



UNIVERSITY *of* CAMBRIDGE
ESOL Examinations

Experts in Language Assessment

Business English Certificates

Handbook for teachers

www.CambridgeESOL.org

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PART OF THE
CAMBRIDGE ASSESSMENT
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Preface

The BEC examinations assess language skills in a business context. BEC is suitable for both professionals who use English in the workplace and Business English students. This handbook is for anyone who is preparing candidates for BEC.

The introduction gives an overview of BEC and its place within the Cambridge ESOL range of examinations. This is followed by a focus on each examination which includes information on content, advice on preparation and sample examination papers.

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Introduction to Cambridge ESOL

■ University of Cambridge ESOL Examinations

University of Cambridge ESOL Examinations (Cambridge ESOL) provides an extensive range of examinations, certificates and diplomas for learners and teachers of English, with a tradition of language assessment dating back to 1913. Cambridge ESOL is part of the Cambridge Assessment group, which is a department of the University of Cambridge and one of the world's largest educational assessment agencies.

Cambridge ESOL examinations are designed for anyone whose first language is not English. They are suitable for learners of all nationalities, whatever their first language and cultural background, and there are examinations suitable for learners of almost any age. The range of Cambridge ESOL examinations includes specialist examinations in Business English, English for Professional Purposes and English for Academic Purposes, as well as examinations for young learners and a suite of certificates and diplomas for language teachers.

The examinations cover all four language skills – reading, writing, listening and speaking. They include a range of tasks which assess candidates' ability to use English, so that in preparing for the examinations, candidates develop the skills they need to make practical use of the language in a variety of contexts. Above all, what the Cambridge ESOL examinations assess is the ability to communicate effectively in English.

Cambridge ESOL is committed to providing examinations of the highest possible quality. This commitment is underpinned by an extensive programme of research and evaluation, and by continuous monitoring of the marking and grading of all Cambridge ESOL examinations. Of particular importance is the rigorous set of procedures which are used in the production and pretesting of question papers.

■ The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR)

Cambridge ESOL examinations are linked to the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, teaching, assessment*, published by the Council of Europe (2001). In fact, they are the only certificated examinations referred to in the Framework document as specifically linked to it by a long-term research project.

Qualifications are plotted against six clearly defined levels. This makes it easy for anyone involved in language teaching and testing (learners, teachers, teacher trainers, etc.) to see the level of different qualifications. It also means that employers and educational institutions can easily compare qualifications and see how they relate to exams they already know in their own country.

Council of Europe Common European Framework of Reference Levels

C2	Mastery
C1*	Effective Operational Proficiency
B2*	Vantage
B1*	Threshold
A2	Waystage
A1	Breakthrough

*BEC Preliminary is at B1 level.

*BEC Vantage is at B2 level.

*BEC Higher is at C1 level.

■ The Association of Language Testers in Europe (ALTE)

Cambridge ESOL is a member of the Association of Language Testers in Europe (ALTE), which was formed in 1990. The members are all providers of language examinations and certificates from countries within Europe.

The principal objectives of ALTE are as follows:

- to promote the transnational recognition of certification, especially in Europe
- to establish common standards for all stages of the language testing process, i.e. test development, question and materials writing, test administration, marking and grading, reporting of test results, test analysis and reporting of findings
- to collaborate on joint projects and in the exchange of ideas and know-how.

Cambridge ESOL examinations fulfil the requirements of the Code of Practice established by ALTE. This Code of Practice focuses on the responsibilities of both examination providers and examination users and covers four main areas:

- developing examinations
- interpreting examination results
- striving for fairness
- informing examination takers.

For more information on ALTE please visit www.ALTE.org

■ Key features of Cambridge ESOL examinations

Cambridge ESOL undertakes:

- to assess language skills at a range of levels, each of them having a clearly defined relevance to the needs of language learners
- to assess skills which are directly relevant to the range of uses for which learners will need the language they have learned, and which cover the four language skills – reading, writing, listening and speaking – as well as knowledge of language structure and usage
- to provide accurate and consistent assessment of each language skill at the appropriate level

- to relate the examinations to the teaching curriculum in such a way that they encourage positive learning experiences, and to seek to achieve a positive impact wherever possible
- to endeavour to be fair to all candidates, whatever their national, ethnic and linguistic background, gender or disability.

Cambridge ESOL examinations are designed around four essential qualities: validity, reliability, impact and practicality. Validity is normally taken to be the extent to which a test can be shown to produce scores which are an accurate reflection of the candidate's true level of language skills. Reliability concerns the extent to which test results are stable, consistent and accurate, and therefore the extent to which they can be depended on for making decisions about the candidate. Impact concerns the effects, beneficial or otherwise, which an examination has on the candidates and other users, whether these are educational, social, economic or political, or various combinations of these. Practicality can be defined as the extent to which an examination is practical in terms of the resources needed to produce and administer it. All these factors underpin the development and production of Cambridge ESOL examinations.

■ Cambridge ESOL's provision for testing business language skills

Cambridge ESOL offers two complementary products to cover a comprehensive range of business language testing needs.

The Business English Certificates (BEC) are certificated examinations which can be taken on various fixed dates at approved centres authorised for BEC. They are aimed primarily at individual learners who wish to obtain a business-related English language qualification, and provide an ideal focus for courses in Business English.

The Business Language Testing Service (BULATS) is non-certificated, and offers employers a quick, reliable and flexible method of assessing employees' language skills.

For more information about BULATS, please contact:

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Cambridge
CB1 2EU
United Kingdom

Tel. +44 1223 553355
Fax. +44 1223 460278
email BULATS@CambridgeESOL.org
www.BULATS.org

Introduction to BEC

■ The aims of BEC

- to assess candidates' ability to operate in English in an international business environment
- to allow candidates to demonstrate to employers their ability to communicate in English with clients and colleagues
- to have a positive and beneficial impact on the content and delivery of Business English language training courses
- to provide an examination to do this which is fair to all candidates and which is delivered to international standards
- to allow test users to compare candidates' results with other qualifications which are linked to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages.

■ The level of BEC

BEC assesses English language ability as used in a business context. BEC Preliminary assesses English language ability used in a business context at Council of Europe 'Threshold' level (B1). BEC Vantage assesses English language ability used in a business context at Council of Europe 'Vantage' level (B2). BEC Higher assesses English language ability used in a business context at Council of Europe 'Effective Operational Proficiency' level (C1).

■ The content of BEC

BEC comprises a Test of Reading, a Test of Writing, a Test of Listening and a Test of Speaking. In BEC Preliminary, the Tests of Reading and Writing are combined in one question paper. In BEC Vantage and BEC Higher, there are separate Reading and Writing papers. Each test is based on realistic business texts, tasks and topics.

The examination texts and topics are set in the context of international business. Materials used in the BEC suite of examinations relate to the areas of language use given overleaf. The coverage of the topics is spread across the four components of each examination. In general terms, the topic areas are similar for each level, but a greater range of linguistic knowledge and degree of skill are required as the levels progress. Note, however, that certain topics will be more prevalent at certain levels, e.g. socialising and personal details will occur more frequently at BEC Preliminary level.

■ Computer-based BEC

BEC is available in a computer-based format as well as paper-based tests. Candidates taking the computer-based version take the Reading, Writing and Listening parts of the test on screen. The face-to-face Speaking test is the same for both the computer-based and paper-based versions of BEC.

Topic areas	Functions/communicative tasks	
Personal identification	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Greeting people and responding to greetings • Introducing oneself and other people • Asking for and giving personal details (name, occupation, etc.) • Asking about and describing jobs and responsibilities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Asking about and describing a company and its organisation • Completing forms with personal or company details • Understanding and writing letters and emails which give personal details
The office, general business environment and routine	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arranging and re-arranging appointments and meetings • Planning future events and tasks • Confirming or changing plans • Asking for and giving permission • Giving and receiving instructions • Predicting and describing future possibilities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Asking for and giving opinions: agreeing and disagreeing • Making, accepting and rejecting suggestions or recommendations • Justifying decisions and past actions • Understanding office communications (reports, letters, emails, memos, etc.)
Entertainment of clients, free time, relationships with colleagues and clients	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussing interests and leisure activities • Inviting, accepting and refusing offers and invitations • Thanking and expressing appreciation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Welcoming a foreign visitor • Talking about own region/country
Travel and meetings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Making enquiries, reservations, orders and conference bookings 	
Using the telephone	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Giving and interpreting numerical data, common abbreviations and acronyms (as used in international business) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exchanging information • Taking messages
Health and safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understanding health and safety rules in the workplace 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understanding instructions and notices
Buying and selling	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understanding prices and delivery dates • Making and accepting offers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Making agreements • Negotiating contracts
Company structures, systems, processes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presenting and describing company structures and processes • Exchanging information on company facilities • Understanding and explaining a company's production, ordering and delivery systems 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understanding and explaining manufacturing processes • Understanding and describing processes in one's company (including staff selection, promotion, appraisal, etc.) • Asking about and explaining errors
Products and services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Describing and presenting products • Advertising, branding and product promotion • Launching a product • Trade fairs • Transport, distribution and suppliers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Asking for and giving information about a product or service • Making comparisons, expressing opinions, preferences, etc. • Making and receiving complaints • Customer support • Apologising and accepting apologies
Results and achievements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Describing and explaining company background, performance results, trends, events and changes 	
Business issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understanding and talking about general business topics, such as management skills, promotional strategies, training courses, conferences, business services, recruitment, rewarding staff, sponsorship, business premises, company budgets, use of IT in business etc. 	

Please note: This list is not exhaustive and is reviewed at regular intervals to ensure BEC is up to date and continues to meet the needs of its target users.

■ Recognition of BEC

The Cambridge ESOL Business English Certificates (BEC) are recognised by employers and educational institutions throughout the world. Around 2,000 employers have already used BEC for recruitment purposes or as part of staff training and development programmes. BEC is also recognised by universities and colleges worldwide, either for admissions purposes, as credits towards or exemption from English language courses, or as a focus for their own Business English courses.

Visit www.CambridgeESOL.org/recognition/search.php for an up to date list of recognising educational institutions and corporate users.

The ALTE 'Can Do' Project

The Association of Language Testers in Europe (ALTE) has developed a framework which covers six levels of language proficiency aligned to the Council of Europe Common European Framework (CEFR). Long-term research carried out by ALTE has shown what language learners can typically do at each level. The table below gives some examples of typical ability in a work environment in each of the skill areas at CEFR B1, B2 and C1 levels.

'Can Do' summary

Typical candidates at **B1 level**

Listening and Speaking

CAN follow a simple presentation/demonstration.
CAN deal with predictable requests from a visitor.
CAN offer advice to clients within own job area on simple matters.
CAN state routine requirements (e.g. asking for typing to be done).

■ Official accreditation in the UK

BEC is accredited by the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA), the statutory regulatory authority for external qualifications in England, and its counterparts in Wales and Northern Ireland.

BEC Preliminary is accredited at Entry Level 3 in the National Qualifications Framework, under the title 'Cambridge ESOL Entry Level Certificate in ESOL International (Business English) (Entry 3)'.

BEC Vantage is accredited at Level 1 in the National Qualifications Framework, under the title 'Cambridge ESOL Level 1 Certificate in ESOL International (Business English)'.

BEC Higher is accredited at Level 2 in the National Qualifications Framework, under the title 'Cambridge ESOL Level 2 Certificate in ESOL International (Business English)'.

■ Varieties of English

Candidates' responses to tasks in BEC are acceptable in varieties of English which would enable candidates to function in the widest range of international contexts. Candidates are expected to use a particular variety with some degree of consistency in areas such as spelling, and not, for example, switch from using

Reading and Writing

CAN understand the general meaning of non-routine letters within own work area.
CAN understand most short reports of a predictable nature.
CAN make notes on routine matters, such as taking/placing orders.
CAN write straightforward, routine letters of a factual nature.

Typical candidates at **B2 level**

Listening and Speaking

CAN ask for factual information and understand the answer.
CAN take and pass on most messages during a normal working day.
CAN express own opinion, and present arguments to a limited extent.
CAN give a simple, prepared presentation on a familiar topic.

Reading and Writing

CAN understand the general meaning of non-routine letters.
CAN understand the general meaning of a report even if the topic isn't predictable.
CAN write a simple report of a factual nature and begin to evaluate, advise, etc.
CAN write a non-routine letter where this is restricted to matters of fact.

Typical candidates at **C1 level**

Listening and Speaking

CAN follow discussion with only occasional need for clarification.
CAN deal with unpredictable questions.
CAN argue his/her case effectively and specify needs precisely.
CAN engage in an extended conversation with a visitor on matters within her/his authority/competence.

Reading and Writing

CAN understand the general meaning of more complex articles.
CAN, given enough time, write a report that communicates the desired message.
CAN write most letters (s)he is likely to be asked to do.
CAN, within a reasonably short time, understand most reports that (s)he is likely to come across.

a British spelling of a word to an American spelling of the same word in the same written response to a given task.

BEC texts are based on authentic source material from many English-speaking countries.

■ BEC candidature

Information is collected about BEC candidates at each session, when candidates fill in a Candidate Information Sheet. The candidates for BEC come from a wide range of backgrounds and take the examination for a number of different reasons. The annual candidature for BEC is in excess of 100,000.

The following points summarise the characteristics of the current BEC candidature.

Nationality

BEC is taken by candidates throughout the world in about 80 countries, although the total number of nationalities represented in the candidature is over 180.

Age

Most candidates (about 65%) are under 25, with the average age worldwide being about 25. This figure varies from country to country.

Gender

About 50% of candidates are female. This figure varies from country to country.

Employment

Many candidates are students, although there are considerable differences in the proportion of students in different countries.

Exam preparation

In most countries, around 90% of candidates undertake a preparatory course before taking the examination.

Reasons for taking BEC

Candidates' reasons for wanting an English language qualification are roughly distributed as follows:

- to help their job or career (70%)
- for further study of English (20%)
- for university recognition (20%).

■ BEC administration

BEC is held on various fixed dates in centres worldwide. Candidates must enter through an authorised centre. A list of centres is available online at www.CambridgeESOL.org/Centres

BEC can be taken on paper or on computer. The sample materials in this handbook are paper-based. For information

on how to obtain sample materials for the computer-based test, visit the Cambridge ESOL website

www.CambridgeESOL.org/exams/bec.htm

■ Grading and results

For each level of BEC, the individual papers total 120 marks after weighting. Each skill (Reading, Writing, Listening, Speaking) represents 25% of the total marks available.

Grading takes place once all scripts have been returned to Cambridge ESOL and marking is complete. The grade boundaries (the minimum score needed to achieve each grade) are set using the following information:

- statistics on the candidature
- statistics on the overall candidate performance
- statistics on individual questions, for those parts of the examination for which this is appropriate (Reading and Listening)
- the Principal Examiner's report on the performance of candidates in the Writing tasks
- comparison with statistics from previous years' examination performance and candidature.

A candidate's overall grade is based on the total score gained in all papers. It is not necessary to achieve a satisfactory level in each individual paper in order to pass the examination.

For BEC Preliminary, results are reported as two passing grades (Pass with Merit and Pass) and two failing grades (Narrow Fail and Fail). This follows the reporting model used by the Cambridge ESOL Main Suite test at the equivalent level (PET). The minimum successful performance which a candidate typically requires in order to achieve a Pass for BEC Preliminary corresponds to about 65% of the total marks. The minimum successful performance which a candidate typically requires in order to achieve a Pass with Merit corresponds to about 83% of the total marks.

For BEC Vantage and BEC Higher results are reported as three passing grades (A, B and C) and two failing grades (D and E). This follows the reporting model used by the Cambridge ESOL Main Suite tests at the equivalent levels (FCE and CAE). The minimum successful performance which a candidate typically requires in order to achieve a Grade C corresponds to about 60% of the total marks. The minimum successful performance which a candidate typically requires in order to achieve a Grade B corresponds to about 75% of the total marks. The minimum successful performance which a candidate typically requires in order to achieve a Grade A corresponds to about 80% of the total marks.

For all levels of BEC, candidates receive statements of results which, in addition to their grades, show a graphical profile of their performance in each skill. These are shown against the scale Exceptional – Good – Borderline – Weak, and indicate the candidate's relative performance in each skill.

■ Notification of results

Statements of results are issued through centres approximately seven weeks after the examination has taken place (for paper-based tests) or three to four weeks after the examination has taken place (for computer-based tests). Candidates for BEC also have direct online access to their results. Enquiries about results may be made through Local Secretaries within a month of the issue of statements of results. Certificates are issued approximately four weeks after the issue of statements of results. There is no limit on the validity of the certificate.

■ Special circumstances

Special circumstances covers three main areas: special arrangements, special consideration and malpractice.

- *Special arrangements:*
These are available for candidates with a permanent or long-term disability, such as a visual or hearing difficulty, or a temporary difficulty such as a broken hand, or ear infection affecting a candidate's ability to hear clearly. They may include extra time, separate accommodation or equipment, Braille transcription, etc. Consult the Cambridge ESOL Local Secretary in your area for more details.
- *Special consideration:*
Cambridge ESOL will give special consideration to candidates affected by adverse circumstances immediately before or during an examination. Special consideration can be given where an application is sent through the centre and is made within 10 working days of the examination date. Examples of acceptable reasons for giving special consideration include sudden illness or other unexpected events.
- *Malpractice:*
Cambridge ESOL will consider cases where candidates are suspected of copying, collusion or breaking the examination regulations in some other way. Results may be withheld because further investigation is needed or because of infringement of regulations. Centres are notified if a candidate's results have been investigated.

BEC support

■ Course materials

A number of coursebooks and practice materials are available from publishers. A list of UK publishers which produce material related to the examinations is available from Cambridge ESOL Information and can be found on the Cambridge ESOL website at:

www.CambridgeESOL.org/resources/books-for-study.php

Most coursebooks will need to be supplemented; care should be taken to ensure that coursebooks and practice materials selected accurately reflect the content and format of the examination.

N.B. Cambridge ESOL does not undertake to advise on textbooks or courses of study.

■ Past papers and examination reports

Cambridge ESOL produces past examination papers, which can be used for practice, and examination reports, which provide a general view of how candidates performed overall and on each paper and offer guidance on the preparation of candidates. Details of how you can order past papers, and a downloadable order form, are available from **www.CambridgeESOL.org/resources/past-papers.html**

Examination reports can be found on the website at **www.CambridgeESOL.org/resources/teacher/bec.html**

■ Speaking test video

A video accompanied by worksheets and notes for the teacher is available to familiarise candidates with the format of the Speaking test. A charge is made for this.

The downloadable order form is available from **www.CambridgeESOL.org/resources/past-papers.html**

■ Online support

Cambridge ESOL provides an online resource for teachers, designed to help them understand the examinations better and to prepare candidates more effectively.

The Teaching Resources website can be found at **www.CambridgeESOL.org/teach**

In some countries, a dedicated Cambridge ESOL website is available. These websites can be found at [www.CambridgeESOL.\(initials for country\)](http://www.CambridgeESOL.(initials for country)), e.g. **www.CambridgeESOL.gr** (Greece), **www.CambridgeESOL.ch** (Switzerland).

■ Seminars for teachers

Cambridge ESOL offers a wide range of seminars designed for teachers concerned with the examinations; some are also suitable as introductions for administrators, school directors, etc. Some seminars are intended to provide information and support for teachers who are familiar with the examinations, and others can be used to introduce teachers to established examinations and also to new or revised examinations. Contact Cambridge ESOL Information for further details.

■ Further information

Copies of the Regulations and details of entry procedure, current fees and further information about this and other Cambridge examinations can be obtained from the Cambridge ESOL centre in your area, or from the address on the back cover of this handbook.

BEC PRELIMINARY

TEST OF READING AND WRITING

GENERAL DESCRIPTION

Paper format	The Reading test consists of a range of business-related texts and accompanying tasks. A text may consist of several short pieces. The Writing test consists of two business-related writing tasks in response to stimuli provided and for a given purpose and target reader.
Timing	1 hour and 30 minutes.
No. of parts	There are seven parts in the Reading test and two parts in the Writing test.
No. of questions	45 questions in the Reading test. Two tasks in the Writing test.
Task types	Multiple choice, Matching, Right/Wrong/Doesn't say, Multiple-choice cloze, Form-filling/Note completion.
Text types	From the following: Notices, messages, adverts, leaflets, contents pages, graphs, charts, tables, business letters, product descriptions, reports, minutes, newspaper or magazine articles, memos.
Length of texts	Reading: 150–400 words per text. Approximately 600–900 words overall. Writing: Two compulsory Writing tasks of 90–120 words in total for the paper.
Answer format	Reading: Candidates indicate answers by shading a box or writing a word on a machine-readable answer sheet. Writing: Candidates write their answers in the boxes on the answer sheet provided.
Marks	Reading: Questions 1–45 carry one mark. Writing: Part One carries one third of the marks for this test. Part Two carries two thirds of the marks for this test.

STRUCTURE AND TASKS – READING

PART 1

Task type and focus	Multiple choice. Understanding short real-world notices, messages, etc.
Format	Five short texts each followed by a 3-option multiple-choice question.
No. of Qs	5.

PART 2

Task type and focus	Matching. Detailed comprehension of factual material; skimming and scanning skills.
Format	A text followed by questions that need matching to parts of the text.
No. of Qs	5.

PART 3

Task type and focus	Matching. Interpreting visual information.
Format	A graphic or graphics followed by questions that need matching to parts of the graphic(s).
No. of Qs	5.

PART 4

Task type and focus	Right/Wrong/Doesn't say. Reading for detailed factual information.
Format	A single text followed by a choice of responses: Right/Wrong/Doesn't say
No. of Qs	7.

PART 5

Task type and focus	Multiple choice. Reading for gist and specific information.
Format	A text followed by 3-option multiple-choice questions.
No. of Qs	6.

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PART 6

Task type and focus	Multiple-choice cloze. Grammatical accuracy and understanding of text structure.
Format	A gapped text followed by 3-option multiple-choice questions for each gap.
No. of Qs	12.

PART 7

Task type and focus	Form-filling/Note completion. Reading and information transfer.
Format	Two short input texts, e.g. an email and a memo, followed by a form-filling/note completion exercise.
No. of Qs	5.

STRUCTURE AND TASKS – WRITING

PART 1

Task type and focus	Internal communication (e.g. note, message, memo or email). (Re-)arranging appointments, asking for permission, giving instructions, etc.
Format	Candidates are required to produce the communication based on a rubric only (plus layout of output text type).
No. of tasks and length	One compulsory task. 30–40 words.

PART 2

Task type and focus	Business correspondence (e.g. letter, fax, email). Apologising and offering compensation, making or altering reservations, dealing with requests, giving information about a product, etc.
Format	Candidates are required to produce a piece of business correspondence based on an input text and four content points.
No. of tasks and length	One compulsory task. 60–80 words.

The seven parts of the Test of Reading

■ PART 1 – MULTIPLE CHOICE

In this part, there is an emphasis on understanding short real-world notices, messages, etc.



Sample task and answer key: pages 13 and 21.



Each correct answer in Part 1 receives 1 mark.

In this part there are five short texts, each of which is accompanied by a multiple-choice question containing three options. In all cases the information will be brief and clear and the difficulty of the task will not lie in understanding context but in identifying or interpreting meaning.

A wide variety of text types, representative of those likely to be encountered in international business, can appear in this part, for example, email, advertisements, internet newsflashes. Each text will be complete and have a recognisable context.

■ PART 2 – MATCHING

In this part, there is an emphasis on reading for detailed comprehension.



Sample tasks and answer key: pages 14 and 21.



Each correct answer in Part 2 receives 1 mark.

This is a matching task comprising one text and five questions, which are often descriptions of people's requirements. Candidates are required to match each question to an appropriate part of the text, labelled A–H. (As there are only five questions, some of the options act as distractors.) The testing focus of this part is vocabulary and meaning, using skimming and scanning skills.

■ PART 3 – MATCHING

In this part, there is an emphasis on interpreting visual information.



Sample tasks and answer key: pages 15 and 21.



Each correct answer in Part 3 receives 1 mark.

This task consists of eight graphs or charts (or one or more graphics with eight distinct elements) and five questions. Each question is a description of a particular graphic (or element of a graphic) and candidates are expected to match the questions to their corresponding graphs, which are labelled A–H.

■ PART 4 – RIGHT/WRONG/DOESN'T SAY

This part tests the candidate's ability to locate detailed factual information.



Sample task and answer key: pages 16 and 21.



Each correct answer in Part 4 receives 1 mark.

This task consists of a text accompanied by seven 3-option multiple-choice questions. Each question presents a statement and candidates are expected to indicate whether the statement is A 'Right' or B 'Wrong' according to the text, or whether the information is not given in the text (C 'Doesn't say'). Candidates are not expected to understand every word in the text but they should be able to pick out salient points and infer meaning where words in the text are unfamiliar. The questions refer to factual information in the text, but candidates are required to do some processing in order to answer the questions correctly.

