UNIVERSITY *of* **CAMBRIDGE**
ESOL Examinations

English for Speakers of Other Languages

First Certificate in English (FCE) Reading

General information

Background to the Examination

First Certificate in English is a general English qualification which is part of the Cambridge ESOL Main-suite examinations. Set at level B2 of the CEF, FCE recognises the ability to deal confidently with a range of written and spoken communications. FCE is designed for learners, whose command of English is adequate for many practical everyday purposes, including business and study.

Candidature

FCE is taken by more than 270,000 candidates per year in over 100 countries. Around 75% of FCE candidates are aged 25 or under with the average being about 23. In some countries, where FCE is more commonly taken by school-age candidates, the average is lower. Around 80% of candidates attend preparation classes.

Structure of the Test

FCE tests the skills of Reading, Writing, Listening and Speaking and also has a Use of English Paper. FCE is administered in five separate papers. Paper 1 Reading, Paper 2 Writing, Paper 3 Use of English, Paper 4 Listening and Paper 5 Speaking. Each of these five papers is equally weighted at 20%. There are five possible grades in FCE: Three pass grades (A, B and C) and two fail grades (D and E). Results are based on candidates' aggregate scores across the four skills.

FCE Reading and Writing Paper

The paper has a fixed format, with four parts. Each part contains a text of between 350 and 700 words and aims to test a particular type of reading sub-skills still through a given task type. The texts in the reading paper are drawn from a range of sources including informational texts, journalism, fiction and non-fiction. The range of text and task types is intended to encourage a familiarity with different types of reading material as well as the use of different approaches to reading appropriate to the text type and reader purpose. Candidates are expected to be able to show understanding of gist, detail and text structure, and deduce meaning by having strategies for dealing with unfamiliar words and structures. Other tasks on the paper include: reading for main points (matching paragraphs to headings/summary sentences); reading for detail, gist and deducing meaning (multiple-choice questions) and skimming and scanning for specific information (multiple-matching task).

Part Three

This task focuses on reading for detailed understanding and main ideas and tests understanding of how texts are structured as well as the ability to follow text development. Although the testing focus remains the same, one of two matching tasks may be used in this part: either gapped sentences or gapped paragraphs as in this example. The texts come from authentic sources, but may be adapted to make them accessible to candidates at the level. The texts may include vocabulary which is unfamiliar to candidates, but this should not interfere with their ability to complete the task.

Reading (CEFR B2)

Test to be analysed	First Certificate in English (FCE)
Target language	English
Task	Reading component (Part 3) Q's 16 - 21
Rubrics	Target language
Items	Target language
Time to do total test	1 hour 15 minutes
Target levels	CEFR B2
	ALTE 3
Age-group sector	Teenagers and adults
Domain	Public domain
Communicative activities	
Overall reading comprehension	Can read texts of various kinds for both information and general interest.
Reading for information and argument	Can distinguish main from subsidiary points and the gist of a text from specific detail.
Reading for text structure	Can use text structure to interpret meaning and read more efficiently.

Mark Distribution

Each of the items carries two marks, representing approximately 20% of the marks available across the four reading tasks.

Effective Level

All FCE Reading tasks are pre-tested using volunteer candidates. Typically, pre-test candidates are students preparing to take the exam in the near future. A range of age and nationality groups is represented in the pre-test population which roughly corresponds to that of the live candidature.

Pre-tested materials are then subject to statistical analysis at task and item level using both classical item analysis to establish that items are discriminating, and Rasch analysis to determine the level of difficulty. Each task, therefore, consists of items of measured difficulty, which are selected from within a specified range to determine the mean difficulty of the task.

Tests are constructed from the tasks in the item bank. Each task, therefore, consists of items of measured (Rasch) difficulty, which are selected from within a specified range to determine the mean difficulty of the task.

