

Pearson English International Certificate

Test Specification



Author: Lottie Harrison

Reviewer: Mallory Klungvedt

1. Overview

The Pearson English International Certificate is a course-agnostic, online, on-demand assessment of English language proficiency for individuals and groups of students. It can be used as a one-off test to assess and certify Reading, Writing, Listening and Speaking skills, and to measure learning progress. The test measures a student's English language competency and reports a Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) band from A1 to C2, underpinned by Pearson's Global Scale of English (GSE). The test is an equivalent certification of the paper-based version of Pearson English International Certificate, although the format of the two tests differs. Follow [this link](#) for detailed information on the standard setting conducted between the test two modes. Both modes of the assessment are regulated by Ofqual.

The PEIC computer-based score report provides the overall test result, four skills scores, performance summaries, and recommendations for future study linked to specific Pearson courseware. Scores are currently reported on the CEFR scale, however, the scoring structure and recommendations are underpinned by the [Pearson Global Scale of English](#) (GSE). The assessment is booked and accessed digitally through the Pearson English Test Hub platform, which also stores and displays the results of the test for an integrated assessment experience.

All levels are recognised globally and are accepted by universities, employers and national education authorities in many countries as evidence of a required standard of English. In England, the tests are regulated by Ofqual under the title Pearson Edexcel Certificate in ESOL International. Please see table below for additional reference:

| Test Level | Edexcel title per Ofqual Registry |
|---|--|
| Pearson English International Certificate (PTE General) A1 | Pearson Edexcel Entry Level Certificate in ESOL International (Entry 1) (CEF A1) (English International Certificate) |
| Pearson English International Certificate (PTE General) Level1 (A2) | Pearson Edexcel Entry Level Certificate in ESOL International (Entry 2) (CEF A2) (English International Certificate) |
| Pearson English International Certificate (PTE General) Level 2 (B1) | Pearson Edexcel Entry Level Certificate in ESOL International (Entry 3) (CEF B1) (English International Certificate) |
| Pearson English International Certificate (PTE General) Level 3 (B2) | Pearson Edexcel Level 1 Certificate in ESOL International (CEF B2) (English International Certificate) |

| | |
|---|--|
| Pearson English International Certificate (PTE General) Level 4 (C1) | Pearson Edexcel Level 2 Certificate in ESOL International (CEF C1) (English International Certificate) |
| Pearson English International Certificate PTE General Level 5 (C2) | Pearson Edexcel Level 3 Certificate in ESOL International (CEF C2) (English International Certificate) |

Who is it for?

The test is designed for secondary and adult learners who are aged 14 or older. Pearson English International Certificate can be used alongside any adult or upper secondary course and is intended to be used with comprehensive integrated skills courses. No prior qualifications are required to take the assessment.

The purpose of the test

The Pearson English International Certificate certifies a student’s level of English at one of the six CEFR levels: A1, A2, B1, B2, C1 or C2. The test can be taken individually or within a learning context. The score report provides detailed information direct to learners on overall achievement and for all four skills. It can be used as proof of their English language level as well as to inform their ongoing learning.

2. Test Design

The starting point for any test is understanding the purpose of the test, the needs of stakeholders (e.g., the learners, teachers, parents, schools, etc.) and the benefits the test will provide to these stakeholders. Once these have been identified, they then feed into the test specifications which detail features such as the test construct, structure and length, item types, skills covered, marking approach, delivery mode, reporting, accessibility, etc. These specifications are reviewed by internal and external language assessment experts to ensure they match the original test construct and address the stakeholder needs identified. The specifications for the Pearson English International Certificate (Computer-based) were derived from:

- Level and domain descriptions in the CEFR
- Pearson GSE Learning Objectives
- Communicative teaching practice

Item writer guidelines were then written covering the requirements of each item type, based on the specifications and sample materials. These guidelines help the item writers to produce comparable, high-quality tasks to ensure that test questions continue to reflect the

test specifications and continue to meet the needs of the stakeholders in a fair and valid way.

Pearson English International Certificate is designed specifically to certify language proficiency. The test construct is based on actionable learner outcomes as embodied in can-do statements in the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages and the Global Scale of English Learning Objectives. It is built on the body of applied linguistic research of the last 50 years which prioritizes the ability to use language in context rather than just knowledge *of* the language. In order to use language effectively, it is assumed that learners require certain knowledge of the systems of language such as grammar, vocabulary and phonemic systems.