■ PART 5 – MULTIPLE CHOICE

This part tests candidates' reading for gist and specific information.



Sample tasks and answer key: pages 17 and 21.



Each correct answer in Part 5 receives 1 mark.

This part presents a single text accompanied by six multiple-choice comprehension questions. The text is informative and is often taken from a leaflet or from a newspaper or magazine article.

Candidates are expected to employ more complex reading strategies in this task, in that they should demonstrate their ability to extract relevant information, to read for gist and detail, to scan the text for specific information, and to understand the purpose of the writer and the audience for which the text is intended.

■ PART 6 – MULTIPLE-CHOICE CLOZE

This part tests candidates' grammatical accuracy and understanding of text structure.



Sample tasks and answer key: pages 18 and 21.



Each correct answer in Part 6 receives 1 mark.

This is a multiple-choice cloze test. Candidates have to select the correct word from three options to complete 12 gaps. This part has a predominantly grammatical focus and tests candidates' understanding of the general and detailed meaning of a text, and in particular their ability to analyse structural patterns.

■ PART 7 – FORM-FILLING/NOTE COMPLETION

This part tests candidates' ability to transfer information.



Sample tasks and answer key: pages 19 and 21.



Each correct answer in Part 7 receives 1 mark.

Candidates are given two short texts, for example a memo and an advertisement, and are asked to complete a form based on this material. There are five gaps, which should be completed with a word, a number or a short phrase. In this part, candidates are tested on their ability to extract relevant information and complete a form accurately.

For this part, candidates need to transfer their answers in capital letters to an answer sheet.

Preparation

READING

General

■ Make sure the students read as widely as possible in class and at home. Classroom reading can include a range of reading texts from authentic sources such as business magazines and web pages, as well as business English coursebooks. Encourage students to interact fully with each text by focusing on pre-reading questions. These stimulate interest in the topic dealt with by the text and train students in prediction techniques.

■ It is useful for students to refer to dictionaries and grammar books while studying. However they should also be encouraged to read texts without thinking that they need to understand every word. They are not allowed to use a dictionary in the examination and they should be trained to try to guess the meaning of unknown words from the context. Students sometimes spend too long processing the text at word level rather than trying to get a more 'top down' view of what it is about.

■ It is important to make sure the students are familiar with the standard format of the test by going through the sample materials with them.

■ Make sure students are familiar with the instructions on the front page of the question paper, and for each part of the test. They should also be familiar with the technique of indicating their answers on the separate answer sheet, so that they can do this quickly and accurately. They will need to be shown how to do this and to practise in a timed exercise. They need to think about the relative merits of transferring their answers on to the answer sheet at the end of each task or waiting until the end of the test. If they find it difficult to complete the parts in the time allowed, it may be wiser to transfer answers after each part.

■ When students are familiar with the different task types, it is a good idea to discuss which part(s) take them longer to complete. Following this discussion you may wish to suggest possible timings for each task. Students may prefer to attempt tasks which they find easier first. The outcome of the discussion will also help you to decide which sections of the paper to focus on for further practice and may lead on to assistance with faster reading strategies.

By part

■ PART 1

■ Expose students to a wide range of notices and short texts taken from business settings.

■ Practise answering sample questions, asking students to explain why an answer is correct (and why the two incorrect options do not apply).

■ PART 2

■ Encourage students to familiarise themselves with text types that are divided into lists, headings or categories; e.g. the contents page of a directory or book, the departments in a business or shop, the items in a catalogue, etc.

■ Set students real-world tasks that require a simple interpretation of what different parts of a text mean, using authentic but simple sources.

■ PART 3

■ Practise understanding texts which describe trends and changes.

■ Practise interpreting graphic data and the layout used to describe it.

■ Practise useful vocabulary such as 'rose steadily', 'remained stable', 'decreased slowly', 'reached a peak'.

■ Increase familiarity with relevant topics, such as sales of goods, share price movement and monthly costs.

■ PART 4

■ Train students to identify a false statement which means that the opposite or a contradictory statement is made in the text, and to recognise that this is not the same as a statement that is not covered in the text.

■ This can be a difficult task for candidates who are not familiar with the three choices represented by A, B and C, and who might not understand the difference between a statement that is incorrect and one that depends on information that is not provided in the text.

■ PART 5

■ Expose candidates to a variety of texts of a similar length.

■ Provide practice in improving reading speed.

■ Discuss the following areas:

- title
- topic
- the writer's purpose
- the theme or main idea of each paragraph
- factual details that can be found in the text
- the writer's opinions (if they are evident).

■ PART 6

■ Practice in the grammatical and structural aspects of the language is useful in preparing students for this part.

■ Analyse the structure and coherence of language within longer discourse so that students are encouraged to read for meaning beyond sentence level.

■ Ask students to analyse errors in their own work, as tasks such as this typically focus on common grammatical difficulties.

■ Pairwork activities might be productive, as students can often help each other in the areas of error identification and analysis.

■ PART 7

■ Practise extracting relevant information from texts.

■ Practise form-filling and note completion exercises.

The two parts of the Test of Writing



Part 1 of the Writing test carries one third of the total marks available and Part 2 carries two thirds of the total marks available.

■ Expected word length

Candidates are asked to write 30–40 words for Part 1 and 60–80 words for Part 2. Significantly fewer words are likely to mean that the task has not been completed, whereas over-long pieces of writing may involve irrelevance or have a negative effect on the target reader. If this is the case, over-length or under-length answers will be penalised.

■ Irrelevance

The examiners' first priority is to give credit for the candidates' efforts at communication, but candidates are penalised for content irrelevant to the task set, as in the real world this would have a negative impact on the target reader and would impair communication.

■ PART 1

This part tests the candidate's ability to produce an internal communication in response to input.



Sample questions and scripts: pages 20 and 23.

■ Task type and focus

An internal company communication; this means a piece of communication with a colleague or colleagues within the company on a business-related matter; the delivery medium may be a note, message, memo or email.

The range of functions in the task include re-arranging appointments, asking for permission, and giving instructions.

■ Task format

Candidates are asked to produce a concise piece of internal company communication of between 30 and 40 words, using a written prompt. The text must be produced in the form of a note, message, memo or email. Candidates are given the layout of memos and emails (e.g. to/from/date/subject) on the question paper, and need not copy this out as part of their answer. The reason for writing and the target reader are specified in the rubric, and bullet points explain what content points have to be included. Relevant ideas for one or more of these points will have to be invented by the candidate.

■ PART 2

This part tests the candidate's ability to produce a piece of business correspondence in response to input.



Sample questions and scripts: pages 20 and 23–24.

■ Task type and focus

A piece of business correspondence; this means correspondence with somebody outside the company (e.g. a customer or supplier) on a business-related matter; the delivery medium may be letter, fax or email.

The range of functions in the task include apologising and offering compensation, making or altering reservations, dealing with requests, and giving information about a product.

■ Task format

Candidates are asked to produce an extended piece of business correspondence of between 60 and 80 words. This task involves the processing of a short text, such as a letter or advertisement, in order to respond to it. A number of bulleted content points below the text clearly indicate what should be included in the answer. Some of this information will need to be invented by the candidate.

Where the delivery medium specified for a Part Two answer is a letter, candidates need not include postal addresses in their answer. Similarly, where the delivery medium specified is a

fax, candidates need not include 'fax header' details, and where the delivery medium specified is an email, candidates need not include to/from/subject details.

Although the use of some key words is inevitable, candidates should not 'lift' phrases from the question paper to use in their answers. They would not receive credit for the language in these phrases.

■ Accuracy and appropriacy in emails

Nowadays a significant proportion of written business communication is transmitted electronically, both within the company and to people outside the company.

In some contexts, this technological change may have changed the nature of what people actually write. It may be argued that a new genre has emerged, characterised by brevity, informality and a lack of conventions and even of regard for linguistic accuracy.

However, linguistic inaccuracy and inappropriate informality within electronic business communications is considered unacceptable by many individuals and organisations, and can be counterproductive if employed in real life.

As well as being used informally, email is also widely used within business cultures in which appropriacy and accuracy are perceived to be important, and this is the context of use on which BEC focuses.

Preparation

WRITING

- In preparing students for the Writing tasks, it is beneficial to familiarise them with a variety of business correspondence.
- Analysing authentic correspondence helps students understand better how to structure their answer and the type of language to use.
- It is useful to focus on the following areas:
 - the purpose of the correspondence
 - references to previous communication
 - factual details
 - the feelings and attitude of the writer
 - the level of formality
 - the opening sentence
 - the closing sentence
 - paragraphing
 - the desired outcome.
- If students are in a class, ask them to write and reply to each other's correspondence so that they can appreciate the importance of accurate content.
- Write and analyse memos and messages to help students recognise the different levels of formality involved. It is a necessary part of preparing for the test that students understand the uses of, and styles inherent in, different types of business communication so that they are aware of how and why different types of correspondence are used.

READING
QUESTIONS 1 – 45

PART ONE
Questions 1 – 5

- Look at questions 1 – 5.
- In each question, which sentence is correct?
- For each question, mark one letter (A, B or C) on your Answer Sheet.

Example

Telephone message

Bill Ryan caught 9.30 flight - due here 11.30 now, not 12.30.

When does Bill Ryan expect to arrive?

- A 9.30
B 11.30
C 12.30

The correct answer is B, so mark your Answer Sheet like this:

0	A	B	C
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Office Staff Required

Experience essential
Full training given (leading to
recognised qualifications)

- Applicants must have
- A relevant qualifications.
B previous experience.
C recognised training.

2

SPORTMASTER

Pakistan-based manufacturer of sports items wishing to do business in Europe is looking for importers

TEL: 92 555 4321

Sportmaster wants to

- A sell its products abroad.
B import products into Pakistan.
C manufacture in Europe.

3

NOTICES FOR DISPLAY ABOVE THIS
PHOTOCOPIER MUST FIRST BE
HANDLED TO RECEPTION

- A You can photocopy notices at Reception for display here.
B Photocopied notices can only be displayed at Reception.
C Take your notice to Reception if you want it displayed here.

4

THE AIRPORT EXPRESS DEPARTS FROM PLATFORM 3 EVERY 20 MINUTES
DURING THE DAY (EVERY 30 MINUTES AT NIGHT)

- A The train service to the airport runs 24 hours a day.
B Airport trains leave Platform 3 at 20 minutes past the hour.
C The airport express takes half an hour at night.

5

Goods not normally dispatched unless paid for at time of ordering -
payment on delivery by special arrangement only

Customers should normally pay for goods

- A when their order is processed.
B when the goods are delivered.
C when they place an order.

2

Turn Over ▶ 3

BEC PRELIMINARY READING

Part 2 (questions 6–10)

- 6 Margaret Williams needs help in choosing the business loan with the most competitive terms.
- 7 Ibrahim Shah wants to be sure that there will be enough demand for his product.
- 8 Maria Fernandez would like some advice about where to advertise a new line of goods.
- 9 Kim Seng wants to research new laws on constructing buildings.
- 10 Peder Andersen needs to know whether his existing funds are enough to set up his business.

PART TWO Questions 6 – 10

- Look at the advertisement below. It shows services offered by a business consultancy.
- For questions 6 – 10, decide which service (A – H) would be suitable for each person.
- For each question, mark one letter (A – H) on your Answer Sheet.
- Do not use any letter more than once.

THINKING OF STARTING A BUSINESS?

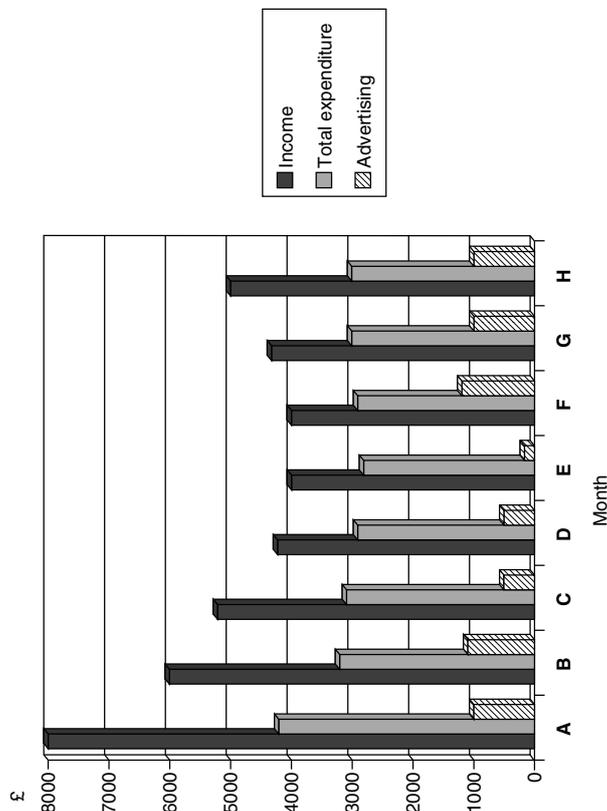
Need expert advice and/or assistance in one or more of the following areas?

- A Market Research
- B Constructing a schedule
- C Calculating costs
- D Meeting legal requirements
- E Obtaining finance
- F Renting or purchasing premises
- G Recruiting and training staff
- H Promoting products and services

Turn Over ► 5

PART THREE
Questions 11 – 15

- Look at the chart below. It shows a restaurant's income, total expenditure and advertising costs during an eight-month period.
- Which month does each sentence (11 – 15) on the opposite page describe?
- For each sentence, mark one letter (A – H) on your Answer Sheet.
- Do not use any letter more than once.



- 11 In this month, total expenditure, like income, showed a fall, while spending on advertising demonstrated the opposite trend.
- 12 Total expenditure rose slightly in this month, while advertising costs reached their peak, leading to a higher income in the following month.
- 13 Despite a decline in advertising costs in this month, expenditure as a whole rose.
- 14 This month's improvement in income was particularly welcome, as it was not matched by an increase in expenditure.
- 15 While this month saw a low point in the restaurant's income, expenditure continued to fall.

BEC PRELIMINARY READING

Part 4 (questions 16–22)

PART FOUR

Questions 16 – 22

- Read the advertisement below for a hot drinks machine.
- Are sentences 16 – 22 on the opposite page 'Right' or 'Wrong'? If there is not enough information to answer 'Right' or 'Wrong', choose 'Doesn't Say'.
- For each sentence 16 – 22, mark one letter (A, B or C) on your Answer Sheet.

ADVERTISING FEATURE

Save money and keep your staff happy

It can be expensive to keep the canteen open to serve drinks to your staff through the day. Our QVM hot drinks machine replaces this service, so that you can close the canteen between mealtimes.

You can install the QVM hot drinks machine anywhere in the building. One machine is suitable for a staff of ten to fifteen people. It costs £1300 to buy, or £11.00 per week to rent over 60 months. It is not expensive to operate: for example, the cost of power for one day is 30p, nearly as cheap as the price of one hot drink from the machine.

Our company will carry out a weekly service, at a charge of £10.00. We can also refill the machine with drinks ingredients for an extra charge of £8.00. Some customers prefer to do this themselves, however.

There are eight choices of hot drink available from the QVM machine, and our company offers one month's trial free of charge, so that you can estimate how popular the machine will be and see what the actual savings are.

16 With a QVM machine, companies can avoid having a canteen altogether.

- A Right B Wrong C Doesn't say

17 The QVM machine provides enough hot drinks for up to fifteen people.

- A Right B Wrong C Doesn't say

18 Most customers prefer to rent the QVM machine over sixty months.

- A Right B Wrong C Doesn't say

19 The electricity used daily by the machine costs less than the price of a hot drink.

- A Right B Wrong C Doesn't say

20 The machine company empties the money from the machine as part of its service agreement.

- A Right B Wrong C Doesn't say

21 Customers can refill their machines with drinks ingredients, if they want to.

- A Right B Wrong C Doesn't say

22 During the trial period, the customer pays a reduced amount to rent the machine.

- A Right B Wrong C Doesn't say

PART FIVE
Questions 23 – 28

- Read the following review of a book called *The Bosses Speak*.
- For each question 23 – 28 on the opposite page, choose the correct answer.
- Mark one letter (A, B or C) on your Answer Sheet.

The Bosses Speak

John Stuart is an executive recruitment specialist who has turned to writing. The result is this book, based on interviews with twenty Chief Executives.

Each top manager – none of them famous names, surprisingly – is given a short chapter, and there is some introductory material and a conclusion. This means you can jump from one person to another, in any order, which is good for people who are too busy to read a book from cover to cover. For a management book it isn't expensive, although whether it's good value for money is doubtful.

Some of the twenty interviewees started their own businesses, while others joined a company and worked their way up. Some are fairly new in their position, and others have had years of experience, though, strangely,

anyone can be equally successful, which is definitely not the case. And the other qualities are ones which most successful bosses I've seen definitely do not have. So in the end I'm no wiser about what really goes on.

Perhaps I'm being unfair. As long as you don't think about whether you'd like them as friends, and pay no attention to most of the advice they give, the most readable parts are where the bosses describe their route to their present position.

Stuart seems to think that his book would be useful for people aiming for the top, and that it might even make a few want to start their own company; but, in fact, what they could learn here is very limited. Seen as light business reading for a doctor or teacher, though, this book would provide some good entertainment.

23 The reviewer suggests that one advantage of the book is that

- A it is better value than other management books.
- B it does not need to be read right through.
- C it is about well-known people.

24 The book concentrates on the fact that the twenty executives who are interviewed

- A work in a number of different industries.
- B started their companies.
- C have worked for different lengths of time.

25 The reviewer cannot accept Stuart's opinions because Stuart

- A makes unreasonable complaints about the interviewees.
- B writes too positively about the interviewees.
- C has different attitudes towards different interviewees.

26 Reading the book made the reviewer think that

- A there are certain qualities which all Chief Executives need.
- B it is difficult to discover how people really run a company.
- C running a company is easier than many people think.

27 Which parts of the book did the reviewer most enjoy reading?

- A how the interviewees became Chief Executives
- B what sort of people the interviewees are
- C the advice given by the interviewees

28 The reviewer recommends the book for people who

- A intend to set up in business.
- B want to become senior managers.
- C are outside the field of business.

Turn Over ▶
11

BEC PRELIMINARY READING

Part 6 (questions 29–40)

PART SIX Questions 29 – 40

- Read the article below about team-building.
- Choose the correct word to fill each gap, from **A**, **B** or **C** on the opposite page.
- For each question **29 – 40**, mark one letter (**A**, **B** or **C**) on your Answer Sheet.

TEAM-BUILDING THROUGH ACTIVITIES

Nowadays, company bosses are increasingly trying to find unusual team-building events as part of their training programme. An activity park **(29)** Fast-track has just opened to offer **(30)** events. It specialises **(31)** events to attract the corporate entertainment market. **(32)** is growing all the time.

The park is situated just a few kilometres outside the city centre **(33)** it provides events that **(34)** entertain as well as train.

Clients can try outdoor attractions such as sailing or climbing. **(35)** availability clearly depends entirely **(36)** the weather. Activities of **(37)** kind are perfect team-building exercises.

'I'd **(38)** been to an activity park before,' explained James Black, a company manager. 'Before we came, I didn't think we **(39)** enjoy ourselves so much and I didn't expect the huge difference that Fast-track's programme has **(40)** to my team. Now we work better together than we did before.'

- | | | | |
|----|-----------|------------|----------|
| 29 | A calling | B calls | C called |
| 30 | A such | B like | C so |
| 31 | A at | B for | C in |
| 32 | A who | B which | C what |
| 33 | A and | B but | C or |
| 34 | A ought | B will | C shall |
| 35 | A because | B although | C since |
| 36 | A on | B of | C with |
| 37 | A a | B these | C this |
| 38 | A still | B ever | C never |
| 39 | A must | B would | C might |
| 40 | A made | B had | C done |

Turn Over ►
13

PART SEVEN
Questions 41 – 45

- Read the memo and note below.
- Complete the claim form on the opposite page.
- Write a word or phrase (in CAPITAL LETTERS) or a number on lines 41 – 45 on your Answer Sheet.

MEMO

TO: Barbara Sinclair
FROM: Peter Rogers
DATE: 25 May 2002
SUBJECT: Insurance Claim

Could you deal with this? It's our insurance claim, for the damage at the weekend. The insurance policy is in my name, and we bought the carpet for £300, although it will cost at least £500 to replace. Luckily our office carpets seem fine.

Thanks

OWEN SMITH INSURANCE COMPANY

with compliments

Thank you for your recent phone call regarding flood damage in your photocopy room.

Could you please complete the attached form and return it to me as soon as possible.

Martin Morris

Insurance Claim

NAME OF POLICY HOLDER: (41)

POLICY NUMBER: LD4756030C

ITEM(S) TO BE REPLACED: (42)

LOCATION OF ITEM(S): (43)

VALUE WHEN PURCHASED: (44)

CAUSE OF DAMAGE: (45)

DATE OF DAMAGE: Sunday 19 May

Turn Over ►
15

BEC PRELIMINARY WRITING

Part 1 (question 46) and Part 2 (question 47)

PART TWO Question 47

- Read this part of a letter from Mary Bennett applying for a job.

With reference to your advertisement in *The Times*, I am writing to apply for the post of training assistant.

I am moving to your country next month with my husband. As you will see from the enclosed CV, I have had a lot of experience in training and I feel that I have much to offer your company.

If I am selected for interview, please could you give me information about how to reach your offices by public transport?

- Write a **letter** to Mrs Bennett.
- acknowledging her letter
- offering her a date and time for an interview
- requesting the names and addresses of two referees
- telling her the best way to reach you by public transport.
- **Write 60 – 80 words.**
- **Write on your Answer Sheet. Do not include any postal addresses.**

Dear Mrs Bennett

WRITING QUESTIONS 46 – 47

PART ONE Question 46

- You are going to attend an engineering exhibition in Frankfurt soon.
- Write an **email** to your assistant:
- explaining why you will be away
- letting her know the dates you will be away
- saying what work she should do while you are away.
- **Write between 30 and 40 words.**
- **Write on your Answer Sheet. Do not write in capital letters.**

To...	Sara Lyons
Cc...	
Subject:	My trip

BEC PRELIMINARY READING

Sample paper answer key

PART ONE

- 1 B
- 2 A
- 3 C
- 4 A
- 5 C

PART TWO

- 6 E
- 7 A
- 8 H
- 9 D
- 10 C

PART THREE

- 11 B
- 12 F
- 13 G
- 14 H
- 15 E

PART FOUR

- 16 B
- 17 A
- 18 C
- 19 B
- 20 C
- 21 A
- 22 B

PART FIVE

- 23 B
- 24 A
- 25 C
- 26 B
- 27 A
- 28 C

PART SIX

- 29 C
- 30 A
- 31 C
- 32 B
- 33 A
- 34 B
- 35 B
- 36 A
- 37 C
- 38 C
- 39 B
- 40 A

PART SEVEN

- 41 PETER ROGERS
- 42 (A/THE/ONE) CARPET
- 43 PHOTOCOPY ROOM
- 44 £300
- 45 FLOOD/FLOODING

Assessment of Writing

Trained examiners award a mark to each piece of writing, using two mark schemes – the General Mark Scheme and the Task-Specific Mark Scheme. The General Mark Scheme summarises performance with reference to content, organisation and cohesion, range and accuracy of vocabulary, range and accuracy of grammatical structures and effect on the target reader across five bands. The Task-Specific Mark Scheme focuses on criteria specific to each task.

Candidates are penalised for dealing inadequately with the requirements of the Task-Specific Mark Scheme. The accuracy of language, including spelling and punctuation, is assessed on the General scale for all tasks.

■ Marking

A mark is awarded to each piece of writing.

A panel of expert examiners is divided into small teams, each with a very experienced examiner as Team Leader. A Principal Examiner guides and monitors the marking process. Examiners discuss the Task-Specific and General Mark Schemes and refer to them regularly while they are working.

During marking, each examiner is allocated scripts chosen at random from the whole entry in order to ensure that there is no concentration of good or weak scripts or of one large centre or one country in the allocation of any one examiner.

The BEC Preliminary General Mark Scheme is interpreted at Council of Europe Level B1.

A summary of the General Mark Scheme is given below. Examiners, who are co-ordinated prior to each examination session, work with a more detailed version, which is subject to updating.

BEC Preliminary Summary of General Mark Scheme Part 1

BAND 5 Very good attempt at task, achieves all content points. No effort is required by the reader.

BAND 4 Good attempt at task, achieves all content points. Only a little effort is required by the reader.

BAND 3 Satisfactory attempt at task, achieves all content points. Some effort is required by the reader OR reasonable attempt at task; achieves two content points.

BAND 2 Inadequate attempt at task, achieving one content point, possibly with noticeable irrelevance; task possibly misunderstood.

