

International Spoken ESOL

An overview of assessment
A guide for centres and candidates



www.cityandguilds.com
January 2007
Version 1.0

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1 Overview of Assessment for International Spoken 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 Spoken ESOL suite of examinations.

These new examinations are based around the Council of Europe: Common European Framework.

Details of the CEF descriptors for Speaking are given on Pages 7, 8 and 9. 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 speaking will be assessed.

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

The International Spoken ESOL suite

The City & Guilds International Spoken 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 Spoken ESOL qualification handbook.

1 Overview of Assessment for International Spoken ESOL

1.2 Assessment of the Spoken ESOL examination paper

International Spoken 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**.

Two scales are used to mark the International Spoken ESOL tests at all levels. These scales are:

1. A **Global communication scale**: this assessment is based on the descriptors showing the language that is required for a candidate to pass **at the level** entered. They describe **what** candidates should be able to do at each level. See pages 6, 7 and 8 for details of the CEF Global Communicator Oral Assessment scale and Oral Assessment Criteria Grid which are used as a basis for the assessment.

2. An **ARPF scale** which covers:

- **accuracy** – the command a candidate has of structure, verb form and pattern, parts of speech
- **range** – the ability to vary the structure, lexis and formality of speech
- **pronunciation** – the ability to reproduce the sounds of English in order to be understood
- **fluency** – the ability to connect utterances.

Candidate requirements

The syllabus requirements for each level of International Spoken ESOL are detailed in the International Spoken ESOL qualification handbook. The requirements for candidate performance in Speaking at each level are summarised in section 3. 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 16)

Grading

Each part of the test is given equal importance. Each part is given a global communication grade, while overall performance is assessed and confirmed using the ARPF scale grades.

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 Global Oral Assessment Scale

C2	Conveys finer shades of meaning precisely and naturally Can express him/herself spontaneously and very fluently, interacting with ease and skill, and differentiating finer shades of meaning precisely. Can produce clear, smoothly-flowing, well-structured descriptions.
C1	Shows fluent, spontaneous expression in clear, well-structured speech Can express him/herself fluently and spontaneously, almost effortlessly, with a smooth flow of language. Can give clear, detailed descriptions of complex subjects. High degree of accuracy; errors are rare.
B2	Expresses points of view without noticeable strain Can interact on a wide range of topics and produce stretches of language with a fairly even tempo. Can give clear, detailed descriptions on a wide range of subjects related to his/her field of interest. Does not make errors which cause misunderstanding.
B1	Relates comprehensibly the main points he/she wants to make Can keep going comprehensibly, even though pausing for grammatical and lexical planning and repair may be very evident. Can link discrete, simple elements into a connected, sequence to give straightforward descriptions on a variety of familiar subjects within his/her field of interest. Reasonably accurate use of main repertoire associated with more predictable situations.
A2	Relates basic information on, eg work, family, free time etc Can communicate in a simple and direct exchange of information on familiar matters. Can make him/herself understood in very short utterances, even though pauses, false starts and reformulation are very evident. Can describe in simple terms family, living conditions, educational background, present or most recent job. Uses some simple structures correctly, but may systematically make basic mistakes.
A1	Makes simple statements on personal details and very familiar topics Can make him/herself understood in a simple way, asking and answering questions about personal details, provided the other person talks slowly and clearly and is prepared to help. Can manage very short, isolated, mainly pre-packaged utterances. Much pausing to search for expressions, to articulate less familiar words.

2 Common European Framework

2.2 Oral Assessment Criteria Grid

	Range	Accuracy	Fluency	Interaction	Coherence
C2	Shows great flexibility reformulating ideas in differing linguistic forms to convey finer shades of meaning precisely, to give emphasis differentiate and to eliminate ambiguity. Also has a good command of idiomatic expression and colloquialisms.	Maintains consistent grammatical control of complex language, even when attention is otherwise engaged (eg in forward planning, in monitoring others' reactions).	Can express him/herself spontaneously at length with a natural colloquial flow, avoiding or backtracking around any difficulty so smoothly that the interlocutor is hardly aware of it.	Can interact with ease and skill, picking up non-verbal and intonational cues apparently effortlessly. Can interweave his/her contribution into the joint discourse with fully natural turn-taking, referencing, allusion making etc	Can create coherent and cohesive discourse making full and appropriate use of a variety of organizational patterns and a wide range of connectors and other cohesive devices.
C1	Has a good command of a broad range of language allowing him/herself 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.	Consistently maintains a high degree of grammatical accuracy; errors are rare, difficult to spot and generally corrected when they do occur.	Can express him/herself fluently and spontaneously, almost effortlessly. Only a conceptually difficult subject can hinder a natural, smooth flow of language.	Can select a suitable phrase from a readily available range of discourse functions to preface his/her remarks in order to get or to keep the floor and relate to his/her own contributions skillfully to those of other speaker.	Can produce clear, smoothly flowing, well-structured speech, showing controlled use of organisational patterns, connectors and cohesive devices.
B2	Has a sufficient range of language to be able to give clear descriptions, express viewpoints on most general topics, without much conspicuous searching for words, using some complex sentence forms to do so.	Shows a relatively high degree of grammatical control. Does not make errors which cause misunderstanding, and can correct most of his/her mistakes.	Can produce stretches of language with a fairly even tempo; although he/she can be hesitant as he/she searches for patterns and expressions, there are few noticeable long pauses.	Can initiate discourse, take his/her turn when appropriate and end conversation when he/she needs to, though he/she may not always do this elegantly. Can help the discussion along on familiar ground confirming comprehension, inviting others, etc	Can use a limited number of cohesive devices to link his/her utterances into clear, coherent discourse, though there may be some 'jumpiness' in a long contribution.