The test suite contains 6 tests: A1, A2, B1, B2, C1, C2, and uses fixed, linear forms. The total time of the test is approximately one hour and fifteen minutes at levels A1 and A2, and one hour and forty-five minutes for levels B1 and up. Items and sections are individually timed, so the exact amount of time taken to complete a test at any level will vary between test takers.

At every level, the test has two parts:

Part 1 assesses Speaking and Listening. There are 7 item types in this section, with variations depending on the level.

Part 2 assesses Reading and Writing. There are 4 item types in this section, with variations depending on the level.

There is an optional ten-minute break between Part 1 and Part 2. Test takers can opt out of the break, take it in its entirety or take only a portion of the time.

3. Readiness Test

The complementary [Readiness Test](#) is designed to assess a candidate's readiness to take the Pearson English International Certificate. The test provides practice of the different questions as well as indicating the likelihood of them passing the test at a certain level, using a traffic light reporting system. There are 4 test levels available – one each at CEFR levels A2, B1, B2 and C1.

4. Content Development

The questions in PEIC have been developed by an experienced, international team of writers. Teams were based in the UK, the USA and Hong Kong. All questions are tagged with

a Global Scale of English (GSE) level and learning objective which provides more granular detail to the CEFR levels for design purposes.

Once written, all questions are reviewed by the teams in the different countries. Comments and suggestions for improvement are stored with the test questions on a secure database. The questions then go through a further review by an expert panel and decisions are made on the quality of the questions, which to keep and which to reject if there are issues of validity, or they do not meet Pearson's Global Editorial Policy. All questions are then reviewed by Pearson staff to ensure that they conform to the test and item specifications. Images and high-quality audio recordings are added to complete the questions before they go forward to be published and calibrated for scoring purposes.

Item Banking

Item bank maintenance is carried out ensuring that items are regularly reviewed and updated. Items already within the item bank are reviewed in terms of usage, exposure, scoring and relevance to today's society. New items are regularly commissioned ensuring that there is an ever-evolving item bank that leads to high quality and rigorous assessments being produced.

5. Test Questions and Test Structure

The majority of the questions on the test are integrated skills questions. These questions test more than one skill at the same time. Using integrated skills questions means that PEIC is a better test of a learner's English than traditional skill-specific tests. In real life and in the classroom, learners use more than one skill to complete communicative tasks. To order something in a restaurant, we need to listen *and* speak. To take notes in a classroom, we need to listen *and* write. Integrated skills questions test how well learners can use the skills they have learnt and practiced in the classroom as well as in real life.

The test has several different item types. This gives learners a chance to demonstrate their English skills in different ways. There are questions where learners choose the correct option or where they write the answer. There are questions where the learner repeats what has been said as well as questions where learners describe something in writing, or write a short essay. The table below describes each item type, what learners are expected to do, and what the item type measures.

| Section | Item type | What do the learners have to do? | What is being tested? |
|---------|----------------------------|--|---|
| | Read and then speak | This question asks the learner to read aloud a sentence or short text. | This question tests accurate pronunciation and how fluent the learner is at speaking. It tests if the words in the text are understood and spoken accurately. |

| | | | |
|---|--|---|---|
| Part 1: Speaking and Listening | Describe image | This question asks the learner to look at a photograph or picture and describe what they see. | This question tests the learner's ability to speak in an extended way linking concepts and ideas. It tests the accuracy of speech including grammar, all aspects of pronunciation, as well as the fluency of the speech. It tests the use of appropriate words to describe the photograph or picture. |
| | Listen and then speak | This question asks the learner to listen to a sentence and then repeat it. | This question tests listening comprehension at the word and sentence level. It tests pronunciation and fluency. It tests if the words heard are understood and can be repeated accurately. |
| | Listen to the conversation | This question asks the learner to listen to a short conversation and then answer a question about the conversation. | This question tests listening comprehension. It tests the accuracy of the listening comprehension of short dialogues. |
| | Listen to the passage and then select the correct image, or speak | This question asks learners to listen to a short passage and answer three questions about what they heard. At levels A1 and A2, the answer to each question is presented as a choice of three images, whereas B and C levels must record their answer to the questions orally. | This question tests listening comprehension. It tests the learner's ability to listen for both overall and specific meaning in a longer listening text. |
| | Listen and read (Hotspots) | This question asks the learner to read a text and at the same time listen to the text. The learner must identify the differences between the written text and the spoken text. | This question tests reading and listening comprehension. It tests the ability to recognise individual words in a text, and their receptive pronunciation. |
| | Listen and then write (dictation) | This question asks the learner to listen to a sentence and write what they have heard. | This question tests listening comprehension at the word and sentence level. It tests the ability to write accurately and understand sentence structure, word order and connectors. |

