issues, expand and support points of view at some length with subsidiary points, reasons and relevant examples, and round off with an appropriate conclusion.	Has a good command of a broad range of language allowing him/her to select a formulation to express him/herself clearly in an appropriate style on a wide range of general, academic, professional or leisure topics without having to restrict what he/she wants to say. The flexibility in style and tone is somewhat limited.	Can produce clear, smoothly flowing, well-structured text, showing controlled use of organisational patterns, connectors and cohesive devices.	Consistently maintains a high degree of grammatical accuracy; occasional errors in grammar, collocations and idioms.	Can write clear, detailed, well-structured and developed descriptions and imaginative texts in an assured personal, natural style appropriate to the reader in mind.	Can write clear, well-structured expositions of complex subjects, underlining the relevant salient issues. Can expand and support point of view with subsidiary points, reasons and relevant examples.

	Overall	Range	Coherence	Accuracy	Description	Argument
B2	Can write clear, detailed official and semi-official texts on a variety of subjects related to his field of interest synthesising and evaluating information and arguments from a number of sources. Can make a distinction between formal and informal language with occasional less appropriate expressions.	Has a sufficient range of language to be able to give clear descriptions, express viewpoints on most general topics, using some complex sentence forms to do so. Language lacks, however, expressiveness and idiomaticity and use of more complex forms is still stereotypic.	Can use a limited number of cohesive devices to link his/her sentences into clear, coherent text, though there may be some 'jumpiness' in a longer text.	Shows a relatively high degree of grammatical control. Does not make errors which cause misunderstandings.	Can write clear, detailed descriptions of real or imaginary events and experiences marking the relationship between ideas in dear connected text, and following established conventions of the genre concerned. Can write clear, detailed descriptions on a variety of subjects related to his/her field of interest Can write a review of a film, book or play.	Can write an essay or report that develops an argument systematically with appropriate highlighting of significant points and relevant supporting detail. Can evaluate different ideas or solutions to a problem giving reasons in support of or against a particular point of view and explaining the advantages and disadvantages of various options. Can synthesise information and arguments from a number of sources.
B1	Can write straightforward connected texts on a range of familiar subjects within his field of interest, by linking a series of shorter discrete elements into a linear sequence. The texts are understandable but occasional unclear expressions and/or inconsistencies may cause a break-up in reading.	Has enough language to get by, with sufficient vocabulary to express him/herself with some circumlocutions on topics such as family, hobbies and interests, work, travel, and current events.	Can link a series of shorter discrete elements into a connected, linear text.	Uses reasonably accurately a repertoire of frequently used routines and patterns associated with more common situations. Occasionally makes errors that the reader usually can interpret correctly on the basis of the context.	Can write accounts of experiences, describing feelings and reactions in simple connected text. Can write a description of an event, a recent trip – real or imagined. Can narrate a story. Can write straightforward, detailed descriptions on a range of familiar subjects within his field of interest.	Can write short, simple essays on topics of interest. Can summarise, report and give his/her opinion about accumulated factual information on a familiar routine and non-routine matters, within his field with some confidence. Can write very brief reports to a standard conventionalised format, which pass on routine factual information and state reasons for actions.

	Overall	Range	Coherence	Accuracy	Description	Argument
A2	Can write a series of simple phrases and sentences linked with simple connectors like 'and', 'but' and 'because'. Longer texts may contain expressions and show coherence problems which make the text hard to understand.	Uses basic sentence patterns with memorised phrases/groups of a few words and formulae in order to communicate limited information in simple everyday situations.	Can link groups of words with simple connectors like 'and', 'but' and 'because'.	Uses simple structures correctly, but still systematically makes basic mistakes. Errors may sometimes cause misunderstandings.	Can write short simple imaginary biographies and simple poems about people. Can write very short, basic descriptions of events, past activities and personal experiences.	
A1	Can write simple isolated phrases and sentences. Longer texts contain expressions and show coherence problems which make the text very hard or impossible to understand.	Has a very basic repertoire of words and simple phrases related to personal details and particular concrete situations.	Can link words or groups of words with very basic linear connectors like 'and' and 'then'.	Shows only limited control of a few simple grammatical structures and sentence patterns in a memorised repertoire. Errors may cause misunderstandings.	Can write simple phrases and sentences about themselves and imaginary people, where they live and what they do.	