Calibration

Tests are constructed from the calibrated tasks in the item bank. The one-parameter Rasch model is used for calibrating the items. For most routine analysis, Cambridge ESOL uses the BIGSTEPS analysis program supplemented by in-house programmes for formatting data and handling the output. The logit scale produced by BIGSTEPS is re-scaled to produce a conventional ESOL scale, which is used for test construction purposes. This is known as the common scale for item-based tests. The complete scale for Cambridge ESOL examinations, from KET (A2) to CPE (C2) covers a range from about 20 to 110. The expected range of values for FCE on this scale is approximately 57-72, with a target mean of 62.

Performance of This Task

This gapped-paragraph task, focusing on text structure, proved to be the most challenging task on the paper. Questions 20 and 21 were the best answered, whilst number 18 posed particular problems for the weaker candidates. These candidates had difficulty answering the question which required them to match 'plenty of meetings' and –'external committees' and 'internal committee meetings' following the gap with -300 scientists and academics working here' in option F. Weaker candidates chose option C because of the word 'meet' This however clearly refers to meetings between Anna and her boss.

Reading Items

Instructions to candidate

You are going to read a newspaper article about a woman who works as a personal assistant, or PA, to the director of a museum. Seven paragraphs have been removed from the article. Choose from the paragraphs **A-H** the one which fits each gap (**16-21**). There is one extra paragraph which you do not need to use. There is an example at the beginning (**0**).

Mark your answers on the separate answer sheet.

Working in a Museum

Anna Cuss is a PA in one of the most important museums in London. She talks to Wendy Smith about her job.

Since she took up her post a year ago as PA to the director of the Natural History Museum, Dr Neil Chalmers, Anna Cuss has become a source of knowledge on all manner of museum issues – from botany and zoology to fund-raising, re-roofing and heating systems.

0	H

And visit they do in their thousands. The Natural History Museum gets up to 1.8 million visitors each year, making it the fourth most popular paying visitor attraction in the UK.

16	

This runs for another year and is advertised as the first of its type to explore eighteenth- and nineteenth-century British sea voyages of exploration.

17	

Her boss is also responsible for the running of the building. The site in London covers a huge area and is home to the largest collection of natural history books, magazines, manuscripts, maps and drawings in the world.

18	

This means there are plenty of meetings to organise. 'Neil sits on various external committees and we have all the internal committee meetings that have to be attended – the focus could be anything from fund-raising for future years to buildings management.'

19	

Anna feels at home in this environment. 'I always wanted to work in a top job in a museum and finally I've managed it,' she says.

20	

'But that would have involved doing a postgraduate course. That would have meant another three years at university, and to be honest, I'd had enough of studying by then.'

21	

That was followed by four years working for the director of the Royal Society of Arts. 'I wasn't really looking to move, but when I saw the Natural History Museum job advertised I felt I had to apply for it.'

A 'This was the first one I had seen being put up and it was a really busy time,' says Anna. 'I had to plan notes for Neil's speech for the opening reception and deal with the press office.'

B She originally studied archaeology as a way of entering the museum world. 'My dream had always been to become a museum curator,' she says.

C As a result, both of them try to meet each day to plan ahead. 'We always keep Fridays free so he can sit down and do some research,' she says.

D Anna has become so keen that after work she reads books on natural history and attends the museum's lectures. She has also taken up bird-watching at the weekend.

E Whether she is helping with school parties or dealing with distinguished visitors from overseas, Anna admits she is kept very busy. She and her boss have just launched the museum's latest exhibition.

F 'What many people don't know is that, apart from the exhibits, we also have 300 scientists and academics working here who are carrying out lots of important research,' says Anna.

G She completed a secretarial course and then worked her way through a range of administrative positions. Later she moved to London to the Museums and Galleries Commission as PA to the assistant director.

H 'People always ask me what I do all day, other than dust down the exhibits,' she jokes. 'But there is a whole lot more going on behind the scenes which makes the museum interesting to the people who visit.'

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Content analysis

Reading component

The tasks, instructions, rubrics and items are all in English, the target language.
The time allocated to the complete test paper (Paper 1) is 75 minutes.
No time allocation is specified for individual tasks/components within the test or sub-tests.