| Optional break | <i>10 minutes (maximum)</i> | | |
|--|--|--|---|
| Part 2: Reading and Writing | Read the text and choose the correct answer | At A1 and A2, this question asks the learner to read a text and choose the correct picture. | This question tests the reading comprehension of the learner. It tests specific information included in a short text. |
| | Read the text and write the answer | At level B1 and above, this question asks the learner to read a longer text and provide short answers to questions on the text. | This question tests the reading comprehension of the learner. It tests specific information included in the text. |
| | Choose the right word or phrase (gap-fill) | This question asks learners to read a short text and select the best word or phrase to complete the text. | This question tests the global understanding of short texts as well as knowledge of vocabulary. |
| | Read and write | This question asks the learners to read a short story or short piece of factual text. The text then disappears, and the learner has to reconstruct the text. | This question tests reading comprehension. It also tests the ability to write accurately and understand sentence structure, word order and connectors. The task does not require them to reproduce the original text word for word but to express the same content using their linguistic resources. |
| | Write an essay | This question asks the learner to write a short essay in response to a prompt. For lower levels, candidates need to write a short description of an image. | This question tests global writing skills. It tests paragraph and sentence structure, the range and accuracy of the language used, and the ability to structure an argument or discussion in a written context. It tests grammar and vocabulary as an essential part of writing. |

More information on the item types and example answers can be found here for [A1 and A2](#), and [B1-C2](#).

6. Alignment to the Common European Framework levels

The computer-based Pearson English International Certificate, like the equivalent paper-based version of the assessment, is aligned to the Common European Framework (CEFR) which forms the basis of the results and score reports. The table below shows what students can do at each of the CEFR levels as they progress on their learning journey.

| Test Level | CEFR Level (Pearson GSE range) | Capabilities of learners as summarised in the CEFR (Council of Europe, 2001, Table 1, p. 24) |
|------------------------------|---|--|
| Foundation Level (A1) | A1 (22–29) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can understand and use familiar everyday expressions and very basic phrases aimed at the satisfaction of needs of a concrete type. • Can introduce themselves and others and can ask and answer questions about personal details such as where they live, people they know and things they have. • Can interact in a simple way provided the other person talks slowly and clearly and is prepared to help. |
| Level 1 (A2) | A2 (30-35) A2+ 36-42) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 their background, immediate environment and matters in areas of immediate need. |
| Level 2 (B1) | B1 (36–42) B1+ (43-58) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 and ambitions and briefly give reasons and explanations for opinions and plans. |
| Level 3 (B2) | B2 (59-66) B2+ (67-75) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can understand the main ideas of complex text on both concrete and abstract topics, including technical discussions in their field of specialisation. • Can interact with a degree of fluency and spontaneity that makes regular interaction with |

| | | |
|---------------------|-------------------------|---|
| | | <p>native speakers quite possible without strain for either party.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can produce clear, detailed text on a wide range of subjects and explain a viewpoint on a topical issue giving the advantages and independent disadvantages of various options. |
| Level 4 (C1) | C1 (76–84) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can understand a wide range of demanding, longer texts, and recognise implicit meaning. • Can express themselves 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. |
| Level 5 (C2) | C2 (85 to 90) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 themselves spontaneously, very fluently and precisely, differentiating finer shades of meaning even in more complex situations. |

7. Test administration

Pearson English International Certificate is delivered in authorized Pearson Vue Test Centres and can also be taken from home through the online proctoring system OnVue. Institutions and test takers can manage the entire testing journey from the dedicated testing platform Test Hub. On Test Hub, tests can be booked by individuals or assigned to them by their teachers. Test Hub is also where test takers receive their results. Tests can only be taken on computers, not tablets or mobile devices. Institutions and test takers testing from home are strongly advised to become familiar with [OnVue's System Requirements](#) and must use a full, over-the-ear headset with mic boom to take the test for the best possible audio and recording quality.

8. Test marking and scoring

At launch, the open-ended speaking and writing questions, such as essay writing or describe an image, will be scored by expert human markers. Test taker responses and human rater markings will simultaneously be collected and analyzed in order to create a fully automated

scoring system. The scoring system, once established with sufficient data, will then work by replicating the standards set by the human raters.

Other item types, which are either correct, partially correct or incorrect, are automatically scored.

9. Results reporting

Score report

A key feature of the Pearson English International Certificate is the [interactive score report](#). Detailed performance summaries, recommendations, and recommended exercises form part of the test reporting, together with overall and four skill scores. Together these provide more detailed feedback for individual test takers and advise them on their future learning. For test takers aged 18 and over, their score reports will also include a photograph.