Reproduced from CEF Preliminary Pilot Version Manual, available at www.coe.int/lang

3 Assessment Criteria by Level

3.1 Preliminary (A1)

Listening and Reading

Level	Marks for Listening					Marks for Reading					
A1	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Total	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Total	
	7	7	5	6	25	4	5	5	6	20	
Minimum for First Class Pass					18	Minimum for First Class Pass					14
Minimum for Pass					14	Minimum for Pass					11

Writing

Preliminary level (A1): to achieve a Pass grade the candidate will be able to:

- write to communicate simple information to a sympathetic reader
- fill in a form with personal details
- copy a text accurately and legibly, correcting basic punctuation and capitalisation errors
- compose simple sentences to communicate ideas or basic information about a topic connected to personal information or knowledge
- write a short letter, card, postcard and message using simple phrases and sentences to communicate ideas and basic information about themselves, where they live and what they do
- write very simple descriptions, accounts and routines, single-step instructions and directions in familiar contexts
- express likes, dislikes and preferences in relation to familiar topics

and must also meet the following criteria:

Accuracy

- use punctuation and capital letters correctly to show beginnings and ends of sentences, proper nouns, personal pronoun 'I'
- spell correctly personal key words and familiar words
- check what is written for basic errors
- construct simple phrases and sentences using only basic grammatical structures

Range

- use a basic range of vocabulary to deal with simple and familiar topics and tasks

Organisation

- write simple sentences on familiar topics
- write a short sequence of simple sentences to form a basic message

3 Assessment Criteria by Level

3.2 Access (A2)

Listening and Reading

Level	Marks for Listening					Marks for Reading					
A2	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Total	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Total	
	7	7	5	6	25	5	5	5	5	20	
Minimum for First Class Pass					18	Minimum for First Class Pass					14
Minimum for Pass					14	Minimum for Pass					11

Writing

Access level (A2): to achieve a Pass grade the candidate will be able to:

- compose simple texts using the appropriate format with some awareness of the intended audience
- fill in a form with personal details recording information using conventions such as deleting, ticking and with some awareness of the intended audience
- copy a text correcting basic grammar, punctuation and spelling errors
- follow instructions to write a formal letter, message or note
- write informally about family, living conditions, schooling and job, plans and arrangements, like and dislikes and past activities
- write short descriptions or tell a simple story using simple and compound sentences
- write a short sequence of simple explanations, instructions or directions
- express simple opinions clearly

and must also meet the following criteria:

Accuracy

- spell correctly the majority of words used for personal detail and familiar common words
- write with reasonable accuracy short words appropriate to the level
- check what is written for errors
- use punctuation and capital letters correctly to show questions, commas in lists and proper nouns
- construct simple and compound sentences using basic structures

Range

- use a limited range of vocabulary to deal with simple and familiar topics and tasks

Organisation

- use conventions to indicate formality or informality
- link a short linear sequence of ideas using discourse markers and conjunctions
- demonstrate some awareness of conventions of an informal and formal letter

3 Assessment Criteria by Level

3.3 Achiever (B1)

Listening and Reading

Level	Marks for Listening					Marks for Reading					
B1	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Total	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Total	
	6	6	6	6	24	6	5	9	10	30	
Minimum for First Class Pass					17	Minimum for First Class Pass					21
Minimum for Pass					13	Minimum for Pass					16

Writing

Achiever level (B1): to achieve a PASS grade the candidate will be able to:

- write straightforward connected texts on a range of familiar topics
- write short simple formal letters to ask for and convey simple information
- write short simple texts for practical purposes: instructions, reports, articles
- write short informal letters on topics of personal interest and knowledge
- write brief narratives and descriptions on straightforward topics
- express opinions simply, giving supporting reasons
- proof read written work identifying and correcting errors

and must also meet the following criteria:

Accuracy

- use correct punctuation in formal and informal texts including dashes, brackets, bullet points and speech marks
- spell correctly the majority of common words and key words relating to work, study and leisure interests
- use basic grammatical structures correctly, including conjunctions, connectives and discourse markers. Errors do not impede a sympathetic reader's understanding

Range

- use vocabulary adequately to meet straightforward needs
- communicate information and ideas with some adaptation to the intended reader

Organisation

- link a short linear sequence of ideas using discourse markers and conjunctions
- demonstrate some awareness of conventions of an informal and formal letter

3 Assessment Criteria by Level

3.4 Communicator (B2)

Listening and Reading

Level	Marks for Listening					Marks for Reading				
B2	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Total	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Total
	8	6	8	8	30	6	6	9	9	30
Minimum for First Class Pass					21	Minimum for First Class Pass				21
Minimum for Pass					16	Minimum for Pass				16