BAND 1 Poor attempt at task; no content points achieved, has little relevance.

BAND 0 No relevant response or too little language to assess.

BEC Preliminary Summary of General Mark Scheme Part 2

BAND 5 All four content points achieved.
• Good range of structure and vocabulary.
• Confident control of language; a few non-impeding errors may be present.
• Effectively organised, with appropriate cohesion.
• Register and format consistently appropriate.
Full realisation of the task set.
Very positive effect on the reader.

BAND 4 Three or four content points achieved.
• More than adequate range of structure and vocabulary.
• Some errors, mostly non-impeding.
• Generally well-organised, with attention paid to cohesion.
• Register and format on the whole appropriate.
Good realisation of the task set.
Positive effect on the reader.

BAND 3 Likely maximum for scripts of 25–50 words.
Three or four content points achieved.
• Adequate range of structure and vocabulary.
• A number of errors may be present, several of which may be impeding.
• Organisation and cohesion is satisfactory, on the whole.
• Register and format reasonable, although not entirely successful.
Reasonable achievement of the task set.
Satisfactory effect on the reader.

BAND 2 Maximum for scripts of fewer than 25 words.
Two or three content points achieved.
• Limited range of structure and vocabulary.
• Numerous errors, several of which impede communication.
• Content is not clearly organised or linked, causing some confusion.
• Inappropriate register and format.
Inadequate attempt at task/task possibly misunderstood/
response considerably irrelevant.
Negative effect on the reader.

BAND 1 Task misunderstood/response largely irrelevant.
Up to two content points achieved.
• Little evidence of structure and vocabulary required by task.
• Serious lack of control; frequent basic errors.
• Lack of organisation, causing a breakdown in communication.
• Little attempt at appropriate register and format.
• Poor attempt at the task.
Very negative effect on the reader.

BAND 0 Achieves nothing. Totally irrelevant or illegible.

■ Spelling and punctuation

These are important aspects of accuracy and are always taken into account. American spelling is equally valid, but there should be consistency.

■ Handwriting

If handwriting interferes with communication without preventing it, the candidate will be penalised. Totally illegible scripts fail to communicate, so will receive Band 0.

■ Irrelevance

The examiners' first priority is to give credit for the candidates' efforts at communication, but candidates are penalised for producing content irrelevant to the task set.

Sample scripts and commentaries

Writing Part One

Script A

I am going to attend an engineering exhibition in Frankfurt, and the ticket's date is 20th March, I will be away for one week, during this week I would like you to arrange the training meeting which we have decided and make an appointment with selling manager. I would like to see him 27th morning 10:30.

EXAMINER COMMENTS

Band 5

All points clearly achieved with only minor errors of punctuation and the occasional missing preposition or article.

Script B

Next week I go to an exhibition in Frankfurt. It's from 9th to the 11th. While I am in Frankfurt you should write the business letters. If there are any problems - call me!

EXAMINER COMMENTS

Band 4

All the content points have been achieved but 'Next week I go' and 'write the business letters' are awkward, and require a little effort by the reader.

Script C

I must go attend an engineering exhibition in Frankfurt from 15 March to 18 March. Can you tell Mr Meier to ask him confirmation for the fly on Monday and finish to made the travel documents for departure in April?

Yours sincerely

EXAMINER COMMENTS

Band 3

The third content point (what work the assistant should do while the writer is away) is not achieved as the second sentence is confused and the role of Mr Meier is not clear.

Script D

I will go on a trip to Frankfurt about attend an engineering exhibition tomorrow (15/March), so I want you help me to leave a message if I have phone call. Thank you

EXAMINER COMMENTS

Band 2

The candidate has failed to achieve both the second and third content points (the dates when the writer will be away and what work the assistant should do during this time), making this an inadequate attempt at the task.

Writing Part Two

Script E

Dear Mrs Bennett

Thank you for applying our company. We arranged an interview for you. The date is 4th April. Please arrive at 9.15 in the morning, the interview will start at 9.30. Please arrive on time.

We also need the names and addresses of 2 referees.

The best way to reach our office is use underground. You can find the name of the street where our office is from the map. And use underground from trainstation to our company. You don't need change train.

If you have any questions, please contact us.

Yours sincerely

EXAMINER COMMENTS

Band 5

All the content points have been achieved and the candidate has demonstrated confident control throughout most of the letter, although there are a few non-impeding errors and a slightly abrupt register.

Script F

Dear Miss Bennett

Thank you for your curriculum vitae and for the interest in this job.

We are pleased to have an interview with you at Monday, 23 April at 10 a.m. in our location. So we have the possibility to introduce you to the team.

Can you please confirm me this requested date and please send me the name of two referees in advance. We hope to see you soon. If you have any questions do not hesitate to contact me.

Kind regards

EXAMINER COMMENTS

Band 4

The language used by this candidate is consistent with Band 5, but the fact that the last content point (how to reach the company by public transport) is not achieved holds the mark awarded at Band 4.

Script G

Dear Mrs Bennett

I have received your letter of application of post training substance, we have arranged for you an interview with Mr John on 26 April, please tell me your 2 referees names and addresses you can reach us by busses numbered 610, 611 from city centre

Yours faithfully

EXAMINER COMMENTS

Band 3

All the content points have been achieved and the candidate has used an adequate range of structure and vocabulary. However, there is an impeding error (training substance) and this together with the lack of punctuation and the fact that the script is slightly short, holds the mark awarded at Band 3.

Script H

To Mrs Bennett

I receive your letter including CV we were also looking for the person who is experienced in work. The date for interview for you is 20-03-06 and we will very happy to interview you. The best way you can reach us by public transport. If you need any further information please don't hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely

EXAMINER COMMENTS

Band 2

Only the first two content points have been achieved, which holds the mark awarded at Band 2.

BEC PRELIMINARY WRITING

Answer sheet



PRELIMINARY

Centre No.

Candidate Name
If not already printed, write name
in CAPITALS and complete the
Candidate No. grid (in pencil).

Candidate's Signature

Examination Title

Centre

Supervisor:

If the candidate is ABSENT or has WITHDRAWN shade here

				0	0	0	0	1	1	1	1
				1	1	1	1	2	2	2	2
				2	2	2	2	3	3	3	3
				3	3	3	3	4	4	4	4
				4	4	4	4	5	5	5	5
				5	5	5	5	6	6	6	6
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				7	7	7	7	8	8	8	8
				8	8	8	8	9	9	9	9
				9	9	9	9				

BEC Preliminary Writing Answer Sheet

Part 1: Write your answer in the box below.

Write your answer to Part 2 on the other side of this sheet ▶

This section for use by Examiner only

Part 1 0 1 2 3 4 5

Part 2: Write your answer in the box below.

This section for use by Examiner only

Part 2 0 1.1 1.2 2.1 2.2 3.1 3.2 4.1 4.2 5.1 5.2

Examiner Number

Examiner's Signature

.....

BEC PRELIMINARY TEST OF LISTENING

GENERAL DESCRIPTION

Paper format The paper consists of four parts. Each part comprises a recorded text or texts and a Listening task.

Timing 40 minutes, including time for the transfer of answers to the answer sheet.

No. of parts There are four parts.

No. of questions 30.

Task types Multiple-choice questions, gap-filling and note-taking.

Task focuses These include understanding specific information and listening for gist.

Text types Monologues: these include presentations, lectures, announcements, briefings, etc. Interacting speakers: these include telephone conversations, face-to-face conversations, interviews, discussions, etc.

Answer format Candidates are advised to write their answers in the spaces provided on the question paper. There are five minutes at the end of the test to copy the answers onto a separate answer sheet. Candidates indicate their answers by shading a box or writing a word, or words, on a machine-readable answer sheet.

Marks Each correct answer receives one mark.

STRUCTURE AND TASKS

PART 1

Task type and focus 3-option multiple choice. Listening for specific information.

Format Eight short conversations or monologues of approximately 15–30 seconds each, not linked thematically. Each extract is heard twice.

No. of Qs 8.

PART 2

Task type and focus Gap-filling. Listening for specific information (numbers and letters).

Format A conversation of approximately a minute and a half, heard twice.

No. of Qs 7.

PART 3

Task type and focus Note-taking. Listening for specific information.

Format A monologue of approximately two and a half minutes, heard twice.

No. of Qs 7.

PART 4

Task type and focus 3-option multiple choice. Listening for gist/specific information.

Format Conversation/interview/discussion between two or more interacting speakers of approximately three minutes, heard twice.

No. of Qs 8.

The four parts of the Test of Listening

■ PART 1 – 3-OPTION MULTIPLE CHOICE

This part tests the candidates' ability to listen for specific information.



Sample task and answer key: pages 29, 30 and 35.



Each correct answer in Part 1 receives 1 mark.

A series of eight short conversations or monologues: each heard twice.

The eight questions in this part of the paper are 3-option multiple-choice questions. For each question, candidates hear a short conversation or monologue, typically lasting around 15 to 30 seconds. Each monologue or dialogue is repeated on the recording in order to give candidates a chance to check their answers. The multiple-choice options may be textual or they may be in the form of pictures, graphs or diagrams.

In the extracts in Part One candidates are being tested on their understanding of spoken English used in a range of situations and on their ability to extract factual information.

Alternatively, they may have to identify a trend in a graph, establish the speaker's reason for phoning or identify feelings and opinions. In every case it will be necessary for candidates to follow the conversation closely.

■ PART 2 – GAP-FILLING

This part tests the candidates' ability to listen for specific information.



Sample task and answer key: pages 31 and 35.



Each correct answer in Part 2 receives 1 mark.

Short telephone conversation: heard twice.

This part consists of a short conversation, typically lasting around a minute and a half, which contains factual information. On the question paper there is a form, table, chart or set of notes with seven gaps where information is missing. Candidates have to fill in each of the gaps. The answers may include dates, prices, percentages or figures. This part has a numerical focus and sometimes there are names that are spelled out on the recording; answers to these have to be written with correct spelling.

■ PART 3 – NOTE-TAKING

This part tests the candidates' ability to listen for specific information.



Sample task and answer key: pages 31 and 35.



Each correct answer in Part 3 receives 1 mark.

Monologue: heard twice.

Candidates hear a monologue. On the question paper there is a set of notes or a form with gaps. There are seven gaps to fill in and the answers may be one or two words. On occasion, the key to one of the gaps may be a date.

■ PART 4 – 3-OPTION MULTIPLE CHOICE

This part tests the candidates' ability to listen for gist and for specific information.



Sample task and answer key: pages 32 and 35.



Each correct answer in Part 4 receives 1 mark.

Conversation/interview/discussion: heard twice.

This part, which lasts about three minutes, contains a longer listening text which generally takes the form of an interview, or a discussion between two or possibly more speakers. There are eight, 3-option multiple-choice questions on the question paper and these are always in a written format. In this part of the Listening component, candidates are being tested on their ability to understand the gist of a longer text and to extract detailed and specific information as required by the questions. They may also be tested on the speakers' opinions.

■ Recording information

The instructions for each task are given on the question paper and are also heard on the recording. Before each text is heard, candidates have time to read through the questions and think about the questions. The length of this preparation time is indicated on the CD. Candidates should use this time to familiarise themselves with the task and begin to make predictions about what they are likely to hear. A variety of voices, styles of delivery and accents are heard in each Listening paper to reflect the various contexts presented in the recordings.

Preparation

- The Listening component is carefully paced and candidates are tested on short extracts in Part One so that they can gradually 'tune in' to the spoken language and improve their listening skills without losing their place in the test.
- Listening can be a very demanding activity and candidates

should practise their listening skills regularly, using a wide variety of listening sources. Candidates who enter the Listening test having done this will be at an advantage.

■ At BEC Preliminary level, it is advisable to collect as much listening material as possible that is suitably paced and of an appropriate length. Native speakers speak at many different speeds and some speak much more clearly than others. If it is possible to collect a bank of authentic material that is carefully chosen, this will prove useful practice for students. Otherwise it might be better to make use of specially designed materials for this level.

■ For Part One, candidates should try to listen to short extracts of speech, concentrating on understanding the general idea or main points of what is said.

■ For Parts Two and Three, practice should be given in gap-filling and note-taking.

■ Prior to listening to tapes or audio materials, students should be given details of the information they need to listen for. Teachers should discuss the task with the students before they listen and encourage them to listen for clues and prompts that will help them identify the points they need to find.

■ When listening to longer texts, it is also useful to discuss areas such as:

- the purpose of the speech or conversation
- the speakers' roles
- the speakers' opinions
- the language functions being used
- factual details
- conclusions.

BEC PRELIMINARY LISTENING

Part 1 (question 1)

PART ONE
Questions 1 – 8

- For questions 1 – 8 you will hear eight short recordings.
- For each question, mark one letter (A, B or C) for the correct answer.

Example:

When were the machine parts sent?

Monday 31

A

Tuesday 1

B

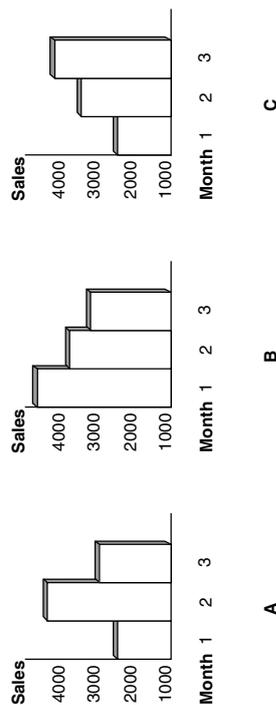
Thursday 3

C

The answer is **A**.

- You will hear the eight recordings twice.

1 Which chart is correct?



Turn Over ▶ **3**

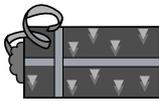
BEC PRELIMINARY LISTENING

Part 1 (questions 2–8)

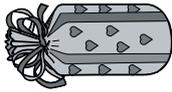
2 What kind of packaging do they decide to use?



A



B



C

3 Where is Mike going to take the visitors first?

Customer Relations

A

Production

B

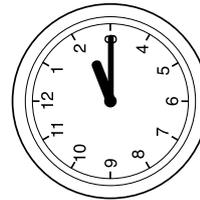
Warehouse

C

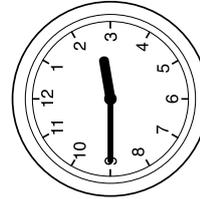
4 Who is Anne going to write to?

- A the clients
- B the supplier
- C the staff

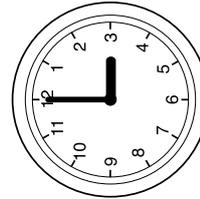
5 What's the new time for the meeting?



A



B



C

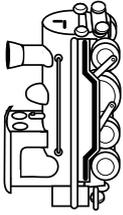
6 Which product has been the most successful?



A



B



C

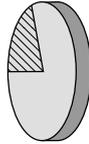
7 What is the purpose of the meeting?

- A to look at applications
- B to write a job advertisement
- C to prepare for interviews

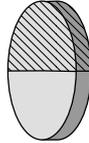
8 Which chart shows the company's market share this year?



A



B



C

PART TWO
Questions 9 – 15

- Look at the notes below.
- Some information is missing.
- You will hear a manager telephoning Human Resources about vacancies in his department.
- For each question 9 – 15, fill in the missing information in the numbered space using a **word**, **numbers** or **letters**.
- You will hear the conversation twice.

Customer Services Vacancies

NUMBER OF VACANCIES: (9) telephone operators

SALARY: (10) Max. £ days

TOTAL HOLIDAY (PER ANNUM): (11) days

JOB REFERENCE: (12)

JOB START DATE: (13) 2002

LINE MANAGER: (14) Ms Sue

TEL NUMBER (FOR ENQUIRIES): (15)

6

PART THREE
Questions 16 – 22

- Look at the notes about a publisher's plans for promotion this autumn.
- Some information is missing.
- You will hear part of a talk by the company's Marketing Director.
- For each question 16 – 22, fill in the missing information in the numbered space using **one** or **two** words.
- You will hear the talk twice.

Autumn promotion plans

MAIN TITLES: pocket dictionary and (16)

Advertising space booked in (17) magazine

New colour for display stands: (18)

Free gifts include (19) and keyrings

Alison has made a deal with (20)

For mailing to booksellers in September: (21)

Venue for dictionary launch party: (22)

Turn Over ▶ 7

BEC PRELIMINARY LISTENING

Part 4 (questions 23–30)

PART FOUR Questions 23 – 30

- You will hear a conversation between a senior manager, called Sue, and her assistant, called David.

- For each question 23 – 30, mark one letter (A, B or C) for the correct answer.
- You will hear the conversation twice.

23 Sue is particularly pleased about the company

- A receiving an award.
- B increasing its share price.
- C getting a new client.

24 What is the main cause of the company's rising costs?

- A import taxes
- B publicity
- C premises

25 Which expenses do they want to reduce?

- A entertainment
- B stationery
- C telephone

26 More training is required because the company has

- A bought new computer software.
- B recruited new members of staff.
- C increased its range of customers.

27 How will the company organise the training?

- A send staff to a college
- B use current staff members
- C employ external trainers

8

28 When the next brochure is printed, it will

- A have an improved design.
- B include a new product.
- C contain extra information.

29 What problem are they experiencing with Johnson's?

- A the quality of goods
- B the high prices
- C the speed of deliveries

30 What will they do about the problem with Johnson's?

- A send them a letter
- B check every order
- C contact other suppliers

You now have 10 minutes to transfer your answers to your Answer Sheet.

9

BEC Preliminary Listening

Tapescript for Listening

Part One. Questions 1–8.

1: WHICH CHART IS CORRECT?

M: ... and I'm pleased to announce that we've had a small but steady increase in ice cream sales, in spite of the unusually low temperatures in the last three months. We'll see whether this trend continues.

2: WHAT KIND OF PACKAGING DO THEY DECIDE TO USE?

F: What packaging do you recommend for the smaller type of bottle?

M: Well, I'd wrap it in clear plastic and tie it at the top.

F: OK. But don't you think a box would be better, perhaps with a pattern on it?

M: Boxes are dull and a pattern on the plastic would look untidy.

F: Right, we'll do as you recommend.

3: WHERE IS MIKE GOING TO TAKE THE VISITORS FIRST?

F: Mike, could you show some people round the factory tomorrow?

M: Certainly. The usual tour – from reception to the warehouse?

F: They are particularly interested in our production techniques, so I would start there.

M: OK, and then through customer relations and into the warehouse.

F: Thanks.

4: WHO IS ANNE GOING TO WRITE TO?

M: Anne, that supplier we use has become very unreliable, and we've decided to look for another one.

F: Seems a good idea.

M: We don't need to inform our clients, but could you send a note round to all our departments when we've decided who to replace the supplier with?

F: Yes of course.

5: WHAT'S THE NEW TIME FOR THE MEETING?

F: What time's the MD back tomorrow?

M: Erm ... just after lunch, I think. Why?

F: Well, I've got a meeting tomorrow at a quarter past two, but I need to be here when the MD arrives – I'll rearrange my meeting for three.

M: Well, Paul's coming to that meeting, and he has to leave early.

F: OK, I'll make it a quarter to, then.

6: WHICH PRODUCT HAS BEEN THE MOST SUCCESSFUL?

M: Our sales figures show that toy trains haven't done very

well, although we've sold a reasonable number of the dolls. As for model cars, we've sold so many that we can't produce enough!

7: WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THE MEETING?

F: We've got to fill those vacancies in research urgently. That's why today's meeting's so important.

M: Yes, but the advertisement's only just gone out. Why discuss the interviews now?

F: The closing date is next Friday. It will take us a day to look at the applications. If we decide on the interview questions today that'll save time.

8: WHICH CHART SHOWS THE COMPANY'S MARKET SHARE THIS YEAR?

F: Is the company doing better this year?

M: It's a mixed picture really. Sales have risen by about fifty per cent, which is excellent, but our total market share is down to five per cent from twenty per cent last year.

— *** —

Part Two. Questions 9–15.

F: Human Resources, Helen speaking.

M: Hello. It's Alan Thomas, phoning about the vacancies here in Customer Services.

F: I'll just take the details to put in the ad. It's for five telephone operators, isn't it?

M: It was five, but we're busier now and also two staff are leaving this week, so we need eight new people.

F: OK. I'll put that. And are these grade 1 posts, salary 14 to 15 thousand?

M: Starting salary is fourteen thousand, but I need some people with experience, so we'll pay up to sixteen thousand nine hundred and fifty. That's the top of grade 2.

F: Fine.

M: Holidays, next.

F: The usual 21 days a year?

M: Actually, the telephone staff are working longer shifts now, so they get an extra 12 days off a year. Together it's 33 days.

F: OK. Do you have a reference number for these posts?

M: Yes, it's CS zero eight zero double one.

F: Right. We'll advertise next week, September the 7th. What start date shall I put? The 6th of October?

M: I wanted them to start on the 1st, but your date is better. So, put that.

F: And will you be their line manager, Mr Thomas?

M: They'll actually report to Sue Blackmann, that's double N.

F: And who can people contact?

M: Sue. She's on seven nine five double three five.

F: Right ...

— *** —

Part Three. Questions 16–22.

M: Okay, I just want to update you on our main plans for promotion this autumn. The main campaign will of course be the pocket dictionary, but we also have a reasonable budget for the new road map, which is coming out next month, as you know. For both titles, we've already taken full-page adverts in 'Travel' magazine and I'm also considering space for the dictionary in that new monthly 'Reference Now'. For window and general shop display, our designer has produced the wonderful stands you can see in the corner. I'm sure you'll agree that the orange is an improvement on the green stands we had last year! Erm, we're looking at a range of free gifts for handing out at exhibitions – currently on order are calendars and keyrings, but possibly in future larger things too, like umbrellas for major clients. I'd like your views on that idea before I go ahead. Alison's managed to negotiate some air time on Radio East and I'm going to visit a TV network on Friday – that's more relevant to our future titles though. Now, publicity material – everything is listed in the annual catalogue, which will be ready to send to booksellers in December. And talking of bookseller mailshots we've also got one going out in September, which will be our information sheet. Finally, I can confirm the venue for the dictionary launch party, which is next month. Some of you know we were trying to get the university library, but in fact, we've now booked the management centre, which will be excellent. Their catering is supposed to be very good ...

— *** —

Part Four. Questions 23–30.

F: There's quite a lot to talk about.

M: Well Sue, it doesn't matter if we don't cover everything today.

F: OK, David, let's see how we go.

M: Things are looking good, aren't they?

F: Definitely. I'm very pleased. We've gone beyond our sales targets. Our share price is stable. And, of course, you know Eurocom were going to move but they've chosen to keep their contract with us after all. But winning the prize for British Exporter of the Year was the best thing, as far as I'm concerned.

M: On the other hand, there is the problem of rising costs.

F: Yes, even though we avoided another rent increase ...

M: But all those expensive newspaper advertisements ...

F: Yes, that's the real problem. Although they are partly balanced by the decrease in import duties.

M: Mmm ... meanwhile, you want to limit our expenses where possible?

F: Yes, certainly. Actually, the budget for entertaining clients is fairly reasonable, and very necessary. It's the cost of phone calls that worries me. It seems far too high.

M: Everyone should be using email wherever possible if you want to save on communications generally. Um, we've already got cheaper paper from the printer's, which is a start.

F: True. Now on to training. We need to be clear where this demand for training is coming from.

M: Well, our own success, basically. Our customer base is expanding all the time. Our staff ...

F: ... who are up to date with new computer applications ...

M: Yes, they're ok for that, but they have to deal with all these new clients. They'll need a wider range of skills than they have at the moment ...

F: We could contact the business school. Perhaps they could send us some of their trainers.

M: Or what about the courses they run?

F: But then again, it seems a pity not to use our own training department.

M: Doing it ourselves, you mean? Well, yes ... after all, it's the people here who know what we do best and can really understand our needs.

F: I agree. OK, what's next?

M: Um, there's the printing of the new brochure.

F: Is the basic information changing?

M: I shouldn't think so but the whole thing really needs to look a bit better. The current one just doesn't give the right idea at all ...

F: Much too old-fashioned. Yes, a new presentation, a proper lay-out. What about out-of-date products?

M: Steve's already taken them out. Now, do you want to talk about the supplier situation?

F: You mean the situation with Johnson's?

M: Yes, they're just not giving us what we need. Their prices have always seemed very reasonable, but the products aren't good enough. There's no point being cheap and on time if we don't actually get what we want.

F: Right, well, we need to deal with the situation. What contact have you had with them?

M: I wrote to them twice last month, and it didn't seem to have any real effect. We've looked at every order as it comes in, so we already have a fairly clear picture of the problem.

F: Hmm ... I think you should start by ringing some other firms, see if they can match Johnson's deal. Then I'll make a decision.

M: Right. Great, we did manage to discuss everything.

F: Yes, good.

