

LanguageCert ESOL International Qualifications: Independent CEFR referencing

UK NARIC's independent review of the LanguageCert ESOL International Qualifications has found that the tests align with the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) at the following scores:

CEFR level	LanguageCert Qualification	Reading	Writing	Listening	Speaking
A1	LanguageCert Entry Level 1 Certificate in ESOL International (Listening, Reading, Writing) (Preliminary A1)	33	33	33	
	LanguageCert Entry Level Certificate in ESOL International (Entry 1) (Speaking) (Preliminary A1)				33
	LanguageCert Entry Level Certificate in ESOL International (Entry 1) (Speaking & Listening) (Preliminary A1)			18	
A2	LanguageCert Entry Level 2 Certificate in ESOL International (Listening, Reading, Writing) (Access A2)	33	33	33	
	LanguageCert Entry Level Certificate in ESOL International (Entry 2) (Speaking) (Access A2)				33
	LanguageCert Entry Level Certificate in ESOL International (Entry 2) Speaking & Listening) (Access A2)			18	
B1	LanguageCert Entry Level 3 Certificate in ESOL International (Listening, Reading, Writing) (Achiever B1)	33	33	33	
	LanguageCert Entry Level Certificate in ESOL International (Entry 3) (Speaking) (Achiever B1)				33
	LanguageCert Entry Level Certificate in ESOL International (Entry 3) (Speaking & Listening) (Achiever B1)			18	
B2	LanguageCert Level 1 Certificate in ESOL International (Listening, Reading, Writing) (Communicator B2)	33	33	33	
	LanguageCert Level 1 Certificate in ESOL International (Speaking) (Communicator B2)				33
C1	LanguageCert Level 2 Certificate in ESOL International (Listening, Reading, Writing) (Expert C1)	33	33	33	
	LanguageCert Level 2 Certificate in ESOL International (Speaking) (Expert C1)				33
C2	LanguageCert Level 3 Certificate in ESOL International (Listening, Reading, Writing) (Mastery C2)	33	33	25	
	LanguageCert Level 3 Certificate in ESOL International (Speaking) (Mastery C2)				33

In November 2018, UK NARIC completed an independent evaluation and CEFR referencing exercise of fifteen LanguageCert ESOL tests – presented in the figure above. The English language

tests, offered by PeopleCert Qualifications Ltd, have been developed in order that applicants can demonstrate skills for further study, settlement and / or employment.

Qualification Overview and Test Format

The qualifications target different skills. Each qualification has been designed to test at a particular CEFR level covering reading, writing, and listening. Candidates can also take an additional paper in speaking available at each CEFR level in order to demonstrate competency across all four skills. For CEFR A1, A2, and B1 there is also the option of taking a standalone speaking and listening qualification.

Reading and Writing

In the three skills tests, reading and writing are combined, and the test is divided into four parts. Candidates are expected to handle a range of text types. At the lower CEFR levels candidates are tested on their reading skills using shorter texts such as postcards or emails relating to everyday tasks and real-life communication, such as the arrangement of a social event (A1, A2, B1) with longer texts such as factual based articles introduced at B1 with increasing complexity of content and abstractedness of topics seen at higher levels (B2, C1, C2).

Topics increase in complexity at the higher levels, including abstract ideas (B2, C1, C2). Input texts cover a range of grammatical structures, vocabulary, and functions appropriate to the levels. Multiple choice, gapfill, and short answer questions are used to test understanding. Candidates need to demonstrate the ability to understand general meaning, as well as specific details. Inferencing, synthesis, and understanding of structures such as contrasting arguments, cause-effect and problem/solution, paraphrasing and use of some literary devices are required at the higher levels with language increasing in abstractedness and technicality in extended texts (B2, C1, C2).

The writing is typically divided into two parts. Some tasks test integrated skills such as requiring a candidate to read an input text and respond to it. Expected output texts reflect different genres and therefore elicit different subskills. Some creative texts are introduced at higher levels (B2, C1, C2), such as descriptive composition.

At A1, output texts are typically around 20-30 words, increasing to c.70-120 (B1), c.100-150 (B2), c.150-200 (C1), to 200+ (C2). Candidates are expected to demonstrate skills appropriate to the levels, such as use of a range of grammar, vocabulary, functions, and appropriate structuring. Higher levels require students to more specifically select informal or formal language, demonstrate the use of colloquial or idiomatic language, to develop and justify arguments, complain, exemplify and respond to counterarguments.

Listening

The listening test is approx. 20 mins (A1, A2) increasing to 30 mins for those taking the B1, B2, C1 and C2 certificates. It is divided into four parts, assessed using multiple choice questions, note-taking, and short answer responses. A range of text types are used, increasing in complexity to reflect proficiency levels, such as including a greater level of technicality in terms of topics and language used. At lower levels, candidates may need to identify overall meaning, related to personal or everyday topics, or specific details (A1, A2, B1). More abstract topics and extended texts are a feature of the higher levels (B2, C1, C2), which may require candidates to identify lines of argument, attitudes, recognise hedging, consistently identify implicit meaning, or follow circumventions (B2, C1, C2). Input texts cover a range of grammatical structures, vocabulary and functions appropriate to the levels.