	Range	Accuracy	Fluency	Interaction	Coherence
B1	Has enough language to get by, with sufficient vocabulary to express him/herself with some hesitation and circumlocutions on topics such as family, hobbies and interests, work, travel, and current affairs.	Uses reasonably accurately a repertoire of frequently used 'routines' and patterns associated with more predictable situations.	Can keep going comprehensibly, even though pausing for grammatical and lexical planning and repair is very evident, especially in longer stretches of free production.	Can initiate, maintain and close simple face-to-face conversation on topics that are familiar or of personal interest. Can repeat back part of what someone has said to confirm mutual understanding.	Can link a series of shorter, discrete simple elements into a connected, linear sequence of points.
A2	Uses basic sentence patterns with memorized phrases, groups of a few words and formulae in order to communicate limited information in simple every situations.	Uses some simple structures correctly, but still systematically makes basic mistakes.	Can make him/herself understood in very short utterances, even though pauses, false starts and reformulation are very evident.	Can ask and answer questions and respond to simple statements. Can indicate when he/she is following but is rarely able to understand enough to keep conversation going of his/her accord.	Can link groups of words with simple connectors like 'and', 'but' and 'because'.
A1	Has a very basic repertoire of words and simple phrases related to personal details and particular concrete situations.	Shows only limited control of a few simple grammatical structures and sentence patterns in a memorised repertoire.	Can manage very short, isolated, mainly pre-packaged utterances, with much pausing to search for expressions, to articulate less familiar words, and to repair communication.	Can ask and answer questions about personal details. Can interact in a simple way but communication is totally dependant on repetition, rephrasing and repair.	Can link words or groups of words with very basic linear connectors like 'and' or 'then'.

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

3 Assessment Criteria by Level

3.1 Preliminary (A1)

Speaking

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

- interact in a simple way provided the other person is prepared to repeat or rephrase things at a slower rate of speech
- initiate and respond to simple statements about personal details, in areas of immediate need or on very familiar topics
- communicate in a very limited range of social situations using a basic range of functional language.
- exchange information to perform a task
- describe and explain familiar topics and simple routines
- give single-step instructions and directions in familiar contexts
- ask and answer simple questions
- produce simple phrases to express likes, dislikes and preferences in relation to familiar topics
- contribute points to a discussion, provided the other speakers are cooperative

and must also meet the following criteria:

Accuracy

- display a limited control of very basic grammatical structures

Range

- produce simple phrases and sentences to give basic information about descriptions of familiar people and places, feelings and opinions
- cope appropriately, with support from the other person, in a limited range of familiar social situations

Pronunciation

- pronounce with sufficient clarity a limited repertoire of words and phrases so they can be understood by a sympathetic listener

Fluency

- manage the conventions of turn-taking in very simple interactions
- use a very limited range of connectors to link utterances

3 Assessment Criteria by Level

3.2 Access (A2)

Speaking

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

- speak with reasonable ease in structured situations and short conversations on familiar topics, although from time to time will be asked to repeat or clarify
- communicate personal information to give simple descriptions of family, other people, living or working conditions, habits and daily routines, education background and/or job
- communicate in a limited number of social situations using a range of functional language
- exchange information to perform a task
- give simple directions, instructions and explanations
- ask and answer questions
- give a short description or tell a simple story using simple and compound sentences
- express simple feelings and opinions and establish a shared understanding

and must also meet the following criteria:

Accuracy

- display some control of basic grammatical structures

Range

- display an adequate range of vocabulary to communicate on familiar topics and perform simple tasks
- adjust language to suit context in straightforward situations

Pronunciation

- pronounce the sounds of English sufficiently clearly to be generally understood

Fluency

- manage the conventions of turn-taking in short social exchanges, using simple techniques to start, maintain and end a conversation
- use a limited number of common discourse markers

3 Assessment Criteria by Level

3.3 Achiever (B1)

Speaking

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

- interact competently if not always accurately in everyday situations
- communicate personal information, opinions and ideas and respond to those of others
- communicate in a variety of social situations using an appropriate range of functional language
- exchange information, feelings and opinions to perform a task
- narrate, describe, explain and express opinions in extended speech related to familiar contexts
- contribute points to a simple discussion

and must also meet the following criteria:

Accuracy

- display good control of basic grammatical structures without impeding errors when dealing with familiar topics