BEC PRELIMINARY LISTENING

Sample paper answer key

PART ONE

- 1 C
- 2 A
- 3 B
- 4 C
- 5 B
- 6 A
- 7 C
- 8 A

PART TWO

- 9 8 (TELEPHONE OPERATORS)
- 10 (£) 16,950
- 11 33 (DAYS)
- 12 CS08011
- 13 6(TH) OCTOBER/OCTOBER 6 (2002)
(THE) SIXTH (OF) OCTOBER (2002)
6/10/02
6/10 (2002)
- 14 (MS SUE) BLACKMANN
- 15 795335

PART THREE

- 16 (NEW) ROAD MAP(S)
- 17 TRAVEL (MAGAZINE)
- 18 ORANGE
- 19 CALENDARS
- 20 RADIO EAST
- 21 (OUR) INFORMATION SHEET(S)
- 22 (THE) MANAGEMENT
CENTRE/CENTER

PART FOUR

- 23 A
- 24 B
- 25 C
- 26 C
- 27 B
- 28 A
- 29 A
- 30 C

BEC PRELIMINARY LISTENING

Answer sheet

Part 3										
16										1 16 0
17										1 17 0
18										1 18 0
19										1 19 0
20										1 20 0
21										1 21 0
22										1 22 0

Part 4											
23	A	B	C	24	A	B	C	25	A	B	C
26	A	B	C	27	A	B	C	28	A	B	C
29	A	B	C	30	A	B	C				

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Instructions Use a PENCIL (B or HB). Rub out any answer you wish to change with an eraser. For Parts 1 and 4: Mark one box for each answer. For example: If you think C is the right answer to the question, mark your answer sheet like this: <table style="display: inline-table; vertical-align: middle;"> <tr><td style="border: 1px solid black; width: 15px; height: 15px;"></td></tr> <tr><td style="border: 1px solid black; width: 15px; height: 15px; text-align: center;">0</td></tr> <tr><td style="border: 1px solid black; width: 15px; height: 15px; text-align: center;">A</td></tr> <tr><td style="border: 1px solid black; width: 15px; height: 15px; text-align: center;">B</td></tr> <tr><td style="border: 1px solid black; width: 15px; height: 15px; text-align: center;">C</td></tr> </table>													0	A	B	C																																																																																																							
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BEC PRELIMINARY TEST OF SPEAKING

GENERAL DESCRIPTION

Paper format	The Test of Speaking consists of three parts.
Timing	12 minutes.
No. of parts	3.
Interaction pattern	Two candidates and two examiners. One examiner acts as both interlocutor and assessor and manages the interaction either by asking questions or by providing cues for candidates. The other acts as assessor only and does not join in the interaction.
Task types	Short exchanges with the interlocutor; a mini-presentation by each candidate; a collaborative task which candidates do together.
Task focus	Exchanging personal and factual information, expressing and finding out about attitudes and opinions.
Marks	The interlocutor gives an impression mark based on a global achievement scale, while the assessor applies detailed analytical scales and gives separate marks for grammar and vocabulary, discourse management, pronunciation and interactive communication.

STRUCTURE AND TASKS

PART 1

Task type and format	Conversation between the interlocutor and each candidate. The interlocutor encourages the candidates to give information about themselves and to express personal opinions.
Focus	General interaction and social language.
Timing	2 minutes.

PART 2

Task type and format	A 'mini-presentation' by each candidate on a business theme. The candidates are given prompts which generate a short talk on a business-related topic.
Focus	Organising a larger unit of discourse. Giving information and expressing opinions.
Timing	5 minutes (including a 1-minute 'long turn' for each candidate).

PART 3

Task type and format	A collaborative task which candidates do together. The candidates are presented with a scenario supported by visual or written prompts which generate a discussion. The interlocutor extends the discussion with further spoken prompts.
Focus	Turn-taking (initiating and responding appropriately), negotiating, collaborating, exchanging information, expressing and justifying opinions, agreeing and/or disagreeing, suggesting, speculating, comparing and contrasting, and decision-making.
Timing	5 minutes.

The three parts of the Test of Speaking

Format

The paired format of the BEC Preliminary Test of Speaking (two examiners and two candidates) offers candidates the opportunity to demonstrate, in a controlled but non-threatening environment, their ability to use their spoken language skills effectively in a range of contexts. The test lasts 12 minutes. One examiner, the interlocutor, conducts the test and gives a global assessment mark for each candidate's performance. The other, the assessor, does not take any part in the interaction but focuses solely on listening to and making an assessment of certain aspects of the candidates' oral proficiency.

At the end of the Test of Speaking, candidates are thanked for attending but are given no indication of the level of their achievement.

The standard format is two examiners and two candidates, and wherever possible this will be the form which the Test of Speaking will take. In cases where there is an uneven number of candidates at a centre, the last test of the session will be taken by three candidates together instead of two. The test format, test materials and procedure will remain unchanged but the timing will be longer: 14 minutes instead of 12.

The Test of Speaking consists of three parts, each of which is assessed. Throughout the test the interactional pattern will vary: between the interlocutor and each candidate, between the two candidates, and among all three. The patterns of discourse vary within each part of the test.

■ PART 1 – INTERVIEW

This part tests the candidates' ability to respond to questions and to express opinions.



Assessment criteria: page 50.

In the first part of the test, the interlocutor addresses each candidate in turn and asks them questions about themselves and their opinions. The questions will be slightly different for each candidate, and candidates are not addressed in strict sequence. In this part of the test, candidates are being tested on their ability to talk briefly about themselves, to provide concise information on subjects such as their home, hobbies and jobs, and to perform simple functions such as agreeing and disagreeing and expressing preferences.

■ PART 2 – LONG TURN

This part tests the candidates' ability to sustain a 'long turn'.



Sample task and assessment criteria: pages 41, 42, 44–47 and 50.

The second part of the test is a 'mini-presentation'. In this part, each candidate is given a choice of two topics and has one minute to prepare a piece of extended speech lasting approximately one minute. After each candidate has finished speaking the next candidate is asked which of the bullet points they think is the most important. In this part of the test candidates are being tested on their ability to sustain their talk accurately and appropriately.

■ PART 3 – COLLABORATIVE TASK

This part tests the candidates' ability to communicate with one another, negotiate, initiate, and respond in an appropriate way.



Sample task and assessment criteria: pages 43, 48, 49 and 50.

The third part of the test is a conversation between the candidates. The interlocutor outlines a scenario and provides prompts in the form of black and white pictures or written text to help the candidates. The candidates are asked to speak for about two minutes. The interlocutor supports the conversation as appropriate and then asks further questions related to the main theme. In this part of the test, candidates are being tested on their ability to interact appropriately using relevant functional language and strategies.

Preparation

General

- It is important to familiarise candidates with the format of the test before it takes place, and a Speaking test video with worksheets and notes for the teacher is available for this purpose from Cambridge ESOL publications. For an order form, please go to our website and click on Publications.
- Candidates can be further prepared through the use of pair and group activities in class as well as test practice material.
- It may be necessary for teachers to explain the benefits of the paired test format. The primary purpose is to sample a wider range of discourse than can be elicited from an individual interview, in particular allowing the assessment to focus on the interactive nature of oral communication.

By part

■ PART 1

- Part One of the test is in an interview format. Classroom activities such as pair or group work where candidates

exchange information is useful preparation for this part of the test.

- Practice of simple repair strategies such as asking for repetition or clarification is useful.

■ PART 2

- Part Two requires a longer turn. Classroom activities which encourage longer contributions prepare candidates for this part of the test. Discussions as well as short talks or presentations are ideal.

- Preparation might also include a focus on simple discourse markers and connectors.

■ PART 3

- Part Three is a discussion. Classroom activities which encourage candidates to interact well with each other, such as pair and group work, are good preparation.

- Candidates should be encouraged to interact appropriately by taking turns to speak.

- It is also a good idea to encourage students to change partners in class so that they grow accustomed to interacting with a variety of people, some of whom they do not know well.

- Practice of particular functions such as giving opinions, agreeing and disagreeing, etc. is also useful.

N.B. In some centres candidates from the same school are paired together. However, where candidates from a number of different educational establishments are entered at the same centre, some candidates may find that they are paired with a candidate from another establishment. Students should check with the centre through which they are entering to find out the local procedure.

BEC PRELIMINARY SPEAKING

Tasks are included from Parts 2 and 3 of the Test of Speaking, together with the interlocutor frame for these parts.

Material is not included for Part 1, in which the interlocutor asks the candidates questions directly, rather than asking them to perform a task.

1**A: What is important when...?**

Choosing a part-time job

- Working hours
- Responsibilities
- Pay

B: What is important when...?

Attending a conference

- Topics
- Venue
- Cost

BEC PRELIMINARY SPEAKING

Sample Part 2 Example 2 Candidate card

2

A: What is important when...?

Joining a computer skills course

- Course materials
- Trainer
- Number of participants in group

B: What is important when...?

Choosing a delivery company

- Speed of service
- Cost
- Personal recommendation

1

Gifts

- calendar
- diary
- t-shirt
- calculator
- golf umbrella
- wall clock
- pens
- baseball caps

BEC PRELIMINARY SPEAKING

Sample Part 2 Example 1 Interlocutor frame

PART 2 5 minutes (6 minutes for groups of three)

Now, in this part of the test, I'm going to give each of you a choice of two different topics. I'd like you to choose one topic and give a short presentation on it for about a minute. You will have a minute to prepare this and you can make notes if you want.

All right? Here are your topics. Please don't write anything on the booklet.

[Hand each candidate a Part 2 booklet (open at appropriate task) and a pencil and paper for notes.]

🕒 60
seconds

Now, **B**, which topic have you chosen, **A** or **B**?
Would you like to show **A** your task and tell us what you think is important when *[interlocutor states candidate's chosen topic]*?

🕒 about
60 seconds

Thank you. Now, **A**, which do you think is most important: *[interlocutor reads out bullet points]*?

Thank you. Now, **A**, which topic have you chosen, **A** or **B**?
Would you like to show **B** your task and tell us what you think is important when *[interlocutor states candidate's chosen topic]*?

🕒 about
60 seconds

Thank you. Now, **B**, which do you think is most important: *[interlocutor reads out bullet points]*?

Thank you.

Can I have the booklets, please?

[Retrieve Part 2 booklets, pencils and paper.]

1

A: What is important when...?

Choosing a part-time job

- Working hours
- Responsibilities
- Pay

Back up questions

Are **working hours** important? (Why?/Why not?)

Are the **responsibilities** important? (Why?/Why not?)

How important is the **pay**? (Why?/Why not?)

Select from the following additional prompts (if the above have already been covered):

How important is the **location** of the job? (Why?/Why not?)

How important are **colleagues**? (Why?/Why not?)

Is it important that the work is **interesting**? (Why?/Why not?)

1

B: What is important when...?

Attending a conference

- Topics
- Venue
- Cost

Back up questions

Are the **topics** important? (Why?/Why not?)

Is the **venue** important? (Why?/Why not?)

How important is the **cost**? (Why?/Why not?)

Select from the following additional prompts (if the above have already been covered):

Is it useful to know who the **speakers** are? (Why?/Why not?)

Is the **number** of people attending important? (Why?/Why not?)

Is the **length** of the conference important? (Why?/Why not?)

BEC PRELIMINARY SPEAKING

Sample Part 2 Example 2 Interlocutor frame

PART 2 5 minutes (6 minutes for groups of three)

Now, in this part of the test, I'm going to give each of you a choice of two different topics. I'd like you to choose one topic and give a short presentation on it for about a minute. You will have a minute to prepare this and you can make notes if you want.

All right? Here are your topics. Please don't write anything on the booklet.

[Hand each candidate a Part 2 booklet (open at appropriate task) and a pencil and paper for notes.]

🕒 60
seconds

Now, **B**, which topic have you chosen, **A** or **B**?
Would you like to show **A** your task and tell us what you think is important when *[interlocutor states candidate's chosen topic]*?

🕒 about
60 seconds

Thank you. Now, **A**, which do you think is most important: *[interlocutor reads out bullet points]*?

Thank you. Now, **A**, which topic have you chosen, **A** or **B**?
Would you like to show **B** your task and tell us what you think is important when *[interlocutor states candidate's chosen topic]*?

🕒 about
60 seconds

Thank you. Now, **B**, which do you think is most important: *[interlocutor reads out bullet points]*?

Thank you.

Can I have the booklets, please?

[Retrieve Part 2 booklets, pencils and paper.]

2

A: What is important when...?

Joining a computer skills course

- Course materials
- Trainer
- Number of participants in group

Back up questions

Are **course materials** important? (Why?/Why not?)

Is it important who the **trainer** is? (Why?/Why not?)

How important is the **number of participants** in the group? (Why?)

Select from the following additional prompts (if the above have already been covered):

Are opportunities to **get qualifications** essential? (Why?/Why not?)

How important is **cost**?

Is it important **how long** each lesson is?

2

B: What is important when...?

Choosing a delivery company

- Speed of service
- Cost
- Personal recommendation

Back up questions

Is **speed of service** important? (Why?/Why not?)

How important is **cost**? (Why?/Why not?)

Are **personal recommendations** important? (Why?/Why not?)

Select from the following additional prompts (if the above have already been covered):

How important are **discounts**?

Is it important for the delivery company to include **insurance**? (Why?/Why not?)

How important is the **size** of the delivery company? (Why?/Why not?)

BEC PRELIMINARY SPEAKING

Sample Part 3 Interlocutor frame

PART 3 5 minutes (7 minutes for groups of three)

Now, in this part of the test you are going to talk about something together.
I'm going to describe a situation.

A large company is choosing some gifts to help promote their company. Talk together for about 2 minutes about the different gifts and decide which 3 would be the most suitable.

Here are some ideas to help you.

[Place the Part 3 booklet open at task 1 in front of the candidates so that they can both see it.]

I'll describe the situation again.

A large company is choosing some gifts to help promote their company. Talk together for about 2 minutes about the different gifts and decide which 3 would be the most suitable.

Now talk together. Please speak so that we can hear you.

 about
2 minutes

Can I have the booklet, please?

[Retrieve Part 3 booklet.]

[Select one or more of the following questions, as appropriate, to redress any imbalance between candidates in Part 3, or to extend the discussion.]

- What kind of gift would you find the most useful? (Why?)
- Do you think promotional gifts should be expensive? (Why?/Why not?)
- Who should companies give promotional gifts to? (Why?)
- Why is it important for companies to give gifts to their clients?
- What other ways are there to promote a company?

Thank you. That is the end of the test.

1

Gifts

- calendar
- diary
- t-shirt
- calculator
- golf umbrella
- wall clock
- pens
- baseball caps

Assessment of Speaking

Throughout the test candidates are assessed on their own individual performance and not in relation to each other. The assessor awards marks according to four analytical criteria:

- Grammar and Vocabulary
- Discourse Management
- Pronunciation
- Interactive Communication.

The interlocutor awards a Global Achievement mark, which is based on the analytical scales.

These criteria should be interpreted within the overall context of the Cambridge ESOL Common Scale for Speaking on page 51, where BEC Preliminary is at Level B1.

■ Grammar and Vocabulary

This refers to the accurate and appropriate use of grammatical forms and vocabulary. It also includes the range of both grammatical forms and vocabulary. Performance is viewed in terms of the overall effectiveness of the language used.

RANGE: the active use of a range of grammatical forms and vocabulary.

ACCURACY: the accurate use of grammatical forms and syntax.

APPROPRIACY: the appropriate use of vocabulary to deal with the tasks.

■ Discourse Management

This refers to the candidate's ability to link utterances together to form a coherent monologue and contribute appropriately to dialogue. The utterances should be relevant to the tasks and to preceding utterances in the discourse. The discourse produced should be at a level of complexity appropriate to B1 level and the utterances should be arranged logically to develop the themes or arguments required by the tasks. The extent of the contributions should be appropriate, i.e. long or short as required at a particular point in the dynamic development of the discourse in order to achieve the task.

COHERENCE: the logical arrangement of utterances to form spoken discourse and to develop arguments or themes.

EXTENT: the appropriate length of individual contributions (long or short) to develop the discourse and deal with the tasks.

RELEVANCE: the relevance of contributions to the tasks and to preceding contributions in the discourse.

■ Pronunciation

This refers to the candidate's ability to produce comprehensible utterances to fulfil the task requirements.

This includes stress, rhythm and intonation, as well as individual sounds. Examiners put themselves in the position

of the person who is not a language teaching specialist and assess the overall impact of the pronunciation and the degree of effort required to understand the candidate.

STRESS AND RHYTHM: the appropriate use of strong and weak syllables in words and connected speech, the linking of words, and the effective highlighting of information-bearing words in utterances.

INTONATION: the use of a sufficiently wide pitch range and the appropriate use of intonation to convey intended meanings.

INDIVIDUAL SOUNDS: the effective articulation of individual sounds to facilitate understanding.

Different varieties of English, e.g. British, North American, Australian, etc., are acceptable, provided they are used consistently throughout the test.

■ Interactive Communication

This refers to the candidate's ability to take an active part in the development of the discourse, showing sensitivity to turn-taking and avoiding undue hesitation. It requires the ability to participate in the range of interactive situations in the test and to develop discussions on a range of topics by initiating and responding appropriately. It also refers to the deployment of strategies to maintain and repair interaction at an appropriate level throughout the test so that the tasks can be fulfilled.

INITIATING AND RESPONDING: the ability to participate in a range of situations and to develop the interaction by initiating and responding appropriately.

HESITATION: the ability to participate in the development of the interaction without undue hesitation.

TURN-TAKING: the sensitivity to listen, speak, and allow others to speak, as appropriate.

■ Global Achievement Scale

This scale refers to the candidate's overall effectiveness in dealing with the tasks in the three separate parts of the BEC Preliminary Test of Speaking. The global mark is an independent, impression mark which reflects the assessment of the candidate's performance from the interlocutor's perspective.

■ Typical minimum adequate performance

Develops the interaction with contributions which are mostly coherent and extended when dealing with the tasks. Grammar is mostly accurate and vocabulary appropriate. Utterances are understood with little strain on the listener.

Assessment is based on performance in the whole test, and does not depend on performance in particular parts of the test.

Marking

In many countries, Oral Examiners are assigned to teams, each of which is led by a Team Leader who may be responsible for approximately 15 Oral Examiners. Team Leaders give advice and support to Oral Examiners, as required.

The Team Leaders are responsible to a Professional Support Leader, who is the professional representative of Cambridge ESOL for the Speaking tests. Professional Support Leaders are appointed by Cambridge ESOL and attend an annual co-ordination and development session in the UK. Team Leaders are appointed by the Professional Support Leader in consultation with the local administration.

After initial training of examiners, standardisation of marking is maintained by both annual examiner co-ordination sessions and by monitoring visits to centres by Team Leaders. During co-ordination sessions, examiners watch and discuss sample Speaking tests recorded on DVD and then conduct practice tests with volunteer candidates in order to establish a common standard of assessment.

The sample tests on DVD are selected to demonstrate a range of nationalities and different levels of competence, and are pre-marked by a team of experienced assessors.

Cambridge ESOL Common Scale for Speaking

The Cambridge ESOL Common Scale for Speaking has been developed to help users to:

- interpret levels of performance in the Cambridge Speaking tests from beginner to advanced
- identify typical performance qualities at particular levels
- locate performance in one examination against performance in another.

The Common Scale is designed to be useful to test candidates and other test users, e.g. admissions officers or employers.

The Common Scale is a general scale. Examiners for BEC Preliminary Speaking use a separate mark scheme, designed specifically for use in the BEC Preliminary Test of Speaking.

The description at each level of the Common Scale aims to provide a brief general description of the nature of spoken language ability at a particular level in real-world contexts. In this way the wording offers an easily understandable description of performance which can be used, for example, in specifying requirements to language trainers, formulating job descriptions and specifying language requirements for new posts.

LEVEL MASTERY

C2 Fully operational command of the spoken language

- Able to handle communication in most situations, including unfamiliar or unexpected ones.
- Able to use accurate and appropriate linguistic resources to express complex ideas and concepts and produce extended discourse that is coherent and always easy to follow.
- Rarely produces inaccuracies and inappropriacies.
- Pronunciation is easily understood and prosodic features are used effectively; many features, including pausing and hesitation, are 'native-like'.

LEVEL EFFECTIVE OPERATIONAL PROFICIENCY

C1 Good operational command of the spoken language

- Able to handle communication in most situations.
- Able to use accurate and appropriate linguistic resources to express ideas and produce discourse that is generally coherent.
- Occasionally produces inaccuracies and inappropriacies.
- Maintains a flow of language with only natural hesitation resulting from considerations of appropriacy or expression.
- L1 accent may be evident but does not affect the clarity of the message.

LEVEL VANTAGE

B2 Generally effective command of the spoken language

- Able to handle communication in familiar situations.
- Able to organise extended discourse but occasionally produces utterances that lack coherence and some inaccuracies and inappropriate usage occur.
- Maintains a flow of language, although hesitation may occur whilst searching for language resources.
- Although pronunciation is easily understood, L1 features may be intrusive.
- Does not require major assistance or prompting by an interlocutor.

LEVEL THRESHOLD

B1 Limited but effective command of the spoken language

- Able to handle communication in most familiar situations.
- Able to construct longer utterances but is not able to use complex language except in well-rehearsed utterances.
- Has problems searching for language resources to express ideas and concepts resulting in pauses and hesitation.
- Pronunciation is generally intelligible, but L1 features may put a strain on the listener.
- Has some ability to compensate for communication difficulties using repair strategies, but may require prompting and assistance by an interlocutor.

LEVEL WAYSTAGE

A2 Basic command of the spoken language

- Able to convey basic meaning in very familiar or highly predictable situations.
- Produces utterances which tend to be very short – words or phrases – with frequent hesitations and pauses.
- Dependent on rehearsed or formulaic phrases with limited generative capacity.
- Only able to produce limited extended discourse.
- Pronunciation is heavily influenced by L1 features and may at times be difficult to understand.
- Requires prompting and assistance by an interlocutor to prevent communication from breaking down.

The BEC Preliminary examination is set at Level B1.

BEC VANTAGE

TEST OF READING

GENERAL DESCRIPTION

Paper format	The paper consists of a range of business-related texts and accompanying tasks. A text may consist of several short sections.
Timing	1 hour.
No. of parts	There are five parts. Parts 1 to 3 test candidates' reading comprehension. Parts 4 and 5 test candidates' understanding of the meaning of written English at word, phrase, sentence and paragraph level.
No. of questions	45.
Task types	Matching, 4-option multiple choice, 4-option multiple-choice cloze, proof-reading.
Text types	Informational texts, articles and reports.
Length of texts	150–550 words per text.
Answer format	Candidates indicate answers by shading a box or writing a word on a machine-readable answer sheet.
Marks	All questions carry one mark.

STRUCTURE AND TASKS

PART 1

Task type and focus	Matching. Scanning and reading for gist.
Format	Matching task involving one continuous text divided into four sections or four short informational texts, approximately 250–350 words in total.
No. of Qs	7.

PART 2

Task type and focus	Matching. Understanding text structure.
Format	Single text: article, report, etc. with sentence-length gaps. Whole text approximately 450–550 words in total.
No. of Qs	5.

PART 3

Task type and focus	4-option multiple choice. Reading for gist and specific information.
Format	Single text of approximately 450–550 words.
No. of Qs	6.

PART 4

Task type and focus	4-option multiple-choice cloze. Vocabulary and structure.
Format	A single informational text with lexical gaps (text including gapped words approximately 200–300 words).
No. of Qs	15.

PART 5

Task type and focus	Proof-reading. Understanding sentence structure and error identification.
Format	Short text (approximately 150–200 words). Identification of additional unnecessary words in text.
No. of Qs	12.

The five parts of the Test of Reading

■ PART 1 – MATCHING

In this part, there is an emphasis on scanning and reading for gist.



Sample task and answer key: pages 55 and 59



Each correct answer in Part 1 receives 1 mark.

This is a matching task. There are four short texts on a related theme (e.g. descriptions of a group of products, or advertisements for jobs) or a single text divided into four sections. Although the context of each text is similar, there is also information that is particular to each text. The texts are labelled A–D. Candidates are presented with a set of seven statements or phrases related to the texts. They are expected to match each one to the relevant text.

Questions in this part tend to focus mostly on the identification of specific information and detail, although some questions may focus on gist.

■ PART 2 – MATCHING

In this part, there is an emphasis on understanding text structure.



Sample task and answer key: pages 56 and 59.



Each correct answer in Part 2 receives 1 mark.

This is a matching task, comprising a text that has had six sentences removed from it and a set of seven sentences labelled A–G. Candidates are required to match each gap with the sentence which they think fits in terms of meaning and structure. The first gap is always given as an example so that candidates have five gaps left to complete. When they have finished this part there is one sentence left which they have not used.