Writing

Communicator level (B2): to achieve a PASS grade the candidate will be able to:

- write coherently on topics of general interest linking ideas appropriately and effectively
- write clear connected text describing real or imaginary people or events
- present an argument giving points for and against, supporting and evaluating different views
- write formal letters, reports or articles to fulfil a range of functions for practical purposes
- write letters descriptions of personally significant events, people or experiences

and must also meet the following criteria:

Accuracy

- use correct punctuation in formal and informal writing to enhance meaning
- correctly spell words used in work, study and daily life
- control grammar to communicate effectively although errors may occur when complex structures are attempted

Range

- use words and expressions appropriate to topic and purpose of the writing
- adjust register in familiar contexts to suit purpose and readership

Organisation

- use a range of linking words effectively to show clearly the relationship between ideas
- paragraph appropriately
- reproduce conventional features of common types of text

3 Assessment Criteria by Level

3.5 Expert (C1)

Listening and Reading

Level	Marks for Listening					Marks for Reading					
C1	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Total	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Total	
	8	6	8	8	30	6	5	9	10	30	
Minimum for First Class Pass					21	Minimum for First Class Pass					21
Minimum for Pass					16	Minimum for Pass					16

Writing

Expert level (C1): to achieve a PASS grade the candidate will be able to:

- write well-structured, detailed texts on complex subjects clearly communicating ideas, impressions, feelings and opinions
- write complex narratives and descriptions varying style appropriately
- write a well-structured detailed argument emphasising important points, expanding and supporting relevant ideas
- write formal letters, reports or articles to fulfil a wide range of functions including those requiring a tactful approach

and must also meet the following criteria:

Accuracy

- use all punctuation marks accurately and effectively
- spell correctly words used in work, study and daily life including commonly used technical words
- consistently control grammar to communicate effectively with few errors even when complex structures are employed

Range

- use a wide range of vocabulary suitable for purpose
- generally use idiomatic expressions appropriately and naturally
- use a wide range of complex structures
- adapt register effectively and appropriately according to purpose in most contexts

Organisation

- link and organise ideas using a range of linking words and cohesive devices
- organise text effectively to reflect the structure of the ideas expressed

3 Assessment Criteria by Level

3.6 Mastery (C2)

Listening and Reading

Level	Marks for Listening					Marks for Reading					
C2	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Total	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Total	
	8	6	8	8	30	6	5	9	10	30	
Minimum for First Class Pass					21	Minimum for First Class Pass					21
Minimum for Pass					16	Minimum for Pass					16

Writing

Mastery level (C2): to achieve a PASS grade the candidate will be able to:

- write well structured texts on complex or abstract subjects
- write clear, smoothly flowing, complex formal letters, reports or articles in styles fully appropriate to purpose and target readership describe or narrate in an assured natural manner maintaining consistently the style
- appropriate to purpose develop cogent and smoothly flowing arguments

and must also meet the following criteria:

Accuracy

- use all punctuation marks accurately and effectively
- spell correctly words used in more specialised contexts such as business, academic and international affairs
- maintain consistent control of complex grammatical structures

Range

- use a very wide range of vocabulary demonstrating ability to distinguish between finer shades of meaning
- use idioms appropriately and naturally
- use a full range of structures to achieve different styles and purposes
- consistently use appropriate register in a wide range of contexts including those requiring sensitive and tactful responses

Organisation

- use a wide range of linguistic devices to create coherent and cohesive writing
- structure texts logically using linguistic markers to enable the reader to understand significant points

4 Overall Grading for IESOL

Overall grades are awarded for each section: Listening, Reading and Writing
Candidates will be awarded an overall grade for the examination in accordance with the following criteria:

First Class Pass:

Candidates must achieve a First Class Pass in **each** section (Listening, Reading and Writing)

Pass:

Candidates must achieve:

- a Pass in each section OR
- two First Class and one Pass OR
- one First Class and two Pass OR
- a First Class, a Pass and a Narrow Fail

Fail:

To help candidates who are not successful in the examination to prepare for a further attempt, Weakness Codes will be indicated as follows:

Weakness Codes

A Narrow Fail

B Insufficient work submitted

C Listening

D Reading

E Writing: communication

F Writing: accuracy

G Writing: range

H Writing: organisation

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