Range

- display an adequate range of vocabulary and expressions to deal with familiar situations and topics
- narrate using past tenses
- adopt a degree of formality appropriate to familiar circumstances
- use appropriate phrases in familiar situations such as greeting and leave-taking

Pronunciation

- pronounce the sounds of English sufficiently well to be generally understood and show a fair control of stress and intonation patterns

Fluency

- initiate and follow the norms of turn-taking, prompt and manage the discourse with a degree of independence
- connect descriptions, narratives and descriptions in simple ways
- speak without undue hesitation unless searching for information, vocabulary or when reformulating

3 Assessment Criteria by Level

3.4 Communicator (B2)

Speaking

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

- speak with a degree of fluency and spontaneity making sustained interaction possible without undue strain
- communicate personal information, opinions, feelings and ideas
- communicate in a variety of social situations using a range of functional language
- exchange information to perform a task
- narrate, describe, explain and express opinions in extended speech
- give straightforward descriptions, narratives, directions, instructions on topics encountered in personal, social academic or vocational life
- contribute points to an argument on a familiar topic integrating sub-themes and coming to a conclusion

and must also meet the following criteria:

Accuracy

- display a relatively high degree of grammatical control without impeding errors

Range

- use sufficient range of language to give detailed descriptions and arguments and be able to highlight personal events and emotions
- produce complex sentences although there is still some searching for vocabulary and expressions
- adopt a degree of formality appropriate to the circumstances
- cope linguistically with more stressful kinds of interaction such as complaints or disputes

Pronunciation

- pronounce clearly the sounds of English in connected speech
- produce stretches of language with few noticeable long pauses but with some hesitation when searching for patterns and expressions

Fluency

- manage the conventions of turn-taking using appropriate phrases for making and dealing with interruptions and requesting information
- link utterances using some cohesive devices although there may be some 'jerkiness' in extended speech

3 Assessment Criteria by Level

3.5 Expert (C1)

Speaking

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

- interact fluently and spontaneously on all subjects except the most abstract with some degree of searching for expressions or use of avoidance strategies
- communicate personal information, opinions, feelings and ideas on all topics except the most complex
- communicate in almost all social situations, including those requiring tact and diplomacy, using a wide range of language functions
- engage in discussion to express and elicit opinion, persuade someone to a point of view, try to reach agreement or perform a specific task
- explain, describe narrate, account for and report on complex subjects integrating sub-themes
- speak clearly on complex themes, developing particular points and rounding off appropriately

and must also meet the following criteria:

Accuracy

- maintain a consistently high degree of grammatical accuracy with few errors, generally correcting those that do occur

Range

- use complex sentences, idiomatic expressions and colloquialisms and qualify opinions and statements without much conspicuous searching for words
- cope linguistically in sensitive or stressful situations even in unfamiliar contexts

Pronunciation

- pronounce clearly the sounds of English in connected speech and use stress and intonation to convey finer shades of meaning precisely

Fluency

- display controlled use of discourse organisation, connectors and cohesive devices and be able to backtrack or reformulate when encountering difficulty
- confidently manage the conventions of turn-taking using appropriate phrases for making and dealing with interruptions and requesting clarification

3 Assessment Criteria by Level

3.6 Mastery (C2)

Speaking

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

- display a comprehensive and reliable mastery of the language with no sign of having to restrict what is said
- communicate personal information, feelings, ideas and opinions on a very wide range of topics including contemporary issues
- communicate in all situations using a very wide range of language functions
- engage in discussion to express and elicit opinion, defend and justify opinions when challenged, persuade someone to a point of view, try to reach an agreement or perform a specific task
- provide sophisticated explanations, descriptions, narratives, account for or report on a complex subject, convey subtleties of meaning, integrate sub-themes and come to an appropriate conclusion

and must also meet the following criteria:

Accuracy

- maintain consistent grammatical control of complex language

Range

- display a good command of idiomatic expressions and colloquialisms with awareness of connotative levels of meaning, conveying subtleties by using a wide range of modification devices
- adjust register appropriately across a range of situations unhampered by linguistic limitations

Pronunciation

- articulate correctly and use stress and intonation patterns naturally to highlight, emphasise and modify meaning

Fluency

- Produce clearly flowing, well-structured speech with an effective logical management of the discourse, highlighting significant points
- Produce coherent and cohesive discourse using a variety of organisational patterns, a wide range of connectors and other cohesive devices and backtracking and reformulating seamlessly
- Interact skilfully and confidently with fully natural turn-taking, referencing and allusion making

4 Overall Grading for Spoken ESOL

Candidates will be awarded a result in accordance with the following criteria:

First Class Pass:

Candidates must achieve:

- 4 First Class Pass grades OR
- 3 First Class Pass + Pass

Pass:

Candidates must achieve:

- 4 Pass grades OR
- 3 First Class Pass + 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** Global Communication part 1
- C** Global Communication part 2
- D** Global Communication part 3
- E** Global Communication part 4
- F** Accuracy
- G** Range
- H** Pronunciation
- I** Fluency

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