The texts for this part are chosen because they have a clear line of thought or argument that can still be discerned by the reader with the sentences removed. There is only one sentence that fits each gap.

This part tests understanding of text structure as well as meaning and the gaps are reasonably far apart so that candidates can successfully anticipate the appropriate lexical and grammatical features of the missing sentence. Candidates can be expected to be tested on a variety of cohesive features with either a backward or a forward reference or both, sometimes going beyond sentence level. Thus, while selecting the appropriate sentence for a gap, they should read before and after the text to ensure that it fits well. At the end of this part, they should read through the entire text, inserting the gapped sentences as they go along, to ensure that the information is coherent.

■ PART 3 – 4-OPTION MULTIPLE CHOICE

In this part, there is an emphasis on reading for gist and specific information.



Sample task and answer key: pages 57 and 59.



Each correct answer in Part 3 receives 1 mark.

This task consists of a text accompanied by 4-option multiple-choice questions. The stem of a multiple-choice question may take the form of a question or an incomplete sentence. There are six questions, which are placed after the text. Sources of original texts may be the general and business press, company literature and books on topics such as management. Texts may be edited, but the source is authentic.

■ PART 4 – 4-OPTION MULTIPLE-CHOICE CLOZE

This part tests the candidate's understanding of vocabulary and structure.



Sample task and answer key: pages 58 and 59.



Each correct answer in Part 4 receives 1 mark.

This is a multiple-choice cloze test with 15 gaps, most of which test lexical items, and may focus on correct word choice, lexical collocations and fixed phrases. The texts chosen for this part come from varied sources but they all have a straightforward message or meaning, so that candidates are being tested on vocabulary and not on their comprehension of the passage.

■ PART 5 – PROOF-READING

This part tests the candidate's understanding of sentence structure and their ability to identify errors.



Sample task and answer key: page 59.



Each correct answer in Part 5 receives 1 mark.

In this task, candidates identify words that have been introduced into a text in error.

This exercise can be related to the authentic task of checking a text for errors, and suitable text types therefore include letters, publicity materials, articles, etc. The text contains 12 numbered lines, which are the test questions. Further lines at the end may complete the text, but these are not test questions.

Preparation

General

■ Make sure the students read as widely as possible in class and at home. Classroom reading can include a range of

reading texts from authentic sources such as business magazines and web pages, as well as business English coursebooks. Encourage students to interact fully with each text by focusing on pre-reading questions. These stimulate interest in the topic dealt with by the text and train students in prediction techniques.

- It is useful for students to refer to dictionaries and grammar books while studying. However they should also be encouraged to read texts without thinking that they need to understand every word. They are not allowed to use a dictionary in the examination and they should be trained to try to guess the meaning of unknown words from the context. Students sometimes spend too long processing the text at word level rather than trying to get a more 'top down' view of what it is about.

- It is important to make sure the students are familiar with the standard format of the test by going through the sample materials with them.

- Make sure students are familiar with the instructions on the front page of the question paper, and for each part of the test. They should also be familiar with the technique of indicating their answer on the separate answer sheet, so that they can do this quickly and accurately. They will need to be shown how to do this and to practise in a timed exercise. They need to think about the relative merits of transferring their answers onto the answer sheet at the end of each task or waiting until the end of the test. If they find it difficult to complete the parts in the time allowed, it may be wiser to transfer answers after each part.

- When students are familiar with the different task types, it is a good idea to discuss which parts take them longer to complete. Following this discussion, you may wish to suggest possible timings for each task. Students may prefer to attempt tasks which they find easier first. The outcome of the discussion will also help you to decide which sections of the paper to focus on for further practice and may lead on to assistance with faster reading strategies.

- Remind students to check the spelling of their answers to Parts 2 and 3, as incorrect spelling of their answers is penalised, and to write clearly and in capital letters.

By part

■ PART 1

- In order to prepare for this part it would be useful to familiarise students with sets of short texts that have a similar theme. Newspapers, magazines and catalogues are useful sources of texts. Students should be encouraged to look closely at all the information, particularly as short texts often include additional snippets of information on separate lines (such as prices, dates, titles, measurements, etc.) that can easily be overlooked.

- Students could be set questions which test global reading skills prior to reading the texts, so that they are trained to think about who a text is written for and why it was written.

■ PART 2

- This can be quite a difficult task, especially for candidates who are unfamiliar with such an exercise. In preparing them for this part, it is a good idea to select a number of graded texts that have clear, familiar ideas and evident cohesive features. Texts can be cut up as they are in the test or simply discussed in their entirety. In this way, students can work up to dealing with more complex material and identifying the many different ways in which ideas are connected.

- It is also useful when doing gapped texts to look at sentences that do not fit in particular gaps and discuss the reasons for this. Sometimes it is possible to make a sentence fit a gap by simply changing a few words. Discussion on areas such as this would also be fruitful.

- Students should be advised to read through the gapped text and the list of sentences first, before completing the task.

■ PART 3

- Multiple-choice questions are a familiar and long-standing type of test; here they are used to test opinion and inference rather than straightforward facts.

- Correct answers are not designed to depend on simple word-matching, and students' ability to interpret paraphrasing should be developed.

- Students should be encouraged to pursue their own interpretation of relevant parts of the text and then check their idea against the options offered, rather than reading all the options first.

- It could be useful for students to be given perhaps one of the wrong options only, and for them to try to write the correct answer and another wrong option.

■ PART 4

- Candidates are usually familiar with this type of task and so it is most important to try to improve their range of vocabulary. The options provided for each question in the test will have similar meanings but only one word will be correct within the context provided. Familiarity with typical collocations would be especially useful. The language of business is often very precise and so it is worth spending time looking at the vocabulary used in different types of text, getting students to keep a vocabulary list and encouraging them to make active use of the lexical items that are new to them.

■ PART 5

- Students should be reminded that this task represents an editing process that is common practice, even in their first language.

- Any work on error analysis is likely to be helpful for this task.

- A reverse of the exercise (giving students texts with missing words) might prove beneficial.

PART ONE
Questions 1 – 7

- Look at the statements below and the comments given on the opposite page by mobile phone retailers.
- Which section (A, B, C or D) does each statement 1 – 7 refer to?
- For each statement 1 – 7, mark one letter (A, B, C or D) on your Answer Sheet.
- You will need to use some of these letters more than once.

Example:

0 the extent to which mobile phones have changed in size

0	A	B	C	D
<input type="checkbox"/>				

- 1 the need for retail staff to stay informed about the mobile phones they are selling
- 2 the belief that the market will not sustain the present number of mobile phone retailers
- 3 the use of mobile phones no longer being restricted to a specific group of people
- 4 the relationship between charges and the number of mobile phone users
- 5 a negative view of competing mobile phone retailers
- 6 a comparison between change in the mobile phone industry and that in a different sector
- 7 those services available at mobile phone outlets that are not provided by other retailers

2

A

Market awareness of the mobile telephone has exploded and the retailer who specialises in mobile phones is seeing growth like never before. Admittedly, some customers buy their first mobile phone in the supermarket, but for advice, add-ons and particular services they turn to the specialist. There are a large number of mobile phone retailers and I can't help but feel the market only has room for four players. Undoubtedly, customer service is the factor that differentiates operators and I think this year we will probably see rationalisation in the sector.

B

When I first started in the industry, mobile phones were retailing at a thousand pounds and were as large as box files. Now, prices are constantly being driven down and handsets are considerably more compact. There is intense competition between the network providers, and every time they lower their tariffs, more people come into the market. This will continue, and while retail dealers' profits will be affected dramatically, network providers will have to generate more revenue by offering internet provision and data services to the mobile user.

C

Over a few years, prices have dropped sharply, and technological advances have meant products have changed – and are changing. Successful retailers must try to keep on top of these developments and invest in the training of employees so they are able to offer impartial advice to customers. E-commerce is taking off but this won't necessarily replace traditional retail outlets. In order to stand out, you need innovative ideas on customer service. We don't believe in criticising other retailers, but there's nothing particularly exciting out there at present.

D

The mobile phone business is behaving like the internet industry in take-up and the pace of innovation, and it's important not to be left behind. We must continue to innovate in delivering the product to the customer. In terms of service provision, you can draw comparisons between us and our closest rival, but clearly all the main mobile phone retailers have succeeded in taking the industry forward. Growth has accelerated rapidly and the mobile telephone has changed from simply being a business tool, to being a means of communication for everyone.

Turn Over ▶
3

BEC VANTAGE READING

Part 2 (questions 8–12)

PART TWO

Questions 8 – 12

- Read the article below about a survey of businesswomen staying in hotels.
- Choose the best sentence from the opposite page to fill each of the gaps.
- For each gap 8 – 12, mark one letter (A – G) on your Answer Sheet.
- Do not use any letter more than once.
- There is an example at the beginning, (0).

Hotels Failing Businesswomen

Hoteliers should take note because they are facing serious criticism! Women account for more than half of all business travellers, but hotels are not doing enough for them. (0) These show that the number of complaints made about the way women guests are treated is increasing.

The Bartonsfield Hotel in London also conducted a recent survey of UK businesswomen, which reveals that 70% feel they receive an inferior service. (8) The attitude of hotel staff made them feel out of place in public areas; for example, 62% chose to eat in their rooms because they were made to feel uncomfortable by staff when dining alone. (9) Four years ago, for example, a similar survey had revealed that a significant number of women travelling alone and wishing to use the hotel restaurant were actually turned away.

Many of the suggestions for improved services put forward by the Business Travel Association are relatively simple. (10) Placing tables in restaurants in a way that allows the head waiter to introduce guests to one another, so they can themselves

choose to sit together over a meal, was a further suggestion. Guests in the dining room would then have the opportunity to meet up with others who might, for example, be attending the same conference, or have the same business interests.

Wendy Manning, executive manager of the Bartonsfield Hotel, agreed with the Business Travel Association that hotel star ratings should be influenced by the level of service they offer to female business guests. (11) 'Our survey highlighted the unwillingness of many women to air their views if they are treated badly,' Wendy Manning pointed out.

A group of influential businesswomen recently met to discuss the results of the Business Travel Association questionnaire. They suggested that businesswomen should not hesitate to make it clear if they have a problem. (12) Once clients have gone, it is all too easy for the issue to be ignored by hotel managers, and it will also be forgotten by the overworked business executives themselves.

Example:

0	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
<input type="checkbox"/>							

- A** The hotel staff assumed they should be booked into the same room.
- B** But there is clear evidence that things are slowly improving.
- C** This would enable women to make an informed choice about a hotel, and they would not be placed in the uncomfortable position of having to complain about poor service.
- D** It is advisable for them to do this during their stay rather than waiting until they check out.
- E** Making sure that facilities in guest bedrooms cater equally for the needs of male and female guests is one such idea.
- F** Most of the women, when questioned further, thought that the reason for this was that they were female and travelling alone.
- G** This is evident from the results of a questionnaire distributed to hotel guests by the Business Travel Association.

Turn Over ► 5

PART THREE
Questions 13 – 18

- Read the article below about product life cycles and the questions on the opposite page.
- For each question 13 – 18, mark one letter (A, B, C or D) on your Answer Sheet for the answer you choose.

Product Life Cycles and Sales Strategy

One of the most important concepts in sales management and marketing is that of the product life cycle. This is a historical record of the life of a product, showing the stage in its life the product has reached at a particular time. By identifying the stage that a product is in or may be heading towards, companies can formulate better marketing plans. All products have 'lives' in as much as they are created, sell with varying profitability over a period of time, and then become obsolete and are replaced or simply no longer produced. A product's sales position and profitability can be expected to fluctuate over time and so, at each successive stage in the product's cycle, it is necessary to adopt different tactics.

The two main features of the product life cycle are unit sales and unit profit. The unit sales figures usually jump on introduction, as a response to heavy advertising and promotion, as customers buy the product experimentally. This is generally followed by a levelling off while it is evaluated – the length of this period depending on the use to which the product is put. Then, unit sales rise steadily through the growth phase to the maturity phase, when the product is widely accepted, and so on to saturation level. By this time, competitors will have entered the market with their own version and, from this point, the sales team will have to work even harder to win all additional sales. Eventually, the product's sales decline as better versions enter the market and competition becomes too strong.

In retrospect, most firms know what happened to their products from launch to withdrawal. They can

compile this information from the records of unit sales.

Unfortunately, unit sales are not the complete story as it is unit profit that is the decisive factor, although this is not always recorded accurately. It is this figure that sales management has to monitor, though, to ensure an effective marketing strategy and to produce effective profits.

At launch, the product is costed accurately on the basis of production costs plus selling costs. Initially these remain fairly stable, but, when the product is proving successful, competitors will bring out their own 'copy-cat' products. With a competitor in the field, the original firm has to respond in order to maintain its market position. It can run special sales promotions, improve deliveries, make more frequent sales calls and so on. Often the extra expenditure is not accurately charged to the product and the result is that, long before unit sales are noticeably falling, the unit profit has already fallen.

The product life cycle, then, presents a picture of what happened in the product's 'lifetime', so how can this be used as an ongoing aid to management decision-making? Every sales manager has a chart on which the progress of sales is plotted and this can be used as a guide to the stage of development each product is currently in. An essential management skill is being able to interpret sales results and draw in the stages as they occur. Deciding where each stage begins and ends can be a random exercise, though usually the stages are based on where the rate of sales growth or decline becomes pronounced.

- 13 According to the text, the end of a product's life cycle is marked by
- a sharp rise in production costs.
 - the product becoming outdated.
 - an increase in customer complaints.
 - less support from sales management.
- 14 What does the writer say about sales management in the first paragraph?
- Companies should spend more time on their sales planning.
 - There are many managers who need to improve their sales performance.
 - Most sales managers fail to recognise which stage a product has reached.
 - The sales approach should change with each phase of the product life cycle.
- 15 According to the text, a greater sales effort is required for a product when
- it is particularly innovative.
 - the advertising budget has been cut.
 - rival companies start to produce something similar.
 - consumer interest switches to a new product category.
- 16 According to the text, a good marketing strategy must primarily be concerned with
- sales statistics.
 - product details.
 - consumer data.
 - profit information.
- 17 According to the text, profit levels may fail to correspond to the volume of sales because
- the full selling costs have not been taken into account.
 - the production costs were not estimated correctly.
 - there are unforeseen problems with distribution.
 - there has been a lack of economic stability.
- 18 What does the writer say about the charts that show sales progress?
- It is a matter of judgement where one sales phase finishes and another begins.
 - Managers should review policy when a sharp fall in sales is indicated.
 - It is difficult to see how sales charts can provide sufficient guidance to managers.
 - Managers should get confirmation of the data they plot on the sales charts.

Turn Over ► 7

BEC VANTAGE READING

Part 4 (questions 19–33)

PART FOUR Questions 19 – 33

- Read the advice below about the use of technology in presentations.
- Choose the best word to fill each gap from **A**, **B**, **C** or **D** on the opposite page.
- For each question 19 – 33, mark one letter (**A**, **B**, **C** or **D**) on your Answer Sheet.
- There is an example at the beginning, (0).

Guidelines for giving Presentations

Most presentations today (0) ...**B**... on the use of some sort of technology, such as a laptop computer linked to a projector. While this technology can help to (19) presentations better, it also has a (20) of getting in the way. As a general (21) it is better to (22) on the content of a presentation as a means of (23) your audience's attention, rather than relying on sophisticated equipment.

Bear in mind that when an organisation invites (24) for a contract, they may (25) four or five presentations from different companies on the same day. Each of these companies will probably be using the same computer graphics (26) and the same equipment. The chances are the presentations will be similar too.

That's why the content and (27) of what you say are important. Think about what you want to say and how to say it as clearly as possible. As a first step, you need to (28) the main points you want to get across. Audiences are easily bored and (29) to remember only the most entertaining, exciting or unusual ideas.

Next create your materials, choosing the images for your presentation carefully. Remember you do not want to stop your audience from listening to you, nor do you want to (30) them.

Finally, make all the necessary (31) for the equipment you need. If technology is to be an important (32) of your presentation, make sure you know how to use it (33) and test it out beforehand.

Example:

A calculate **B** depend **C** determine **D** lean

0	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	A	B	C	D

- 19 **A** produce **B** make **C** construct **D** build
- 20 **A** behaviour **B** habit **C** practice **D** routine
- 21 **A** method **B** law **C** rule **D** course
- 22 **A** focus **B** define **C** target **D** direct
- 23 **A** gaining **B** acquiring **C** collecting **D** taking
- 24 **A** requests **B** calls **C** bids **D** commands
- 25 **A** appoint **B** programme **C** schedule **D** catalogue
- 26 **A** parcels **B** packets **C** bundles **D** packages
- 27 **A** formation **B** design **C** structure **D** system
- 28 **A** catalogue **B** label **C** mark **D** identify
- 29 **A** point **B** tend **C** lead **D** move
- 30 **A** disorder **B** mistake **C** confuse **D** complicate
- 31 **A** appointments **B** procedures **C** arrangements **D** organisations
- 32 **A** share **B** role **C** function **D** element
- 33 **A** precisely **B** suitably **C** properly **D** accurately

PART FIVE
Questions 34 – 45

- Read the article below about a training company.
- In most of the lines 34 – 45 there is one extra word. It is either grammatically incorrect or does not fit in with the meaning of the text. Some lines, however, are correct.
- If a line is correct, write **CORRECT** on your Answer Sheet.
- If there is an extra word in the line, write **the extra word** in CAPITAL LETTERS on your Answer Sheet.
- The exercise begins with two examples, (0) and (00).

Examples

0	1	0					
00	C	O	R	E	C	T	

Training Provision

- 0 There is little doubt that training has become so an accepted part of business but it is
- 00 equally true that companies take a much less scientific approach than they should. A
- 34 recent study suggested us that, while UK organisations spend nearly £10bn a year on
- 35 training, 37% of them have never evaluated that expenditure in strict terms of business
- 36 impact. Yet if training activities that are run along the same lines as other business
- 37 operations, in ways that maximise with opportunities, it becomes easier for training
- 38 organisations to help companies meet strategic goals. One organisation showing an
- 39 awareness of what this principle is CT Solutions, a training business that has its own
- 40 premises in South London. The need for more training has combined it with cutbacks in
- 41 office accommodation to create plenty of business for those hiring out space, particularly
- 42 upper-end hotels. But while CT Solutions detected that many organisations were not
- 43 satisfied with hotels because they do not always provide a good service. CT Solutions is
- 44 totally dedicated to providing of space for business, mostly for training, but also for
- 45 conferences and AGMs. Clearly, since the business has been grown in size, it is an approach that works.

10

BEC VANTAGE READING
Sample paper answer key

PART ONE

- 1 C
2 A
3 D
4 B
5 C
6 D
7 A

PART TWO

- 8 F
9 B
10 E
11 C
12 D

PART THREE

- 13 B
14 D
15 C
16 D
17 A
18 A

PART FOUR

- 19 B
20 B
21 C
22 A
23 A
24 C
25 C
26 D
27 C
28 D
29 B
30 C
31 C
32 D
33 C

PART FIVE

- 34 US
35 STRICT
36 THAT
37 WITH
38 CORRECT
39 WHAT
40 IT
41 CORRECT
42 WHILE
43 CORRECT
44 OF
45 BEEN

BEC VANTAGE

TEST OF WRITING

GENERAL DESCRIPTION

Paper format	The paper consists of two business-related Writing tasks in response to stimuli provided and for a given purpose and target reader.
Timing	45 minutes.
No. of parts	There are two parts.
No. of tasks	Two (both are compulsory).
Task types	In task one candidates are required to write an internal company communication. In task two candidates are required to write either a piece of business correspondence, a report or a proposal.
Answer format	Candidates write their answers on the question paper.
Marks	Part 1 carries one third of the total marks available and Part 2 carries two thirds of the total marks available.

STRUCTURE AND TASKS

PART 1

Task type and focus	A message, memo or email. Giving instructions, explaining a development, asking for comments, requesting information, agreeing to requests.
Format	Candidates are required to produce an internal communication based on a rubric only (plus layout of output text type).
No. of tasks and length	One compulsory task. 40–50 words.

PART 2

Task type and focus	Business correspondence, short report or proposal. Correspondence: e.g. explaining, apologising, reassuring, complaining. Report: e.g. describing, summarising. Proposal: e.g. describing, summarising, recommending, persuading.
Format	Candidates are required to produce a piece of business correspondence, short report or proposal, based on a rubric and input text(s).
No. of tasks and length	One compulsory task. 120–140 words.

The two parts of the Test of Writing



Part 1 of the Test of Writing carries one third of the total marks available and Part 2 carries two thirds of the total marks available.

■ Expected word length

Candidates are asked to write 40–50 words for Part 1 and 120–140 words for Part 2. Significantly fewer words are likely to mean that the task has not been completed, whereas over-long pieces of writing may involve irrelevance or have a negative effect on the target reader. If this is the case, over-length or under-length answers will be penalised.

■ Irrelevance

The examiners' first priority is to give credit for the candidates' efforts at communication, but candidates are penalised for content irrelevant to the task set, as in the real world this would have a negative impact on the target reader and would interfere with communication.

■ PART 1

This part tests the candidate's ability to produce an internal company communication.



Sample questions and scripts: pages 63 and 65.

■ Task type and focus

An internal company communication, e.g. note, message, memo or email. The range of functions in the task may include giving instructions, explaining a development, asking for comments, requesting information, agreeing to requests.

■ Task format

In this part candidates are presented with the context in the task rubric. This explains the role the candidate must take in order to write a note, message, memo or email of around 40 to 50 words using a written prompt. It also identifies whom the message is to be written to. The prompt is included in the instructions, in the form of bullet points clearly stating the pieces of information that must be incorporated into the answer.

Where the delivery medium specified for a Part One answer is a memo or an email, candidates need not include to/from/date/subject details.

■ PART 2

This part tests the candidate's ability to produce a piece of business correspondence in response to input.



Sample questions and scripts: pages 63 and 65–67.

■ Task type and focus

A piece of business correspondence, short report or proposal. The range of functions in the task may include explaining, apologising, reassuring, complaining, describing, summarising, recommending or persuading.

■ Task format

In the second Writing task, candidates are required to write 120 to 140 words in the form of business correspondence, a short report or a proposal. There is an explanation of the task and one or more texts as input material. These texts may contain visual or graphic material and have 'handwritten' notes on them.

There is no significant difference between the format required for proposals and reports. At this level, reports must be clearly organised and should not contain letter features. There is no particular requirement to provide subheadings, particularly given the length of the report.

Where the delivery medium specified for a Part Two answer is a letter, candidates should include opening and closing formulae, but need not include postal addresses in their answer. Similarly, where the delivery medium specified is a fax, candidates need not include 'fax header' details, and where the delivery medium specified is a memo or an email, candidates need not include to/from/date/subject details.

■ Accuracy and appropriacy in emails

Nowadays a significant proportion of written business communication is transmitted electronically, both within the company and to people outside the company.

In some contexts, this technological change may have changed the nature of what people actually write. It may be argued that a new genre has emerged, characterised by brevity, informality and a lack of conventions and even of regard for linguistic accuracy.

However, linguistic inaccuracy and inappropriate informality within electronic business communications is considered unacceptable by many individuals and organisations, and can be counterproductive if employed in real life.

As well as being used informally, email is also widely used within business cultures in which appropriacy and accuracy are perceived to be important, and this is the context of use on which BEC focuses.

Preparation

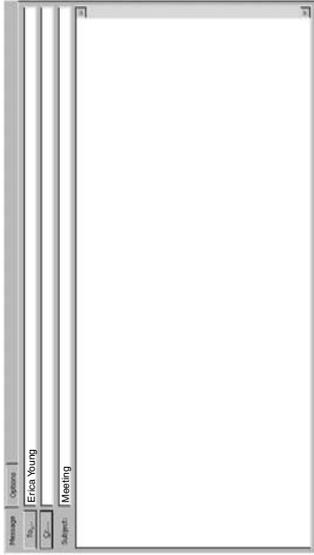
■ The preparation activities outlined for BEC Preliminary candidates would be equally valuable at this level.

■ In the second task for this level, candidates are often provided with annotated information and are asked to report or convey these comments. It is important that students know how to reformulate the comments, incorporating some of their own vocabulary and structures into their work.

■ Whilst at BEC Preliminary level the emphasis is on the accurate reporting of facts, at this level much more is expected in terms of register, cohesion and the range of structures and language used.