PEIC is mapped to Pearson assessment frameworks, including the [GSE Learning Objectives](#), as well as the [CEFR](#). From this, the score reports given to test takers provide test-specific performance summaries for each skill at different CEFR levels, as well as an overall score out of 100, with an equivalent CEFR level. This scoring fully aligns with the paper-based version of the assessment.

The recommendations, which state what students need to do to improve and progress to the next CEFR band, are course-agnostic, but a range of Pearson courseware titles are available to provide links to specific activities, making the reports interactive and fully integrating the assessment to the learning process.

Teachers who have administered the test to a group of learners will also be able to access [group reports](#) with:

- an overall CEFR band for each student as well as group reporting of overall scores with percentages for a group, and by level,
- percentages of the total number of students that achieved Pass, Merit or Distinction as well as what percentage might have obtained a Fail or Level Below result
- a profile of sub-skill scores for each student which show the strengths and weaknesses of individuals,
- individual student reports.

Certificate

Around two weeks after scores reports become available on Test Hub, secure test certificates are issued to candidates who achieved a Pass or higher and sent via courier to the institution or the learner (if purchased directly).



Pearson
Edexcel Level 1 Certificate in
ESOL International (CEF B2)
(English International Certificate)

PEARSON TEST OF ENGLISH GENERAL (CEF B2)

This is to certify that

Jane Catherine Doe

has achieved a

PASS (WITH MERIT)

In December 2020

80029-0005201 1001526220899

500/1926/0 issued 08/01/2021


ofqual
REGULATED
register.ofqual.gov.uk


Derek Richardson
Responsible Officer
Pearson Education Ltd



Digital Credly Badge

In addition to their score report and secure certificate, candidates who achieve a Pass or higher will also receive a digital Credly badge. This secure digital credential provides verification of the candidates' achievements to external parties and can also be used to showcase their achievement on their social media platforms. More information about Credly can be found [here](#).



10. Results reviews and appeals

Score Enquiries and Post Results Services

If candidates are unhappy with the results of their International Certificate test and would like to request a review or rescore, these can be requested by submitting a request via our [online form](#).

Retake policy

- You can book your next test as soon as the Score Report from your last test is available. Please do not create a new account in order to bypass the wait as this can cause further delays.
- You can only book one test at a time.
- You can have a maximum of 3 tests scored in a 12 month period for the same level.

Post Results Services

Score review: If you are unhappy with the score you received and you want to understand what went wrong with your performance, you can pay to request a review of your speaking

section to obtain some feedback on your performance. This review will not change your scores. A fee will be charged for the score review. Fill out the [online form](#) to request a score review

The customer support team will provide you with a phone number where payment can be made.

Score review appeals: You may pay for an Appeal of the score review if you believe that processes and procedures weren't followed correctly to provide the score review outcome. This process entails **Appeals stage 1**, completed by a person internal to Pearson that was not involved in the decision making of the score review, and **Appeals stage 2**, completed by an entirely external expert. Fill out the [online form](#) to request a score review appeal.

The customer support team will provide you with a phone number where payment can be made.

Malpractice review and appeals: If you received a revoked score notification or a one-year ban from testing due to malpractice linked to your test completion/test day, you may wish to appeal against such a decision. Similar to the score review appeal, you can make a case to the customer support team to have the decision reviewed, by filling out the [online form](#).

After an internal review, if the decision to revoke the score and impose a ban on testing is upheld, you may appeal the decision. The candidate is asked to fill out the [online form](#).

You will request an **Appeals stage 1**, which will be a review of the incident and its procedures. It will be completed by a person internal to Pearson that was not involved in the decision-making of the malpractice incident. **Appeals stage 2** can be requested if you are unhappy with the result of Appeals stage 1. This judgement is completed by an entirely external expert. If the appeals process results in overturning the decision, then money for the appeals will be refunded to you.

Fees associated with score reviews and appeals as of March 2022. *Fees are subject to change*

- International Certificate Score review: \$50
- International Certificate Appeals Stage 1: \$120
- International Certificate Appeals Stage 2: \$150

Further Information

About the test: [Visit our website](#)

About accessing a scheduled test: english-testhub.pearson.com

About OnVue and testing from home: home.pearsonvue.com/peic/onvue

About Accommodations: Send an email to 3rdlinesupport@pearson.com

Password support: [Click here](#)

Other escalations: Submit this [online form](#)