Text Characteristics

(Analysis of example tasks and items has been carried out in conjunction with the Dutch CEF Grid, the CEFR, the ALTE can-do statements and the DIALANG performance descriptors.)

Test to be analysed	FCE (Paper 1)
Task	Part 3 – questions 16 – 21
Skill	Reading
Rubric in L1/Target language	Target language
Target language	English
Item in L1/Target language	Target language
Time to do total task	Not specified
1. Text source	Magazine
2. Authenticity	Genuine/adapted
3. Discourse type	Mainly descriptive
4. Discourse subtype	Impressionistic description
5. Domain	Personal
6. Topic	Daily life
7. Nature of content	Mostly concrete
8. Text length	500 words
9. Vocabulary	Mostly frequently occurring
10. Grammar	Limited range of complex structures
Comprehensible by learner at CEF level	B2

Item Characteristics

Item 0 – example item

'People always ask me what I do all day, other than dust down the exhibits,' she jokes. 'But there is a whole lot more going on behind the scenes which makes the museum interesting to the people who visit.'

Item type	Selected response (jumbled text)
Operations involved in answering	Recognise and retrieve information relating to specific details in the text.
	Understanding information explicit in the text.
	Understanding lexical and grammatical coherence. Understanding text structure.
Item level estimated	B2

Item 16

Whether she is helping with school parties or dealing with distinguished visitors from overseas, Anna admits she is kept very busy. She and her boss have just launched the museum's latest exhibition.

Item type	Selected response (jumbled text)
Operations involved in answering	Recognise and retrieve information relating to specific details in the text.
	Understanding information explicit in the text.
	Understanding lexical and grammatical coherence. Understanding text structure.
Item level estimated	B2

Item 17

'This was the first one I had seen being put up and it was a really busy time,' says Anna. 'I had to plan notes for Neil's speech for the opening reception and deal with the press office.'

Item type	Selected response (jumbled text)
Operations involved in answering	Recognise and retrieve information relating to specific details in the text.
	Understanding information explicit in the text.
	Understanding lexical and grammatical coherence. Understanding text structure.
Item level estimated	B2

Item 18

'What many people don't know is that, apart from the exhibits, we also have 300 scientists and academics working here who are carrying out lots of important research,' says Anna.

Item type	Selected response (jumbled text)
Operations involved in answering	Recognise and retrieve information relating to specific details in the text.
	Understanding information explicit in the text.
	Understanding lexical and grammatical coherence. Understanding text structure.
Item level estimated	B2

Item 19

As a result, both of them try to meet each day to plan ahead. 'We always keep Fridays free so he can sit down and do some research,' she says.

Item type	Selected response (jumbled text)
Operations involved in answering	Recognise and retrieve information relating to specific details in the text.
	Understanding information explicit in the text.
	Understanding lexical and grammatical coherence. Understanding text structure.
Item level estimated	B2

Item 20

She originally studied archaeology as a way of entering the museum world. 'My dream had always been to become a museum curator,' she says.

Item type	Selected response (jumbled text)
Operations involved in answering	Recognise and retrieve information relating to specific details in the text.
	Understanding information explicit in the text.
	Understanding lexical and grammatical coherence. Understanding text structure.
Item level estimated	B2

Item 21

She completed a secretarial course and then worked her way through a range of administrative positions. Later she moved to London to the Museums and Galleries Commission as PA to the assistant director.