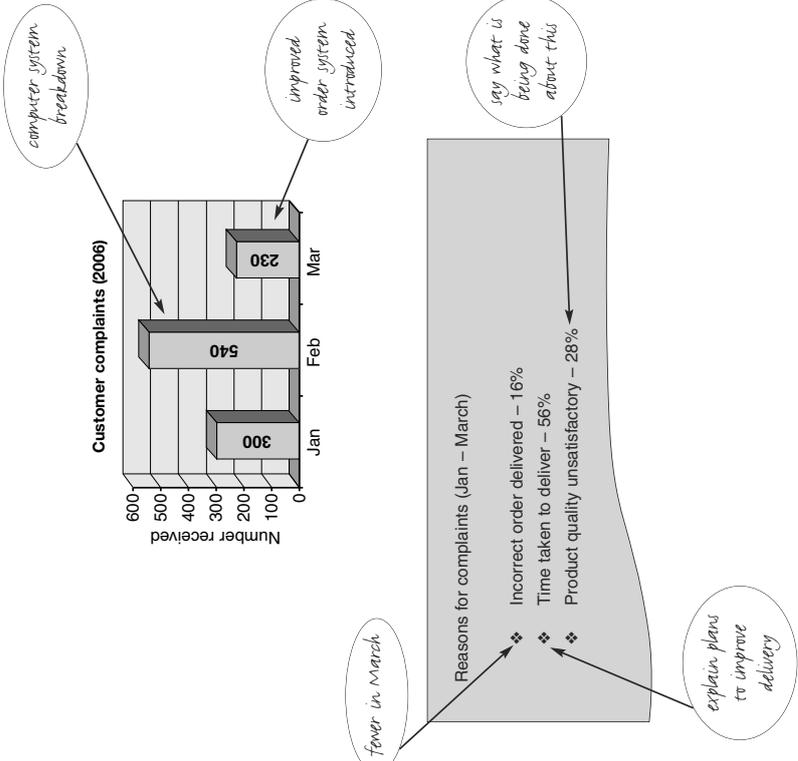
PART ONE

- You are a regional sales manager for an international company. You have been asked to go to a meeting at your company's head office. You cannot go, so somebody else will go in your place.
- Write an **e-mail** to Erica Young, who is organising the meeting:
 - apologising for not being able to go to the meeting
 - explaining why you cannot go
 - saying who will go.
- Write 40 – 50 words.**
- Write on the opposite page.



PART TWO

- You work in the Customer Services Department of a mail-order company. You have been asked to prepare a short report for your line manager about complaints.
- Look at the information below, on which you have already made some handwritten notes.
- Then, using **all** your handwritten notes, write your **report**.
- Write 120 – 140 words.**
- Write on the separate answer paper provided.



Assessment of Writing

Trained examiners award a mark to each piece of writing using two mark schemes – the General Mark Scheme and the Task-Specific Mark Scheme. The General Mark Scheme summarises performance with reference to content, organisation and cohesion, range and accuracy of vocabulary, range and accuracy of grammatical structures and effect on the target reader across five bands. The Task-Specific Mark Scheme focuses on criteria specific to each task.

Candidates are penalised for dealing inadequately with the requirements of the Task-Specific Mark Scheme. The accuracy of language, including spelling and punctuation, is assessed on the General scale for all tasks.

■ Marking

A mark is awarded to each piece of writing.

A panel of expert examiners is divided into small teams, each with a very experienced examiner as Team Leader. A Principal Examiner guides and monitors the marking process. Examiners discuss the Task-Specific and General Mark Schemes and refer to them regularly while they are working.

During marking, each examiner is allocated scripts chosen at random from the whole entry in order to ensure that there is no concentration of good or weak scripts or of one large centre or one country in the allocation of any one examiner.

The BEC Vantage General Mark Scheme is interpreted at Council of Europe Level B2.

A summary of the General Mark Scheme is given, right. Examiners, who are co-ordinated prior to each examination session, work with a more detailed version, which is subject to updating.

■ Spelling and punctuation

These are important aspects of accuracy and are always taken into account. American spelling is equally valid, but there should be consistency.

■ Handwriting

If handwriting interferes with communication without preventing it, the candidate will be penalised. Totally illegible scripts receive Band 0.

■ Irrelevance

The examiners' first priority is to give credit for the candidates' efforts at communication, but candidates are penalised for content irrelevant to the task set.

BEC Vantage Summary of General Mark Scheme

BAND 5	Full realisation of the task set. <ul style="list-style-type: none">• All content points included and expanded upon where the task allows.• Controlled, natural use of language; minimal errors which are minor.• Wide range of structure and vocabulary.• Effectively organised, with appropriate use of cohesive devices.• Register and format consistently appropriate. Very positive effect on the reader.
BAND 4	Good realisation of the task set. <ul style="list-style-type: none">• All content points adequately dealt with.• Generally accurate, errors when complex language is attempted.• Good range of structure and vocabulary.• Generally well-organised, with attention paid to cohesion.• Register and format on the whole appropriate. Positive effect on the reader.
BAND 3	Reasonable achievement of the task set. <ul style="list-style-type: none">• All major content points included; some minor omissions.• A number of errors will be present, but they do not impede communication.• Adequate range of structure and vocabulary.• Organisation and cohesion is satisfactory, on the whole.• Register and format reasonable, although not entirely successful. Satisfactory effect on the reader.
BAND 2	Inadequate attempt at the task set. <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Some major content points omitted or inadequately dealt with; some irrelevance is likely.• Errors sometimes obscure communication, are numerous, and distract the reader.• Limited range of structure and vocabulary.• Content is not clearly organised or linked, causing some confusion.• Inappropriate register and format. Negative effect on the reader.
BAND 1	Poor attempt at the task set. <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Notable content omissions and/or considerable irrelevance, possibly due to misinterpretation of the task set.• Serious lack of control; frequent basic errors.• Little evidence of structure and vocabulary required by task.• Lack of organisation, causing a breakdown in communication.• Little attempt at appropriate register and format. Very negative effect on the reader.
BAND 0	Achieves nothing. Either fewer than 25% of the required number of words or totally illegible or totally irrelevant.

Sample scripts and commentaries

Writing Part One

Script A

I'm really sorry but I'm not able to go to the meeting at our company's head office. I can't attend because of previous arrangements which I can't change.

Mr Jan Korwalski, a very good worker, will go instead of me.

Please accept my apologies.

Marta Stefanska

EXAMINER COMMENTS

Band 5

All points covered. Successful attempt at complex language, for example 'I can't attend because of previous arrangements', 'will go instead of me'. Concise, making a very positive effect on the reader.

Script B

Dear Mrs Young

I would like to apologise for not being able to go to meeting at our company's head office because I will not be in the country. I am going on the business trip to Italy.

Mr Mark Smith will go instead of me.

Many Thanks.

Nadia Johnson

Regional Sales Manager

EXAMINER COMMENTS

Band 4

All points adequately dealt with. Good range of structure and vocabulary. Minor non-impeding errors, for example 'go to meeting', 'on the business trip'. Positive effect on the reader.

Script C

To: Erica Young

Cc:

Subject: Meeting

Dear Mr Young:

Thanks for your last letter! I'm very glad to be invited to attend the meeting at your company's

head office. But first of all, I'm apologising for not being able to go to the meeting. This is due to a error of my agenda, in fact. I have a international conference that day.

I feel sorry for my absence. I'd like to recommend my personal assistant to go instead of me. His name is Jim Green. I hope this will not cause you some trouble.

Best wish yours

Chan Bo Fun

EXAMINER COMMENTS

Band 3

Generally well organised (although not concise), leading to a satisfactory effect on the reader. There are, however, some basic non-impeding errors, for example 'a error of my agenda', 'cause you some trouble'.

Script D

Hello Erica,

I'd like to apologise you, but I can't attend to this meeting in our head office.

In this time I'm going to London for sales meeting with our customers.

Instead of me, for this meeting will go my sales assistance - Tom

Best regards

Natasha

EXAMINER COMMENTS

Band 3

A number of errors, but they do not impede communication. Overall, an adequate attempt at the task.

Writing Part Two

Script E

This report deals with the number of customer's complaints between January 2006 and March 2006 as well as with reasons for those complaints.

Complaints in January stood at 300, but in February the number rocketed to 540 because of a computer system breakdown. Finally, after introducing some improvement in the order system the number of complaints fell back to 230.

We can point out 3 main reasons for these complaints.

Firstly, 10% of them were due to incorrect deliveries. In particular, March saw fewer complaints.

Secondly, an excessive time for delivery led to 56% of complaints. The whole delivery system will be reviewed in order to solve the problem.

Finally, 28% of complaints were due to a lack of quality in our products. This will be solved by setting up a new quality section in our process.

EXAMINER COMMENTS

Band 5

All content points are adequately covered and are well organised. As well as achieving an appropriate register, the candidate demonstrates a good range of vocabulary, e.g. 'setting up'. Errors are few and overall the answer has a very positive effect on the reader.

Script F

Report on customer complaints

INTRODUCTION

This report has the purpose of presenting the reasons for customer complaints in 2006.

FIELDINGS

The customer complaints received in 2006 were 300 in January. Then they increased to 540 in February because of the computer system's breakdown.

In March they fell to 230 because an improved order system was introduced.

The reasons for complaints from January to March were analysed:

firstly the company received complaints for incorrect orders delivered. These errors were fewer in March.

secondly the time taken to deliver is too high, but the company has planned to recruit new agents.

Finally customers complain for the poor product quality. In order to solve this problem more quality controls are making.

CONCLUSIONS

At the moment all customers aren't satisfied but many measures have been taken to improve their satisfaction.

EXAMINER COMMENTS

Band 4

There is a satisfactory range of structures, with some errors, but these do not impede understanding. The content points

are adequately covered, and the register is appropriate. The information is generally well organised, using headings and other discourse markers.

Script G

I was asked to write about complaints in the first three months of 2006.

In January our company received three hundred complaints whereas in February it were five hundred forty. 16% of the complaints in January were because of a incorrect order delivery. The increase in February occurred because our computer system brokes down. The reason for a complaint was in 56% of the cases the time taken to deliver. It is planned to employ two persons in the sales department to improve the delivery. In March the complaints fell to two hundred thrirty. due to the introduction of the improved order system.

Furthermore the incorrect order deliveries were fewer than in January. In 28% of the complaints in March the product quality was unsatisfactory. The production manager has already developed a new purchase system to avoid quality damages. It will be introduced next month.

EXAMINER COMMENTS

Band 3

All content points are addressed and although there are some errors, these do not prevent the message being conveyed. Generally the register and format are appropriate and the organisation is satisfactory, with an adequate range of language used.

Script H

Customer Complaints Reports (2006 Jan-Mar)

Background

- Number of customers complains received showed very high points in February
- It became less half than February's in March.

Analysis

- The breakdown of computer system in February lead to a lot of complaints.
- On the other hand the introduction of improved order system decrease the amount.
- Fewer incorrect order delivered in March. It result in few complaints.
- More than half of complaints are because of late deliver.

- Unsatisfactory product quality's complaints showed 28% of all.

Recommendation

- To improve delivery system is important, it leads the decrease of complaints. It should be improved.
- To reduce poor quality product. Products should be cheack before shipping.

EXAMINER COMMENTS

Band 2

The organisation of the report is reasonable, as is the register and format. However, not all content points are adequately addressed, a limited range of language is used, and there are some distracting errors.

BEC VANTAGE

TEST OF LISTENING

GENERAL DESCRIPTION

Paper format The paper consists of three parts. Each part comprises a recorded text or texts and a Listening task.

Timing Approximately 40 minutes, including time for the transfer of answers to the answer sheet.

No. of parts There are three parts.

No. of questions 30.

Task types Gap-filling, multiple-matching and multiple choice.

Task focuses These include listening for specific information, gist, topic, context, and function, particularly opinion.

Text types Monologues: these include presentations, lectures, announcements, briefings, etc. Interacting speakers: these include meetings, discussions, interviews, etc.

Answer format Candidates are advised to write their answers in the spaces provided on the question paper. There are ten minutes at the end of the test to copy the answers onto a separate answer sheet. Candidates indicate their answers by shading a box or writing a word, or words, on a machine-readable answer sheet.

Marks Each correct answer receives one mark.

STRUCTURE AND TASKS

PART 1

Task type and focus Gap-filling. Listening for note-taking (short answers).

Format Three short monologues or dialogues of approximately one minute each, not linked thematically. Each extract is heard twice.

No. of Qs 12.

PART 2

Task type and focus Multiple-matching. Listening to identify topic, context, function, etc.

Format Short monologues; two sections of five short monologues, not linked thematically.

No. of Qs 10.

PART 3

Task type and focus Multiple choice. Following the main points and retrieving specific information from the text.

Format A monologue, interview or discussion lasting approximately 4 minutes, heard twice.

No. of Qs 8.

The three parts of the Test of Listening

■ PART 1 – NOTE-TAKING

This part tests the candidates' ability to retrieve factual information.



Sample task and answer key: pages 71, 72 and 76.



Each correct answer in Part 1 receives 1 mark.

A series of three short monologues or dialogues: each heard twice.

In this part there are three conversations or answer machine messages, with a gapped text to go with each. Each gapped text provides a very clear context and has four spaces which have to be filled with one or two words or a number. The gapped texts may include forms, diary excerpts, invoices, message pads, etc. Candidates hear each conversation or message twice, and as they listen they are required to complete the gapped text.

This part of the Listening test concentrates on the retrieval of factual information and it is important for candidates to listen carefully, using the prompts on their question paper in order to identify the missing information. For example, they may have to note down a person's name, and if names on the recording are spelled out, these must be spelled correctly. Alternatively, they may have to listen for a room or telephone number, or an instruction or deadline. Answers to this part are not designed to be dictation, and some reformulation of the prompt material will be required in order to locate the correct answer.

■ PART 2 – GAP-FILLING

This part tests the candidates' ability to identify topic, context, function, etc.



Sample task and answer key: pages 72 and 76.



Each correct answer in Part 2 receives 1 mark.

Short monologues; two sections of five monologues each.

This part is divided into two sections. Each section has the same format: candidates hear five short monologues and have to match each monologue to a set of options A–H. In each section, the eight options form a coherent set and the overall theme or topic is clearly stated in the task rubric. For example, candidates may hear five people talking and have to decide what recommendations consultants made to their company. In this case, the set of options A–H will contain a list of the different recommendations that consultants might make. The two sections always test different topics or business issues.

In this part of the Listening test, candidates are being tested on their global listening skills and also on their ability to extract gist, understand main ideas and identify opinion. In

order to answer the questions successfully candidates have to link what the speaker says to one of the options. It is not possible to establish the answer from a 'word match' (although word matches may offer an element of distraction). However, a right answer is always overtly given and candidates are not expected to opt for the 'best' answer.

■ PART 3 – 3-OPTION MULTIPLE CHOICE

This part tests the candidates' ability to follow the main points of a text and retrieve specific information.



Sample task and answer key: pages 73 and 76.



Each correct answer in Part 3 receives 1 mark.

Extended conversation or monologue: heard twice.

A longer text, usually lasting approximately four minutes is heard in this part. The text is typically an interview or discussion with two or more speakers, or possibly a presentation or report with one speaker. There are eight 3-option multiple-choice questions that focus on details and main ideas in the text. These include questions on options and feelings.

■ Recording information

The instructions for each task are given on the question paper and are also heard on the recording. Before each text is heard, candidates have time to read through the questions and think about the questions. The length of this preparation time is indicated on the recording. Candidates should use this time to familiarise themselves with the task and begin to make predictions about what they are likely to hear. A variety of voices, styles of delivery and accents are heard in each Listening paper to reflect the various contexts presented in the recordings.

Preparation

- All listening practice is helpful for students, whether authentic or specially prepared.
- In particular, discussion should focus on:
 - the purpose of speeches and conversations or discussions
 - the roles of speakers
 - the opinions expressed
 - the language functions employed
 - relevant aspects of phonology such as stress, linking and weak forms, etc.
- In addition, students should be encouraged to appreciate the differing demands of each task type. It will be helpful not only to practise the task types in order to develop a sense of familiarity and confidence, but also to discuss how the three task types relate to real-life skills and situations.

■ The first task is note-taking (and therefore productive), and students should reflect on the various situations in which they take notes from a spoken input. They should also be encouraged to try to predict the kinds of words or numbers that might go in the gaps.

■ The second task is a matching exercise, featuring differing styles and registers.

■ The third task involves correct interpretation, with correct answers often being delivered by more than one speaker.

■ In all three tasks, successful listening depends on reading the questions and rubric carefully, and students should be encouraged to make full use of the pauses during the test to check their answers.

PART ONE
Questions 1 – 12

- You will hear three telephone conversations or messages.
- Write **one or two words or a number** in the numbered spaces on the notes or forms below.
- You will hear each recording twice.

Conversation One
(Questions 1 – 4)

- Look at the notes below.
- You will hear a woman telephoning a conference centre office.

NOTES ABOUT SEMINAR

Date: 21st February

Title: (1)

Time: 10 am – 4 pm.

Venue: (2)

Topic of extra workshop: (3)

Amount payable in advance: (4) per person

Conversation Two
(Questions 5 – 8)

- Look at the form below.
- You will hear a man calling a computer supplier.

HILLS PC SUPPLIES
Customer Services
Telephone Message

Caller's name: James Firth

Client: Allen and Brown Ltd

Item(s) ordered: (5)

Order no./date: HFC02345 / 12-3-02

Notes: order was delivered late by the (6)
and was supplied without (7)

Action: call to apologise and discuss (8)

BEC VANTAGE LISTENING

Part 1 (questions 9–12) and Part 2 (questions 13–22)

Conversation Three (Questions 9 – 12)

- Look at the notes below.
- You will hear a recorded message about a job vacancy.

Position: Manufacturing administrator

Responsible to: **(9)**

Candidates should preferably be qualified in: **(10)**

The person appointed will need to be **(11)** in their relations with other people.

Salary: **(12)**

PART TWO Questions 13 – 22

Section One (Questions 13 – 17)

- You will hear five short recordings. Five people are talking about a problem that occurred.
- For each recording, decide what each speaker is talking about.
- Write one letter (A – H) next to the number of the recording.
- Do not use any letter more than once.
- You will hear the five recordings twice.

- 13 **A** losing a business card
- 14 **B** taking the wrong equipment
- 15 **C** arriving late for a meeting
- 16 **D** forgetting an address
- 17 **E** misunderstanding a message
- **F** missing a presentation
- **G** forgetting to make a phone call
- **H** taking the wrong documents

Section Two (Questions 18 – 22)

- You will hear another five recordings.
- For each recording, decide what the speaker is doing.
- Write one letter (A – H) next to the number of the recording.
- Do not use any letter more than once.
- You will hear the five recordings twice.

- 18 **A** making a complaint
- 19 **B** confirming information
- 20 **C** giving instructions
- 21 **D** changing an arrangement
- 22 **E** requesting information
- **F** making a recommendation
- **G** giving an invitation
- **H** requesting advice

PART THREE
Questions 23 – 30

- You will hear a radio interview with José Martínez, the Director of Pizza Rapida, a pizza delivery chain in Spain.
- For each question **23 – 30**, mark one letter (**A**, **B** or **C**) for the correct answer.
- You will hear the recording twice.

23 José Martínez became successful by

- A** taking over a well-known competitor.
- B** establishing an innovative retail business.
- C** gaining a reputation for high quality.

24 Before José Martínez set up his pizza delivery service, he

- A** tested samples on potential clients.
- B** handed out product questionnaires.
- C** assessed demand in different areas.

25 According to José Martínez, the Spanish fast food business

- A** is different from that of the U.S.
- B** has slowed slightly in its rate of growth.
- C** employs an increasing number of women.

26 José Martínez wants his trainee managers to

- A** develop a competitive attitude.
- B** try out some of the shop-floor jobs.
- C** spend some time working abroad.

27 José Martínez believes that at first people invested in Pizza Rapida because they

- A** were attracted by what the company offered.
- B** saw that the shares were performing well.
- C** thought food companies were a safe investment.

6

28 José Martínez left the first company he worked for because it

- A** set the staff impossible targets.
- B** offered insufficient incentives.
- C** provided inadequate support.

29 José Martínez finds that popular sports events

- A** are good places to advertise his service.
- B** raise brand awareness through team sponsorship.
- C** increase public demand for his products.

30 What does José Martínez plan to do in the future?

- A** develop a chain of restaurants
- B** set up a franchise operation
- C** expand into the frozen food market

You now have 10 minutes to transfer your answers to your Answer Sheet.

7

BEC Vantage Listening

Tapescript for Listening

Part One. Questions 1–12.

CONVERSATION ONE. QUESTIONS 1–4.

- M: Apex Business Centre. How may I help you?
- F: Hello. I'm calling about the seminar next week.
- M: Erm, which one? We have at least three on next week. Do you remember the name?
- F: No, I, er ... wait a minute, I know it's on the twenty-first of February.
- M: Oh, yes, madam, that would be Successful Selling. It's a very popular seminar.
- F: That's the one! Now, can you tell me when and where it is, please?
- M: Certainly. It's being run from 10 till 4, and it's being held at the Central Hotel. It's next to the University.
- F: Oh, yes, I know where that is.
- M: Now, could I also mention an additional session we're offering on the day? There's a workshop on profit margins starting at four-thirty after the main seminar.
- F: Oh, that might be useful ... but I have a meeting to go to ... anyway, how much is it?
- M: There's no charge for the additional session. The day costs a hundred and twelve pounds for each participant. I can reserve a place for you now, if you like. We do need to have forty pounds as a deposit, and the balance on the day.
- F: Yes, please. My name's ...

CONVERSATION TWO. QUESTIONS 5–8.

- F: Good morning. Hills PC Supplies.
- M: Yes, hello. I want to speak to David Hills.
- F: I'm afraid he's away today. Can I take a message?
- M: Well, OK. Tell him it's James Firth, from Allen and Brown.
- F: Certainly.
- M: I'm really not happy at all. We ordered a laser printer from you last month and ...
- F: Let me just find the reference on that ... ah yes, HPC02345 ... on the twelfth of March ...
- M: Yes. Now, the first problem was the delivery. It came several days after you promised. I don't see why you use a despatch company if that's what happens.
- F: Oh dear. No.
- M: And then, when we took it out of the box, we found you'd sent the thing without any cables, so we couldn't even connect it up. If you think we're going to pay this invoice in full ...
- F: Well, I am sorry, Mr Firth. I'll check what went wrong and

I'll ask David to ring you. I'm sure he'll want to talk about a discount. Will you be in this afternoon?

M: Yes. Well, good bye.

CONVERSATION THREE. QUESTIONS 9–12.

F: Hello. Thank you for calling the Jefferson recruitment line. Here are details of our current job vacancies. First of all, we are looking for a manufacturing administrator to join a team led by the plant manager. This role involves monitoring all aspects of the production process, and will include some project work.

For this position you should have some relevant experience and a recognised qualification in business administration would be an advantage.

You need to be a good organiser, with excellent administrative skills. A high level of computer skills is essential. You must be able to work without supervision, and must be flexible when working with others, as the position supports other managers. You should be able to work to tight deadlines.

The hours are 9 to 5, Monday to Friday. The salary will be negotiable. In addition we offer a benefits package including subsidised lunches, 23 days' holiday and health insurance.

— *** —

Part Two. Questions 13–22.

SECTION ONE. QUESTIONS 13–17

- M: It was just so embarrassing, the whole thing. I mean, being late's one thing, and I had already got my secretary to phone through and leave a message to say I was running behind schedule. But in the end I didn't get there at all ... and all the other managers were there to see the team show the project and its results. Oh well, that's how it goes, I guess ...
- F: Well, I'm certainly not going to forget that in a hurry! What a terrible mistake ... It made the whole meeting pointless, really. I can't imagine what they thought of me, sitting there with the paperwork for another client. Very unprofessional. I mean, I could still tell them the relevant facts, but I couldn't show them the actual contract. I didn't put it in my briefcase last night.
- M: What a lost opportunity. I should've made a proper note in my diary where I would have seen it instead of just on the back of an old envelope. Anyway, it's too late now. I just didn't remember and that's that. They'll have given the work to someone else by now ... I'd promised to ring before midday if I was available. I really need to be better organised.
- F: I was so busy preparing all the equipment for the presentation that I didn't notice the time passing. So then I asked reception to call me a taxi ... I was still checking the papers when they rang to say it had arrived ... but I couldn't believe it when he didn't know where

the street was and drove all over the place ... they'd already started without me by the time I finally got there.

M: Well, I thought it was a bit strange at the time, but I just took down what I thought I heard on the machine, and then made out the order form accordingly. It wasn't till they called back to query the quantity that we realised just what I'd done. Still, we sorted it out before it was too late so it wasn't a disaster, after all.

SECTION TWO. QUESTIONS 18–22

F: I guess the main weakness is with the image of some of the products. I complained about this last year. With our present strategy, we could find ourselves having problems in the future. We need to turn the situation around, work the market to our advantage. What I'd suggest is a complete review of the way we're approaching the market. I think we should get everyone together and explore all the possibilities.