At the lower levels, the audio texts are slower than natural speed though with some natural features of speech such as hesitations (A1, A2, B1). Standard accents are used, with the variety of accents increasing with the higher levels (B2, C1, C2). Complex, idiomatic, academic, technical, and colloquial language is seen most consistently at higher CEFR levels (B2, C1), with a specific increased focus on connotation at C2.

Speaking

The speaking test is divided into four parts and conducted with an interlocutor - as a result, candidates also need to demonstrate interactive skills. At lower levels this takes 6 minutes, increasing to 12 minutes (B1), 13 (B2), and 15+ (C1, C2). Tasks range from some short questions about the candidate, role plays, a discussion and a short monologue on an unseen topic with follow up questions. At lower levels, the focus is on personal or everyday life topics and requires students to take turns, describe, and ask / answer factual or concrete questions.

Tasks allow candidates to demonstrate their ability to initiate conversation, take turns, develop points, and use a range of grammar, vocabulary and functions across different topics, appropriate to the CEFR levels tested. At higher levels, more abstract questions are used (B2, C1, C2). Within these tasks, candidates need to be able to hypothesise, express abstract ideas, speculate, emphasise, negotiate, and express shades of opinion with flexibility with an understanding of sociolinguistic context in increasingly extended turns.

Speaking & Listening qualifications

Available at A1, A2 and B1, these standalone tests include integrated skills and last approx. 9 minutes (A1), 12 minutes

(A2) and 15 minutes (B1). They are divided into four parts. The test covers question and answer interaction, role plays, and a discussion-based task leading to a monologue/presentation style task. Topics relate to personal, public or educational domains. Interlocutors support interaction, including through use of follow-up questions. A range of grammatical structures, vocabulary, and functions are used and expected, appropriate to each CEFR level.

Grading and Certification

Reading and listening questions are typically machine marked with some human marked to a mark scheme. Writing tasks are marked across task fulfilment; accuracy and range of grammar; accuracy and range of vocabulary; organisation. Speaking is marked against criteria including task fulfilment and coherence; accuracy and range of grammar; accuracy and range of vocabulary; pronunciation, intonation and fluency.

Speaking and Listening standalone qualifications are marked across listening and responding; interactive communication and task fulfilment; accuracy and range of grammar; accuracy and range of vocabulary; pronunciation, intonation, and fluency.

Candidates receive a statement of results (SoR) including exam level, overall achievement (high pass, pass, fail) and numerical results per skill. A results and certification verification service is available.

CEFR global scale¹

Proficient User	C2	Can understand with ease virtually everything heard or read. Can summarise information from different spoken and written sources, reconstructing arguments and accounts in a coherent presentation. Can express him/herself spontaneously, very fluently and precisely, differentiating finer shades of meaning even in more complex situations.
	C1	Can understand a wide range of demanding, longer texts, and recognise implicit meaning. Can express him/herself fluently and spontaneously without much obvious searching for expressions. Can use language flexibly and effectively for social, academic and professional purposes. Can produce clear, well-structured, detailed text on complex subjects, showing controlled use of organisational patterns, connectors and cohesive devices.
Independent User	B2	Can understand the main ideas of complex text on both concrete and abstract topics, including technical discussions in his/her field of specialisation. Can interact with a degree of fluency and spontaneity that makes regular interaction with native speakers quite possible without strain for either party. Can produce clear, detailed text on a wide range of subjects and explain a viewpoint on a topical issue giving the advantages and disadvantages of various options.
	B1	Can understand the main points of clear standard input on familiar matters regularly encountered in work, school, leisure, etc. Can deal with most situations likely to arise whilst travelling in an area where the language is spoken. Can produce simple connected text on topics which are familiar or of personal interest. Can describe experiences and events, dreams, hopes & ambitions and briefly give reasons and explanations for opinions and plans.
Basic User	A2	Can understand sentences and frequently used expressions related to areas of most immediate relevance (e.g. very basic personal and family information, shopping, local geography, employment). Can communicate in simple and routine tasks requiring a simple and direct exchange of information on familiar and routine matters. Can describe in simple terms aspects of his/her background, immediate environment and matters in areas of immediate need.
	A1	Can understand and use familiar everyday expressions and very basic phrases aimed at the satisfaction of needs of a concrete type. Can introduce him/herself and others and can ask and answer questions about personal details such as where he/she lives, people he/she knows and things he/she has. Can interact in a simple way provided the other person talks slowly and clearly and is prepared to help.

¹ The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages Global Scale. Available at: <https://www.coe.int/en/web/common-european-framework-reference-languages/table-1-cefr-3.3-common-reference-levels-global-scale>.