Item type	Selected response (jumbled text)
Operations involved in answering	Recognise and retrieve information relating to specific details in the text.
	Understanding information explicit in the text.
	Understanding lexical and grammatical coherence. Understanding text structure.
Item level estimated	B2

Answer Key

0 = H
16 = E
17 = A
18 = F
19 = C
20 = B
21 = G

Statistical Report

Statistical Report (whole task)

mean facility (p)	**0.56**
mean discrimination (Pb)	**0.47**

Statistical Report (individual items)

	item 0	item 16	item 17	item 18	item 19	item 20	item 21
Facility (p)	e.g.	0.49	0.43	0.37	0.42	0.82	0.82
Discrimination (i.d.)	e.g.	0.52	0.50	0.50	0.41	0.45	0.42
Sample size	>11,000						

First Certificate in English (FCE) Listening

General information

Background to the Examination

First Certificate in English is a general English qualification which is one of the Cambridge ESOL Main-suite Examinations. Set at level B2 of the CEF, FCE recognises the ability to deal confidently with a range of written and spoken communications. FCE is designed for learners whose command of English is adequate for many practical everyday purposes, including business and study.

Candidature

FCE is taken by 270,000 candidates per year in 100 countries. Around 75% of FCE candidates are aged 25 or under with the average age being about 23. In some countries, where FCE is more commonly taken by school-age candidates, the average age is lower. Around 80% of candidates attend preparation classes.

Structure of the Test

FCE tests the skills of Reading, Writing, Listening and Speaking and also has a Use of English Paper. FCE is administered in five separate papers. Paper 1 Reading, Paper 2 Writing, Paper Use of English, Paper 4 Listening and Paper 5 Speaking. Each of these five papers is equally weighted at 20%. There are five possible grades in FCE: Three pass grades (A, B and C) and two fail grades (D and E). Results are based on the candidate's aggregate scores across the four skills.

FCE Listening Paper 4

The paper has a standard structure of four parts. Each part contains a recorded text and corresponding comprehension tasks. Texts are monologues or dialogues. Recordings contain a variety of accents corresponding to standard variants of English native speakers and to non-native speaker accents that approximate to the norms of native speaker accents.

Part Three

This task focuses on listening for detailed understanding of main ideas and on retrieving specific details from spoken text. Five short monologues of 30-60 seconds in length provide the input. Students match ideas expressed by each speaker with a written description of the idea(s) presented. The written explanation of the ideas in the text is expressed in vocabulary

and structures which differ from those used by the speaker in the original. This ensures that the task can only be accomplished by genuine comprehension and not by matching words and phrases from the text.

Listening (CEFR B2)

Test to be analysed	FCE (First Certificate in English)
Target language	English
Task	Listening component (Paper 4, part 3)
Rubrics	Target language
Items	Target language
Time to do total test	approx. 40m
Target levels	CEFR B2 vantage
	ALTE 3
Age-group sector	Teenagers and adults
Domain	Public domain
Communicative activities:	
Overall listening comprehension	Can understand the main ideas of complex speech on both concrete and abstract topics. Can understand a limited range of regional accents provided that they do not deviate too much from standard pronunciation.
Listening for information	Can identify and understand specific details and information even when embedded in complex spoken text which the candidate may not fully understand.

Mark Distribution

Each of the items carries one mark. The task (part 3) represents one sixth of the marks available across the four listening tasks.

Effective Level

All FCE Listening tasks are pre-tested using volunteer candidates. Typically, pre-test candidates are students preparing to take the exam in the near future. A range of age and nationality groups is represented in the pre-test population which roughly corresponds to that of the live candidature.

Pre-tested materials are then subject to statistical analysis at task and item level using both classical item analysis to establish that items are discriminating, and Rasch analysis to

determine the level of difficulty. Each task, therefore, contains items within a given range of measured difficulty, and itself has an average level of difficulty. Each task, therefore, consists of items of measured (Rasch) difficulty, which are selected from within a specified range to determine the mean difficulty of the task.

Calibration

Tests are constructed from the calibrated tasks in the item bank. The one-parameter Rasch model is used for calibrating the items. For most routine analysis, Cambridge ESOL uses the BIGSTEPS analysis program supplemented by in-house programmes for formatting data and handling the output. The logit scale produced by BIGSTEPS is re-scaled to produce a conventional ESOL scale, which is used for test construction purposes. This is known as the common scale for item-based tests. The complete scale for Cambridge ESOL examinations, from KET (A2) to CPE (C2) covers a range from about 20 to 110. The expected range of values for FCE on this scale is approximately 52-72, with a target mean of 62.