M: I'm very glad that you can come. I was worried that the invitations were so late that many key people wouldn't be able to make it. We do need your input – your information is important. I understand you're planning to come by train. The train service can be a bit of a problem, but if you go to Medford Central Station, it's a direct line. That'll take you to Tower Square – and if you give us a call when you arrive we'll send someone to collect you.

F: When I first read the report, I was very disappointed. Our results are well below target, in spite of using the consultants, and all the new strategies we've been applying. I can't understand it at all. In order to try and get clear what's going on, I'm going to need input from various sections. What I'd like from you, as soon as you can, is price comparisons for the different regions. I'll also need a report on how useful the consultants' advice was.

M: No, I mean they've given me everything I asked for, so I can't really complain about that. They even invited me to come over and check the figures for myself. But I'd rather try to go through them here with you, if you could spare the time. Perhaps you could tell me what you think would be the best thing to do. I'd be really interested in your views. Your experience means you must have dealt with this type of problem before.

F: I just thought I ought to let you know, that following the discussion we had last week about staffing levels, I took your recommendation to the Board. You've probably heard already that we agreed that we do need to create a new Area Manager's position. I just wanted to let you know officially that it had been authorised. So now we can contact the recruitment agency and ask them to start looking around. They might have somebody on their books already.

Part Three. Questions 23–30.

F: Good evening and welcome to Business People.

We are fortunate to have as our guest tonight José Martínez, the founder and Director of Pizza Rapida. José was brought up in America and started his working life there. Now he is one of the most successful entrepreneurs in Europe. How did he achieve this? Well, he began his rise to success in Europe when he launched his pizza delivery chain from a small shop in the Spanish capital, Madrid, 10 years ago. By the late-nineties he had succeeded in expanding the business to over 400 outlets and in doing so, he has almost transformed the eating habits of the nation. As a result of this success, he has recently been able to buy out his main competitor and today, Pizza Rapida is well-known for producing top-quality food at reasonable prices. José is now one of the wealthiest men in Spain. José, welcome to our studio.

M: Thank you.

F: Now, did you do lots of market research before you set up your pizza delivery service?

M: Well, not really. But I did do some basic research to get the product itself right by giving some away to teenagers in the neighbourhood. I kept experimenting with the key ingredients until they all thought the pizzas were great.

F: But surely Spain isn't traditionally a fast food market, so why did you think a pizza home delivery service would be successful?

M: Well, I just thought that the same trends which had caused the fast-food revolution in the US were at work in Spain. For example, more and more women were joining the labour market, leaving them less time to shop and cook, so families were beginning to think of fast food as an attractive alternative to home cooking. The sector grew incredibly quickly in the first few years. It's a little steadier now – still very healthy though.

F: Great! So you must need an increasing number of staff – but what do you look for in your managers?

M: I try to follow the American system and make sure my people get experience at all levels of the business. I don't want managers to come straight from university to the office without doing the basic jobs in the company first.

F: Pizza Rapida was floated on the Stock Exchange in 1998. Was that a success, too?

M: Yes, it was amazing!

F: Why do you think Pizza Rapida attracted so much investment?

M: I think initially it was largely because the basic theory of home delivery pizzas was new, easy for the general public to understand, and fun. Once we were established, the shares started to take off. And I'm happy to say that we've been the best performer on the stock market for two years and profits were up again by 45% last year.

- F: What background did you have, or training, to lead to this amazing success?
- M: Sales basically. I started my working life as a salesman for a soap company in America. After the initial three month training period, I managed to exceed the annual target they had given me, but I was so disgusted by the tiny bonus I was offered that I resigned and joined a competitor. Ten years later, they sent me to Spain to run their sales and marketing operation.
- F: Does any aspect of the Spanish lifestyle help you to promote your products?
- M: Well, Spaniards are very keen on football, as you know, and I think you have to be constantly aware of all possible opportunities. So now, when top teams are playing, I hire extra staff to deliver pizzas for the fans to eat while they watch the match on television.
- F: That sounds like a real winner! And what's next?
- M: Well, one option I was looking at was franchising the operation but I decided I didn't want to lose control, so what I'm seriously considering now is producing frozen pizzas and other food to sell to supermarket and restaurant chains.
- F: Well, I wish you every success with that and many thanks

BEC VANTAGE LISTENING

Sample paper answer key

PART ONE

- 1 SUCCESSFUL SELLING
- 2 (THE) CENTRAL HOTEL
- 3 PROFIT MARGIN(S)
- 4 (£)40/FORTY
- 5 (LASER/LAZER) PRINTER
- 6 DISPATCH/DESPATCH COMPANY
- 7 (ANY) CABLES
- 8 (A) DISCOUNT
- 9 (THE) PLANT MANAGER
- 10 BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION
- 11 FLEXIBLE
- 12 NEGOTIABLE

PART TWO

- 13 F
- 14 H
- 15 G
- 16 C
- 17 E
- 18 F
- 19 C
- 20 E
- 21 H
- 22 B

PART THREE

- 23 B
- 24 A
- 25 B
- 26 B
- 27 A
- 28 B
- 29 C
- 30 C

BEC VANTAGE

TEST OF SPEAKING

GENERAL DESCRIPTION

Paper format	The Test of Speaking consists of three parts.
Timing	14 minutes.
No. of parts	3.
Interaction pattern	Two candidates and two examiners. One examiner acts as both interlocutor and assessor and manages the interaction either by asking questions or by providing cues for candidates. The other acts as assessor only and does not join in the interaction.
Task types	Short exchanges with the interlocutor; a mini-presentation by each candidate; a collaborative task which candidates do together.
Task focus	Exchanging personal and factual information, expressing and finding out about attitudes and opinions.
Marks	The interlocutor gives an impression mark based on a global achievement scale, while the assessor applies detailed analytical scales and gives separate marks for grammar and vocabulary, discourse management, pronunciation and interactive communication.

STRUCTURE AND TASKS

PART 1

Task type and format	Conversation between the interlocutor and each candidate. The interlocutor encourages the candidates to give information about themselves and to express personal opinions.
Focus	Giving personal information. Talking about present circumstances, past experiences and future plans, expressing opinions, speculating, etc.
Timing	3 minutes.

PART 2

Task type and format	A 'mini-presentation' by each candidate on a business theme. The candidates are given prompts which generate a short talk on a business-related topic.
Focus	Organising a larger unit of discourse. Giving information and expressing and justifying opinions.
Timing	6 minutes (including a 1-minute 'long turn' for each candidate).

PART 3

Task type and format	A collaborative task which candidates do together. The candidates are presented with a discussion on a business-related topic. The interlocutor extends the discussion with prompts on related topics.
Focus	Turn-taking (initiating and responding appropriately), negotiating, collaborating, exchanging information, expressing and justifying opinions, agreeing and/or disagreeing, suggesting, speculating, comparing and contrasting, and decision-making.
Timing	5 minutes.

The three parts of the Test of Speaking

Format

The paired format of the BEC Vantage Test of Speaking (two examiners and two candidates) offers candidates the opportunity to demonstrate, in a controlled but non-threatening environment, their ability to use their spoken language skills effectively in a range of contexts. The test lasts 14 minutes. One examiner, the interlocutor, conducts the test and gives a global assessment mark for each candidate's performance. The other, the assessor, does not take any part in the interaction but focuses solely on listening to and making an assessment of certain aspects of the candidates' oral proficiency.

At the end of the Test of Speaking, candidates are thanked for attending, but are given no indication of the level of their achievement.

The standard format is two examiners and two candidates, and, wherever possible, this is the form which the Test of Speaking takes. In cases where there is an uneven number of candidates at a centre, the last test of the session is taken by three candidates together instead of two. The test format, test materials and procedure remain unchanged but the timing is longer: 20 minutes instead of 14.

The Test of Speaking consists of three parts, each of which is assessed. Throughout the test, the interactional pattern varies: between the interlocutor and each candidate, between the two candidates, and among all three. The patterns of discourse vary within each part of the test.

■ PART 1 – INTERVIEW

This part tests the candidates' ability to respond to questions and expand on responses.



Assessment criteria: page 90.

In the first part of the test, the interlocutor addresses each candidate in turn and asks first general, then more business-related questions. Candidates are not addressed in strict sequence. In this part of the test, candidates are being tested on their ability to talk briefly about themselves and to provide concise information on where they come from and their job/studies. Candidates are then required to perform functions such as agreeing and disagreeing, and expressing opinions and preferences (in the second part of Part 1 which focuses on a business-related topic).

■ PART 2 – LONG TURN

This part tests the candidates' ability to sustain a 'long turn'.



Sample task and assessment criteria: pages 81, 82, 84–87 and 90.

The second part of the test is a 'mini-presentation'. In this part, each candidate is given a choice of three topics and has one minute to prepare a piece of extended speech lasting

approximately one minute. After each candidate has spoken their partner is invited by the interlocutor to ask a question about what has been said.

■ PART 3 – COLLABORATIVE TASK

This part tests the candidates' ability to communicate with one another, negotiate, initiate, and respond in an appropriate way.



Sample task and assessment criteria: pages 83, 88, 89 and 90.

The third part of the test is a conversation between the candidates. The interlocutor gives them a topic to discuss. The candidates are asked to speak together for about three minutes. The interlocutor supports the conversation if appropriate and then asks further questions related to the main theme.

Preparation

- Candidates should be familiar with the paired assessment as discussed in BEC Preliminary.
- Students need to practise exchanging personal and non-personal information.
- At Vantage level it may be possible for students to practise talking about themselves in pairs with or without prompts (such as written questions).
- However, prompt materials are necessary for Parts Two and Three, and students could be encouraged to design these themselves or may be provided with specially prepared sets.
- In small classes, students could discuss authentic materials as a group, prior to engaging in pairwork activities. Such activities familiarise students with the types of interactive skills involved in requesting and providing factual information, such as: speaking clearly, formulating questions, listening carefully and giving precise answers.
- In the 'mini-presentation' candidates are being asked to show an ability to talk for an extended period (approximately one minute). Discussion activities as well as giving short talks or presentations should help to develop this skill.
- In the final discussion in the Vantage Speaking test, candidates are also being tested on their ability to express opinions, compare and contrast, concede points and possibly reach a conclusion (although it is perfectly acceptable for candidates to agree to differ). Any discussion activities on a business theme that encourage students to employ these skills are beneficial. Group or class discussions may be valuable ways of developing these skills.

N.B. In some centres candidates from the same school are paired together. However, where candidates from a number of different educational establishments are entered at the same centre, some candidates may find that they are paired with a candidate from another establishment. Students should check with the centre through which they are entering to find out the local procedure.

BEC VANTAGE SPEAKING

Tasks are included from Parts 2 and 3 of the Test of Speaking, together with the interlocutor frame for these parts.

Material is not included for Part 1, in which the interlocutor asks the candidates questions directly, rather than asking them to perform a task.

1**A: What is important when...?**

Entertaining clients

- Types of activities
- Cost of activities
-
-

B: What is important when...?

Renting retail premises

- Location
- Length of contract
-
-

C: What is important when...?

Deciding on packaging for products

- Image
- Production process
-
-

2

A: What is important when...?

Selecting staff for promotion

- Attitude to work
- Current performance
-
-

B: What is important when...?

Considering a career change

- Further study or training
- Opportunities for future promotion
-
-

C: What is important when...?

Planning an advertising campaign

- Market research
- Selecting appropriate medium
-
-

1

Work Experience Programme

Your company has decided to offer a 2-week work experience programme for a small group of business students.

You have been asked to help with the preparations for this programme

Discuss the situation together and decide:

- what kinds of work experience should be offered to the students
- how the participants should be selected

BEC VANTAGE SPEAKING

Sample Part 2 Example 1 Interlocutor frame

PART 2

6 minutes (8 minutes for groups of three)

Now, in this part of the test, I'm going to give each of you a choice of three different topics. I'd like you to select one of the topics and give a short presentation on it for about a minute. You will have a minute to prepare this and you can make notes if you want. After you have finished your talk, your partner will ask you a question.

All right? Here are your topics. Please don't write anything in the booklets.

[Hand each candidate a Part 2 booklet (open at appropriate task) and a pencil and paper for notes.]

🕒 60
seconds

Now, *B*, which topic have you chosen, *A*, *B* or *C*?
Would you like to talk about what you think is important when *[interlocutor states candidate's chosen topic]*?

A, please listen carefully to *B*'s talk, and then ask him/her a question about it.

🕒 about
60 seconds

Thank you. Now, *A*, please ask *B* a question about his/her talk.

Now, *A*, which topic have you chosen, *A*, *B* or *C*?
Would you like to talk about what you think is important when *[interlocutor states candidate's chosen topic]*?

B, please listen carefully to *A*'s talk, and then ask him/her a question about it.

🕒 about
60 seconds

Thank you. Now, *B*, please ask *A* a question about his/her talk.

Thank you.

Can I have the booklets, please?

[Retrieve Part 2 booklets, pencils and paper.]

1

A: What is important when...?

Entertaining clients

- Types of activities
- Cost of activities
-
-

Back up questions

What **types of activity** are important to consider? (Why?)

How important is it to consider **cost**? (Why?)

Select from the following additional prompts (if the above have already been covered):

How important is the **venue**? (Why?)

Is it important **which company personnel** are involved in entertaining clients? (Why/Why not?)

1

B: What is important when...?

Renting retail premises

- Location
- Length of contract
-
-

Back up questions

Is **location** the most important thing to consider? (Why/Why not?)

Why is the **length of the contract** important?

Select from the following additional prompts (if the above have already been covered):

How important is **cost**? (Why?)

How important is it to consider the **condition** of the premises? (Why?)

1

C: What is important when...?

Deciding on packaging for products

- Image
- Production process
-
-

Back up questions

Why is **image** important?

How important is it to consider the **production process**? (Why?)

Select from the following additional prompts (if the above have already been covered):

How important is the **cost** of the packaging?

Is it essential to carry out **market research** before deciding on the packaging? (Why/Why not?)

BEC VANTAGE SPEAKING

Sample Part 2 Example 2 Interlocutor frame

PART 2

6 minutes (8 minutes for groups of three)

Now, in this part of the test, I'm going to give each of you a choice of three different topics. I'd like you to select one of the topics and give a short presentation on it for about a minute. You will have a minute to prepare this and you can make notes if you want. After you have finished your talk, your partner will ask you a question.

All right? Here are your topics. Please don't write anything in the booklets.

[Hand each candidate a Part 2 booklet (open at appropriate task) and a pencil and paper for notes.]

🕒 60
seconds

Now, *B*, which topic have you chosen, *A*, *B* or *C*?
Would you like to talk about what you think is important when *[interlocutor states candidate's chosen topic]*?

A, please listen carefully to *B*'s talk, and then ask him/her a question about it.

🕒 about
60 seconds

Thank you. Now, *A*, please ask *B* a question about his/her talk.

Now, *A*, which topic have you chosen, *A*, *B* or *C*?
Would you like to talk about what you think is important when *[interlocutor states candidate's chosen topic]*?

B, please listen carefully to *A*'s talk, and then ask him/her a question about it.

🕒 about
60 seconds

Thank you. Now, *B*, please ask *A* a question about his/her talk.

Thank you.

Can I have the booklets, please?

[Retrieve Part 2 booklets, pencils and paper.]

2

A: What is important when...?

Selecting staff for promotion

- Attitude to work
- Current performance
-
-

Back up questions

Is the employee's **attitude to work** the most important thing to consider? (Why/Why not?)

Why is it important to consider an employee's **current performance**?

Select from the following additional prompts (if the above have already been covered):

How important is it to consider **ambition**? (Why?/Why not?)

How important is it for the candidate to have **skills appropriate** for the new post? (Why?)

2

B: What is important when...?

Considering a career change

- Further study or training
- Opportunities for future promotion
-
-

Back up questions

Why is it important to consider **further study or training**?

Is it important to consider **opportunities for further promotion**? (Why/Why not?)

Select from the following additional prompts (if the above have already been covered):

How important is it to consider **financial rewards**? (Why?)

Is it important to consider **flexible working arrangements** when considering a career change? (Why/Why not?)

2

C: What is important when...?

Planning an advertising campaign

- Market research
- Selecting appropriate medium
-
-

Back up questions

How important is it to carry out **market research**? (Why?)

Is selecting the **appropriate medium** the most important thing? (Why/Why not?)

Select from the following additional prompts (if the above have already been covered):

How important is it to **budget effectively**? (Why?)

Why is it essential for the advertising campaign to **support the image** of the product?

BEC VANTAGE SPEAKING

Sample Part 3 Interlocutor frame

PART 3

5 minutes (7 minutes for groups of three)

Now, in this part of the test you are going to discuss something together.

[Hold the Part 3 booklet open at the task while giving the instructions below.]

You will have 30 seconds to read this task carefully, and then about three minutes to discuss and decide about it together. You should give reasons for your decisions and opinions. You don't need to write anything. Is that clear?

[Place the booklet open at task 1 in front of the candidates so they can both see it.]

🕒 30 seconds

I'm just going to listen and then ask you to stop after about three minutes. Please speak so that we can hear you.

🕒 about
3 minutes

Can I have the booklet, please?

[Select one or more of the following questions as appropriate, to redress any imbalance between candidates in Part 3, or to extend the discussion.]

- What **other preparations** would the company make before having work experience students? (Why?)
- What are the **advantages** to a company of offering a work experience programme to business students? (Why?)
- In what **other ways** can businesses develop **close links** with the community?
- What do you think is the **most useful** kind of **work experience** for business students? (Why?)
- What **help** would you give a student on their first day of work experience? (Why?)
- What areas of business would **you** like to have more experience of? (Why?)

Thank you. That is the end of the test.

1

Work Experience Programme

Your company has decided to offer a 2-week work experience programme for a small group of business students.

You have been asked to help with the preparations for this programme

Discuss the situation together and decide:

- what kinds of work experience should be offered to the students
- how the participants should be selected

Assessment of Speaking

Throughout the test candidates are assessed on their own individual performance and not in relation to each other. The assessor awards marks according to four analytical criteria:

- Grammar and Vocabulary
- Discourse Management
- Pronunciation
- Interactive Communication.

The interlocutor awards a Global Achievement mark, which is based on the analytical scales.

These criteria should be interpreted within the overall context of the Cambridge ESOL Common Scale for Speaking on page 91, where BEC Vantage is at Level B2.

■ Grammar and Vocabulary

This refers to the accurate and appropriate use of grammatical forms and vocabulary. It also includes the range of both grammatical forms and vocabulary. Performance is viewed in terms of the overall effectiveness of the language used.

RANGE: the active use of a range of grammatical forms and vocabulary.

ACCURACY: the accurate use of grammatical forms and syntax.

APPROPRIACY: the appropriate use of vocabulary to deal with the tasks.

■ Discourse Management

This refers to the candidate's ability to link utterances together to form a coherent monologue and contribute appropriately to dialogue. The utterances should be relevant to the tasks and to preceding utterances in the discourse. The discourse produced should be at a level of complexity appropriate to B2 level and the utterances should be arranged logically to develop the themes or arguments required by the tasks. The extent of the contributions should be appropriate, i.e. long or short as required at a particular point in the dynamic development of the discourse in order to achieve the task.

COHERENCE: the logical arrangement of utterances to form spoken discourse and to develop arguments or themes.

EXTENT: the appropriate length of individual contributions (long or short) to develop the discourse and deal with the tasks.

RELEVANCE: the relevance of contributions to the tasks and to preceding contributions in the discourse.

■ Pronunciation

This refers to the candidate's ability to produce comprehensible utterances to fulfil the task requirements.

This includes stress, rhythm and intonation, as well as individual sounds. Examiners put themselves in the position

of a person who is not a language teaching specialist and assess the overall impact of the pronunciation and the degree of effort required to understand the candidate.

STRESS AND RHYTHM: the appropriate use of strong and weak syllables in words and connected speech, the linking of words, and the effective highlighting of information-bearing words in utterances.

INTONATION: the use of a sufficiently wide pitch range and the appropriate use of intonation to convey intended meanings.

INDIVIDUAL SOUNDS: the effective articulation of individual sounds to facilitate understanding.

Different varieties of English, e.g. British, North American, Australian, etc., are acceptable, provided they are used consistently throughout the test.

■ Interactive Communication

This refers to the candidate's ability to take an active part in the development of the discourse, showing sensitivity to turn-taking and avoiding undue hesitation. It requires the ability to participate in the range of interactive situations in the test and to develop discussions on a range of topics by initiating and responding appropriately. It also refers to the deployment of strategies to maintain and repair interaction at an appropriate level throughout the test so that the tasks can be fulfilled.

INITIATING AND RESPONDING: the ability to participate in a range of situations and to develop the interaction by initiating and responding appropriately.

HESITATION: the ability to participate in the development of the interaction without undue hesitation.

TURN-TAKING: the sensitivity to listen, speak, and allow others to speak, as appropriate.

■ Global Achievement Scale

This scale refers to the candidate's overall effectiveness in dealing with the tasks in the three separate parts of the BEC Vantage Test of Speaking. The global mark is an independent, impression mark which reflects the assessment of the candidate's performance from the interlocutor's perspective.

■ Typical minimum adequate performance

Develops the interaction with contributions which are mostly coherent and extended when dealing with the tasks. Grammar is mostly accurate and vocabulary appropriate. Utterances are understood with little strain on the listener.

Assessment is based on performance in the whole test, and does not depend on performance in particular parts of the test.

Marking

In many countries, Oral Examiners are assigned to teams, each of which is led by a Team Leader who may be responsible for

approximately 15 Oral Examiners. Team Leaders give advice and support to Oral Examiners, as required.

The Team Leaders are responsible to a Professional Support Leader, who is the professional representative of Cambridge ESOL for the Speaking tests. Professional Support Leaders are appointed by Cambridge ESOL and attend an annual co-ordination and development session in the UK. Team Leaders are appointed by the Professional Support Leader in consultation with the local administration.

After initial training of examiners, standardisation of marking is maintained by both annual examiner co-ordination sessions and by monitoring visits to centres by Team Leaders. During co-ordination sessions, examiners watch and discuss sample Speaking tests recorded on DVD and then conduct practice tests with volunteer candidates in order to establish a common standard of assessment.

The sample tests on DVD are selected to demonstrate a range of nationalities and different levels of competence, and are pre-marked by a team of experienced assessors.

Cambridge ESOL Common Scale for Speaking

The Cambridge ESOL Common Scale for Speaking has been developed to help users to:

- interpret levels of performance in the Cambridge Speaking tests from beginner to advanced
- identify typical performance qualities at particular levels
- locate performance in one examination against performance in another.

The Common Scale is designed to be useful to test candidates and other test users, e.g. admissions officers or employers.

The Common Scale is a general scale. Examiners for BEC Vantage Speaking use a separate mark scheme, designed specifically for use in the BEC Vantage Test of Speaking.

The description at each level of the Common Scale aims to provide a brief general description of the nature of spoken language ability at a particular level in real-world contexts. In this way the wording offers an easily understandable description of performance which can be used, for example, in specifying requirements to language trainers, formulating job descriptions and specifying language requirements for new posts.

LEVEL MASTERY

C2 Fully operational command of the spoken language

- Able to handle communication in most situations, including unfamiliar or unexpected ones.
- Able to use accurate and appropriate linguistic resources to express complex ideas and concepts and produce extended discourse that is coherent and always easy to follow.
- Rarely produces inaccuracies and inappropriacies.
- Pronunciation is easily understood and prosodic features are used effectively; many features, including pausing and hesitation, are 'native-like'.

LEVEL EFFECTIVE OPERATIONAL PROFICIENCY

C1 Good operational command of the spoken language

- Able to handle communication in most situations.
- Able to use accurate and appropriate linguistic resources to express ideas and produce discourse that is generally coherent.
- Occasionally produces inaccuracies and inappropriacies.
- Maintains a flow of language with only natural hesitation resulting from considerations of appropriacy or expression.
- L1 accent may be evident but does not affect the clarity of the message.

LEVEL VANTAGE

B2 Generally effective command of the spoken language

- Able to handle communication in familiar situations.
- Able to organise extended discourse but occasionally produces utterances that lack coherence and some inaccuracies and inappropriate usage occur.
- Maintains a flow of language, although hesitation may occur whilst searching for language resources.
- Although pronunciation is easily understood, L1 features may be intrusive.
- Does not require major assistance or prompting by an interlocutor.

LEVEL THRESHOLD

B1 Limited but effective command of the spoken language

- Able to handle communication in most familiar situations.
- Able to construct longer utterances but is not able to use complex language except in well-rehearsed utterances.
- Has problems searching for language resources to express ideas and concepts resulting in pauses and hesitation.
- Pronunciation is generally intelligible, but L1 features may put a strain on the listener.
- Has some ability to compensate for communication difficulties using repair strategies, but may require prompting and assistance by an interlocutor.