Performance of this Task

This was a multiple matching task based on five short texts, in which five different people talk about their favourite teacher. The topic and the texts were credible, and results suggest that candidates were able to relate to them without much difficulty. It is worth noting that the six summary sentences, which candidates had to match to the five listening texts, fell into two categories. Half were quite broad, general descriptions of a teacher's practice – '… wouldn't let me miss any classes', '..trained me in useful skills', while the others described one-off, specific examples of the teacher's conduct – '…allowed me to break a school rule', '… prevented me from making a mistake'. The preparation time allowed for candidates to read through the questions could allow them to pick up on this kind of contrast, which has implications for what they try to identify as they listen.

Listening Items

Instructions (recorded)

You will hear five different people talking about their favourite teacher. For questions 19 – 23, choose from the list (A-F) what each speaker says. Use the letters only once. There is one extra letter which you do not need to use.

Items 19-23

A	My favourite teacher trained me in skills which are useful in my present job.
B	My favourite teacher prevented me from making a mistake.
C	My favourite teacher encouraged me to create something original.
D	My favourite teacher believed lessons should be amusing.
E	My favourite teacher allowed me to break a school rule.
F	My favourite teacher wouldn't let me miss any classes.

Speaker 1	**19**
Speaker 2	**20**
Speaker 3	**21**
Speaker 4	**22**
Speaker 5	**23**

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Content analysis

Listening component

The time allocated to the complete the test paper (paper 2) is 35 minutes. (Paper two consists of FOUR tasks.)

Text Characteristics

(Analysis of example tasks and items has been carried out in conjunction with the Dutch CEF Grid, the CEFR, the ALTE can-do statements and the DIALANG performance descriptors.)

Test to be analysed	FCE (Paper 4) Listening
Task	Part 3
Rubric in L1/Target language	Target language
Item in L1/Target language	Target language
Time to do total task	Not specified (approx. 5m)
1. Text source	Interview
2. Authenticity	Genuine – adapted to level
3. Discourse type	Interview (radio)
4. Discourse subtype	Mainly descriptive
5. Domain	Public
6. Topic	Education/schooling and work
7. Nature of content	Mostly concrete
8. Text length	5 monologues – 30 seconds each
9. Vocabulary	Mostly frequently occurring words
10. Grammar	Mostly simple structures
11. Text speed	Normal speed for context
12. Number of participants	Five
13. Accent	Standard English and some regional accents
14. Clarity of articulation	Clear
15. How often played (how many times?)	Twice
Comprehensible by learner at CEF level	B2

Item Characteristics

Item 19

Item Type	Multiple matching
Operations involved in answering	Recognise and retrieve
	Information implicit in text
	Specific detail
Item level estimated	B2

Item 20

Item Type	Multiple matching
Operations involved in answering	Make inferences
	Information explicit in text
	Main idea
Item level estimated	B2

Item 21

Item Type	Multiple matching
Operations involved in answering	Make inferences
	Information explicit in text
	Main idea
Item level estimated	B2

Item 22

Item Type	Multiple matching
Operations involved in answering	Recognise and retrieve.
	Information explicit in text
	Specific detail
Item level estimated	B2

Item 23

Item Type	Multiple matching
Operations involved in answering	Make inferences
	Information implicit in text
	Main idea
Item level estimated	B2

Answer Key

19 = E
20 = C
21 = A
22 = F
23 = D

Statistical Report

Statistical Report (whole task)

mean facility (p)	**0.74**
mean discrimination	**0.49**

Statistical Report (individual items)

	item 19	item 20	item 21	item 22	item 23
Facility (p)	0.79	0.77	0.69	0.79	0.68
Discrimination (i.d.)	0.51	0.38	0.50	0.53	0.55
Sample size	>148,000				