LEVEL WAYSTAGE

A2 Basic command of the spoken language

- Able to convey basic meaning in very familiar or highly predictable situations.
- Produces utterances which tend to be very short – words or phrases – with frequent hesitations and pauses.
- Dependent on rehearsed or formulaic phrases with limited generative capacity.
- Only able to produce limited extended discourse.
- Pronunciation is heavily influenced by L1 features and may at times be difficult to understand.
- Requires prompting and assistance by an interlocutor to prevent communication from breaking down.

The BEC Vantage examination is set at Level B2.

BEC HIGHER TEST OF READING

GENERAL DESCRIPTION

Paper format	The paper consists of a range of business-related texts and accompanying tasks. A text may consist of several short sections.
Timing	1 hour.
No. of parts	There are six parts. Parts 1 to 3 test candidates' reading comprehension skills. Parts 4 to 6 test candidates' understanding of the meaning of written English at word, phrase, sentence and paragraph level.
No. of questions	52.
Task types	Matching, 4-option multiple choice, 4-option multiple-choice cloze, rational deletion, open cloze, proof-reading.
Text types	These include extracts from informational texts, articles and reports.
Length of texts	150–600 words per text.
Answer format	Candidates indicate answers by shading a box or writing a word on a machine-readable answer sheet.
Marks	All questions carry one mark.

STRUCTURE AND TASKS

PART 1

Task type and focus	Matching. Reading for gist and global meaning.
Format	Matching task involving either a single text of five short, related texts (approx. 450 words in total).
No. of Qs	8.

PART 2

Task type and focus	Matching. Text structure and detail.
Format	An authentic business-related text with sentence-length gaps. Whole text approximately 450–500 words in total.
No. of Qs	6.

PART 3

Task type and focus	4-option multiple choice. Understanding general points and specific details.
Format	4-option multiple-choice task involving longer text based on authentic source material (approx. 500–600 words).
No. of Qs	6.

PART 4

Task type and focus	4-option multiple-choice cloze. Vocabulary and text structure.
Format	A single business-related text with mainly lexical gaps (approx. 250 words).
No. of Qs	10.

PART 5

Task type and focus	Open cloze. Text structure and discourse features.
Format	Single business-related text with structure and discourse gaps (approx. 250 words).
No. of Qs	10.

PART 6

Task type and focus	Proof-reading. Understanding sentence structure; error identification.
Format	Short text (approximately 150–200 words). Identification of additional unnecessary words in text.
No. of Qs	12.

The six parts of the Test of Reading

■ PART 1 – MATCHING

In this part, there is an emphasis on reading for gist and global meaning.



Sample task and answer key: pages 96 and 101.



Each correct answer in Part 1 receives 1 mark.

This is a matching task involving either a single text or five related shorter texts. Examples are a set of related product descriptions, a set of advertisements (for instance, for different types of services), notices, book reviews, short newspaper items on related topics or a single magazine article divided into five sections.

Texts may be edited, but the source is authentic. They are identified as texts A–E. There are eight questions, each of which is one sentence, numbered 1–8. Each sentence is a statement which can be matched with only one of the texts. The candidate's task is to read the sentence and then scan the texts for the one to which the sentence applies. Candidates are tested on whether they can understand the language of the question and relate it to the meaning of the text, which is expressed in different language.

■ PART 2 – MATCHING

In this part, there is an emphasis on structure and reading for detail.



Sample task and answer key: pages 97 and 101.



Each correct answer in Part 2 receives 1 mark.

This is a gapped text with six sentence-length gaps. The text comes from an authentic business-related source, although it may be edited. Sources include business articles from newspapers or magazines, books on topics such as management, and company literature such as annual reports. Candidates have to read the text and then identify the correct sentence to fill each gap from a set of eight sentences marked A–H. Sentence H is the example, and one other sentence is a distractor which does not fit any of the gaps. Understanding, not only of the meaning of the text but of some of the features of its structure, is tested.

■ PART 3 – 4-OPTION MULTIPLE CHOICE

In this part, there is an emphasis on understanding general points and specific details.



Sample task and answer key: pages 98 and 101.



Each correct answer in Part 3 receives 1 mark.

This task consists of a text accompanied by 4-option multiple-choice questions. The stem of a multiple-choice item may take the form of a question or an incomplete sentence. There are six questions, which are placed after the text. Sources of original texts may be the general and business press, company literature and books on topics such as management. Texts may be edited, but the sources are authentic.

■ PART 4 – 4-OPTION MULTIPLE-CHOICE CLOZE

This part tests the candidates' knowledge of lexis and text structure.



Sample task and answer key: pages 99 and 101.



Each correct answer in Part 4 receives 1 mark.

This task is a modified cloze: in other words, a gapped text in which the gaps are carefully chosen. There are 10 multiple-choice questions, most of which test vocabulary. The text is based on authentic source material of one of the text types listed above. The candidate's task is to choose the correct option from the four available to fill each gap.

■ PART 5 – OPEN CLOZE

This part tests the candidates' understanding of how texts are structured and their ability to follow the detailed meaning and argument of a text.



Sample task and answer key: pages 100 and 101.



Each correct answer in Part 5 receives 1 mark.

This task is an open cloze: a gapped text in which the candidate has to supply the word to fill each gap. There are 10 questions. Gaps are formed by rational deletion, being chosen rather than simply those which occur if (for example) every seventh word is deleted. The focus is on structure and coherence/cohesion in the text. Items tested may include prepositions, auxiliary verbs, pronouns, conjunctions, etc.

■ PART 6 – PROOF-READING

This part tests candidates' understanding of sentence structure and their ability to identify errors.



Sample task and answer key: pages 100 and 101.



Each correct answer in Part 6 receives 1 mark.

In this task, candidates identify words that have been introduced into a text in error. This exercise can be related to the authentic task of checking a text for errors, and suitable text types therefore include letters, publicity materials, etc. The text contains 12 numbered lines, which are the test questions. Further lines at the end may complete the text, but these are not test questions.

Preparation

General

■ Make sure the students read as widely as possible in class and at home. Classroom reading can include a range of reading texts from authentic sources such as business magazines and web pages, as well as Business English coursebooks. Encourage students to interact fully with each text by focusing on pre-reading questions. These stimulate interest in the topic dealt with by the text and train students in prediction techniques.

■ It is useful for students to refer to dictionaries and grammar books while studying. However they should also be encouraged to read texts without thinking that they need to understand every word. They are not allowed to use a dictionary in the examination and they should be trained to try to guess the meaning of unknown words from the context. Students sometimes spend too long processing the text at word level rather than trying to get a more 'top down' view of what it is about.

■ It is important to make sure the students are familiar with the standard format of the test by going through the sample materials with them.

■ Make sure students are familiar with the instructions on the front page of the question paper, and for each part of the test. They should also be familiar with the technique of indicating their answer on the separate answer sheet, so that they can do this quickly and accurately. They will need to be shown how to do this and to practise in a timed exercise. They need to think about the relative merits of transferring their answers on to the answer sheet at the end of each task or waiting until the end of the test. If they find it difficult to complete the parts in the time allowed, it may be wiser to transfer answers after each part.

■ When students are familiar with the different task types, it is a good idea to discuss which parts take them longer to complete. Following this discussion you may wish to suggest

possible timings for each task. Students may prefer to attempt the tasks which they find easier first. The outcome of the discussion will also help you to decide which sections of the paper to focus on for further practice and may lead on to assistance with faster reading strategies.

■ Remind students to check the spelling of their answers to Parts 2 and 3, as incorrect spelling is penalised, and to write clearly and in capital letters.

By part

■ PART 1

■ Present students with sets of related short texts (e.g. job advertisements, advertisements for hotels, etc.) from newspapers, magazines, brochures.

■ Longer texts may also be divided into sub-headed sections.

■ Students should be encouraged to identify facts or ideas within each text, describing how the texts are similar and what differences they contain.

■ The register or style of the task sentences is likely to differ from that of the texts, and students should be given practice in recognising the same information in different styles, e.g. by rewriting advertisements in objective prose.

■ The task is designed to go beyond simple word-matching, and students will need to practise paraphrasing.

■ Activities that help students to identify target information among otherwise superfluous text (e.g. choosing what to watch from TV listings) would be beneficial.

■ Above all, students should treat the task as an example of information-processing skills which are frequently employed in social and professional life.

■ PART 2

■ This task requires an overt focus on cohesion and coherence to which many students may not be accustomed.

■ It is helpful for students to reassemble texts that have been cut up, discussing why texts fit together as they do.

■ It is useful for students to discuss why sentences do or do not fit together.

■ Students can benefit from altering the cohesion of texts to make sentences that do not fit together do so, and vice versa.

■ Since culture affects discourse, including the order of argument development, discussions exploring this are beneficial.

■ The cut and paste functions of word-processing, where available, can be exploited for this task.

■ PART 3

■ Multiple-choice questions are a familiar and long-standing

type of test; here they are used to test opinion and inference rather than straightforward facts.

- Correct answers are designed not to depend on simple word-matching, and students' ability to interpret paraphrasing should be developed.

- Students should be encouraged to pursue their own interpretation of relevant parts of the text and then check their idea against the options offered, rather than reading all the options first.

- It could be useful for students to be given perhaps one of the wrong options only, and for them to try to write the correct answer and another wrong option.

■ PART 4

- It is important for students to appreciate that the correct answer in each case is correct in relation to the gap itself, rather than in relation to the other three options.

- It is worth emphasising that this task tests lexical and collocational knowledge, and that the best (if not the only) route to this knowledge is to read widely within the kinds of texts that the task employs.

- It is worth discussing what aspects of linguistic knowledge are tested (collocations, fixed phrases, register, etc.).

- It might be useful to give students gapped texts and have them produce alternative words which fit or do not fit the gaps.

- Any vocabulary-building activity is likely to be helpful in preparing for this task.

■ PART 5

- The kinds of words which are gapped may well correspond to the kinds of errors students make; therefore discussion of photocopied examples of students' compositions could be helpful.

- Students should be encouraged to circle the word or words in the text that dictate what the answer is, in order for them to see that such clues to the answer may be either adjacent to the gap or several words distant.

- Students should brainstorm various likely words which might fit a particular gap, and then discuss why others do not fit.

- Students could be given several possible answers for a gap and discuss why the correct answer is correct.

- This task tests grammatical and structural aspects of language, and any practice in these areas is beneficial.

■ PART 6

- Students should be reminded that this task represents a kind of editing that is common practice, even in their first language.

- Any work on error analysis is likely to be helpful for this task.

- A reverse of the exercise (giving students texts with missing words) might prove beneficial.

BEC HIGHER READING

Part 1 (questions 1–8)

PART ONE Questions 1 – 8

- Look at the statements below and at the five extracts from an article on the opposite page about organisations which outsource (OWOs). These are organisations which give contracts for some of their activities to be run by managed service suppliers (MSSs).
- Which article (A, B, C, D or E) does each statement 1 – 8 refer to?
- For each statement 1 – 8, mark one letter (A, B, C, D or E) on your Answer Sheet.
- You will need to use some of these letters more than once.
- There is an example at the beginning. (0).

Example:

- 0 There are signs that some MSSs are moving into foreign markets.

0	A	B	C	D	E
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>				

- 1 There is a risk that outsourcing too many operations could weaken an OWO.
- 2 OWOs are finding that they need to adapt their management methods as a result of the increased outsourcing they commission.
- 3 There are different ways of assessing the total financial worth of outsourced business.
- 4 There may be improvements for an OWO's staff when it outsources services.
- 5 Despite their success in business terms, MSSs may not be high profile.
- 6 OWOs may not have consistent policies with regard to MSSs.
- 7 It is theoretically possible for the majority of an OWO's activities to be contracted to MSSs.
- 8 Outsourcing is affecting the way performance is measured in some areas of business.

2

A

Basic activities such as catering, cleaning and security were often the first to be contracted out as both the private and public sectors yielded to the 1990s' philosophy of concentrating on core activities. As a result of outsourcing, many canteens have lost their institutional atmosphere and resemble high-street retail outlets, boosting both the range of products and facilities for workers and the MSSs' turnover. Profits from the growing UK outsourcing market are helping the biggest catering MSSs to expand overseas as the industry develops a global dimension.

D

There are signs that the spread of contracting out to MSSs is impacting on the way OWOs are run, generating a need for high-level staff who will be skilled at negotiating and handling relationships with partner organisations rather than simply giving internal directions. Meanwhile, many MSSs face new employment and recruitment issues as their workforces often consist of staff inherited from dozens of organisations in both the public and private sectors.

B

Estimates of the scope and value of managed service supplying vary according to the definitions used of what activities are included or excluded in calculations. Although some MSSs are large – for example, the Alfis Group is, with 200,000 employees, one of the ten biggest private sector employers in Europe – they enjoy little of the public name recognition of the OWOs for whom they work. At the same time, in fields such as IT and research, OWOs now outsource not only non-core activities but also those where they believe specialist MSSs can bring additional expertise.

E

The growth in outsourcing has coincided – and may continue to coincide – with increasing interest in the concept of the virtual organisation – one which chooses to outsource almost everything so that it can concentrate on handling relationships with its clients. However, a recent report warns that the notion of virtual organisations must be balanced against the negative possibility of 'hollow' organisations, left with only a 'fragile shell remaining'. The report also expresses concern that some large MSSs have 'gradually taken control of significant parts of public sector activities', changing the basis on which the success or otherwise of those activities is assessed.

C

The growth of outsourcing means that a number of MSSs are finding themselves drawn into the established managerial thinking of their OWOs to a point where their reputation becomes dependent on the OWO's performance – in both positive and negative ways. This and other consequences of growth are generating calls from MSSs for both the private sector and governments to think more strategically about their relationship with MSSs, rather than on a disjointed contract-by-contract basis.

Turn Over ►

3

PART TWO
Questions 9 – 14

- Read this text taken from an article about how companies' decision-making can go wrong.
- Choose the best sentence from the opposite page to fill each of the gaps.
- For each gap 9 – 14, mark one letter (A – H) on your Answer Sheet.
- Do not use any letter more than once.
- There is an example at the beginning, (0).

Bad business decisions are easy to make

Those who make disastrous business decisions generally exhibit two characteristic types of behaviour. First they make a selective interpretation of the evidence when deciding to go ahead with a project. (0)...H....

How do such bad decisions come about? One reason is that the people in control are determined to make their mark by doing something dramatic. (9)..... Once the leader has decided to put his or her name to a project, many in the organisation believe it politic to support it too, whatever their private doubts. (10)..... These doubters know that such a perception will cloud their future careers. The

desire to agree with the boss is typical of committees, with group members often taking collective decisions that they would not have taken individually. They look around the table, see their colleagues nodding in agreement and suppress their own doubts. If all these intelligent people believe this is the right thing to do, they think to themselves, perhaps it is. It rarely occurs to committee members that all their colleagues have made the same dubious calculation.

Responsible managers usually ask to see the evidence before reaching a decision. (11)..... Even those who consider all the evidence, good and bad, fail to take account of the fact that expert predictions are often wrong. The reason for this is that feedback is only effective if it is received quickly and often; and senior executives rarely become the experts they claim to be, because they make too few big decisions to learn much from them. So when it becomes clear that disaster looms, many executives insist on pressing ahead regardless. (12)..... The repercussions of doing so can be daunting.

So what can be done to prevent companies making bad decisions? (13)..... Another is to delegate the decision on whether or not to continue to people who are not in the thick of the decision-making, such as the non-executive directors. (14)..... But they shouldn't expect any gratitude; people who have made huge mistakes are not going to say, 'Thank you, we should have paid attention to you in the first place.'

Example:

0	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
<input type="checkbox"/>								

- A** It would be far better, though, if dissidents in the organisation raised their doubts beforehand, and were listened to.
- B** They want to be recognised as having changed the company in a way that history will remember.
- C** This is not to argue that companies should never attempt anything brave or risky.
- D** Too much money has been spent and too many reputations are at stake to think about stopping at this stage.
- E** One solution is to set targets for a project and to agree in advance to abandon it if these are not met.
- F** After all, people who persistently point to potential pitfalls are seen as negative and disloyal.
- G** But they often rely only on those parts of it that support their case.
- H** Coupled with this, they insist that the failure was someone else's fault.

Turn Over ▶ 5

BEC HIGHER READING

Part 3 (questions 15–20)

PART THREE

Questions 15 – 20

- Read the following extract from an article about incompetent employees, and the questions on the opposite page.
- For each question 15 – 20, mark one letter (A, B, C or D) on your Answer Sheet for the answer you choose.

Every organisation has its share of employees-from-hell: the lazy, deluded, hypochondriac under-performers. They are difficult to manage and miserable to work with. Their productivity is low and their ability to poison staff morale high. They are, alas, always well-entrenched and management-resistant. Interestingly, their numbers in any organisation have more to do with management's refusal to deal with the situation than with poor selection. That is, their existence in the organisation is nearly always due to a long line of weak managers who have declined to tackle the problem.

Traditionally, there are three classic ineffective ways of dealing with the incompetent. The first is to ignore the problem, hoping that it will go away. Rather than confront laziness or serious absenteeism, the manager gives the employee less work to do. This inevitably leads to frustration on the part of the good hardworking staff who see the problem employee getting away with it.

The second approach, which has traditionally been the most favoured, is to pass them on. There is usually a part of any business where people believe the poor performer can do no damage. Alternatively, poor performers can be moved to another branch in the dreariest

part of town, or to another town, or even to another country. A clever variant of this tactic is to herd all the incompetent employees into one part of the company that is then sold off or privatised.

There is a third approach which is to promote the incompetent. This sounds bizarre and exceedingly stupid but is not infrequently adopted. The idea is that, although these posts are quite senior and well-paid, the actual jobs are fairly pointless ones in which incompetent people can hide without doing any serious damage. The employee is thus confirmed in his or her delusions of competence.

All three of these strategies are the result of not dealing with the problem early on. Many managers find dealing with incompetence very difficult. The scenario that all managers hate is as follows: show a subordinate a low mark on their appraisal form. The employee first wants the behaviour defined; then wants an example of when this behaviour occurred; then argues about how this incident occurred and how typical it was. The net result is a row about the past and frustration on the part of both.

A different and more successful method is the problem-solving

approach. This insists that one still shows the low score but, rather than attempting to explain it, one describes what needs to be done differently to achieve a higher score. The emphasis is on the future not the past; on a clear description of the desirable behaviour, not the incompetent behaviour. The touchy or sensitive employee normally responds to this reasonably well. Nevertheless, there are those who cannot, or will not, respond to good management. They may be unable to do the job due to not having the ability to learn ever-changing tasks fast enough. They may be distracted by problems at home or more likely they have been managed very poorly in the past.

There is really only a very limited number of things that can be done with the really incompetent. Buy them out, which may be the best solution for all concerned; raise the game by making sure they are given ever higher but reachable targets. A final strategy is to insist that they have an annual psychological test where a disinterested outside consultant does a motivation analysis and has the power to recommend that they be let go – not encouraged to go to another part of the organisation, but into the bracing waters of the job market.

15 What criticism does the writer make of managers in the first paragraph?

- A They lose interest in the issue of incompetent employees.
- B They fail to take a firm line with inefficient employees.
- C They have little idea of what is really required of their staff.
- D They often make bad decisions when choosing new staff.

16 What is the effect of the first of the methods suggested for dealing with incompetent staff?

- A It has only a short-term effect on the problem.
- B It means that better workers will not have to work so hard.
- C It makes good workers aware that problems are being dealt with.
- D It sends a negative message to those who do their job well.

17 In both the second and third ineffective methods of dealing with incompetent employees, the managers' aim is to

- A have all of the incompetent staff working in the same part of the company.
- B improve the attitude of the incompetent staff to work by giving them promotion.
- C put the incompetent staff in a situation where they can do as little harm as possible.
- D make the work so unattractive that the incompetent staff want to leave.

18 The writer says in the fifth paragraph that employees who are given a low mark on their appraisal form will

- A demand a detailed explanation of what they have done wrong.
- B claim that special circumstances have had an effect on their work.
- C deny that their work has been in any way unsatisfactory.
- D argue that they find the work they have had to do frustrating.

19 In the sixth paragraph the writer says that when talking to an incompetent employee a manager should

- A make no reference to the most recent appraisal mark.
- B compare the work of the employee with that of more efficient workers.
- C make clear what will happen if performance does not improve.
- D explain to the employee how he or she can gain a better appraisal mark.

20 What does the writer suggest as a way to deal with incompetent employees who fail to respond even to a problem-solving approach?

- A Set them targets which it would be impossible to attain.
- B Give them a test designed to identify their strengths.
- C Pay them a sum of money to leave the company.
- D Get an outside consultant to find them another job.

Turn Over ► 7

PART FOUR
Questions 21 – 30

- Read the article below about life coaching – regular meetings between a business person and a neutral consultant to discuss work-related problems.
- Choose the correct word or phrase to fill each gap from **A, B, C** or **D** on the opposite page.
- For each question **21 – 30**, mark one letter (**A, B, C** or **D**) on your Answer Sheet.
- There is an example at the beginning, (0).

Why I Found A Life Coach

Anyone who has ever **(0)** **D** through a self-improvement book has probably learned that such books do not hold the **(21)** of personal happiness. Having read too many of them without success, I was **(22)** to staying vaguely dissatisfied for the rest of my life. But when I **(23)** a newspaper article about a new kind of consultant, called a life coach, I became curious, and decided to learn more.

I was looking for a more personal way to **(24)** my life: I'd achieved my material goals before **(25)** the support of a coach, but professional challenges, long hours and not having someone neutral to talk to were putting my work and relationships at **(26)** I realised I needed to learn how to deal with problems before they occurred.

My life coach is very good at asking me **(27)** questions which help me to discover what I'm dissatisfied with in my life, and to understand who I am. It's good to have someone you can trust and respect to **(28)** things over with.

I sometimes pick topics in **(29)** of our discussions, such as situations at work, or conflicts between me and colleagues, though I don't always **(30)** an agenda. And I know that everything I say to my coach is in the strictest confidence. I'm far better at tackling difficult situations now, and best of all, I feel much more at ease with my life.

Example:

A stared **B** seen **C** inspected **D** glanced

0	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	A	B	C	D

- 21** **A** solution **B** answer **C** key **D** secret
- 22** **A** patient **B** resigned **C** tolerant **D** contented
- 23** **A** found out **B** came across **C** ran into **D** met with
- 24** **A** evaluate **B** account **C** estimate **D** reckon
- 25** **A** appointing **B** signing **C** registering **D** enlisting
- 26** **A** danger **B** hazard **C** risk **D** peril
- 27** **A** examining **B** probing **C** exploring **D** investigating
- 28** **A** talk **B** discuss **C** say **D** tell
- 29** **A** preparation **B** readiness **C** precaution **D** anticipation
- 30** **A** set **B** put **C** place **D** hold

Turn Over ▶ **9**

BEC HIGHER READING

Part 5 (questions 31–40) and Part 6 (questions 41–52)

PART FIVE Questions 31 – 40

- Read the article below about working abroad.
- For each question 31 – 40, write one word in CAPITAL LETTERS on your Answer Sheet.
- There is an example at the beginning. (0).

Example

WORKING ABROAD

An increasing number of people are finding (0) necessary to spend at least part of their working life abroad. An international career used to be something people opted into from choice, but (31) many it has now become a requirement of staying in work. You do not have to be working in a huge multi-national corporation to find (32) being asked to work abroad. Companies that not so (33) years ago reserved foreign travel for directors, are now sending middle managers and even new recruits on projects overseas.

The characteristics of international travel will vary widely. For some people it will mean that they will occasionally have to spend a (34) days in a foreign city, while for others it will mean that they will constantly be moving from (35) country to another until they eventually lose touch with (36) original national identity.

The growing demand for people with the skills and experience to work in cross-national contexts places a premium on those who have developed the skills to enable them to rise to that challenge. (37) is needed is flexibility and adaptability, both of (38) arise from a state of mind rather than from innate ability. Teamworking skills are also important and (39) is the ability to communicate effectively, especially (40) long distances, via new communications technologies, such as videoconferencing and teleconferencing.

An international career requires a variety of skills. The time to begin preparing for such a career is now.

PART SIX Questions 41 – 52

- Read the text below about writing good covering letters.
- In most of the lines 41 – 52 there is one extra word. It is either grammatically incorrect or does not fit in with the meaning of the text. Some lines, however, are correct.
- If a line is correct, write **CORRECT** on your Answer Sheet
- If there is an extra word in the line, write **the extra word** in CAPITAL LETTERS on your answer sheet.
- The exercise begins with two examples, (0) and (00).

Examples

DON'T GET "FILED IN THE BIN"

- 0 When you're applying for a job, what can you do to ensure that your covering letter doesn't just get 'filed' in the rubbish bin? Firstly, you always remember that the purpose of a covering letter is there to complement for your CV. This means it should flesh out and explain clearly through any points that the CV alone doesn't deal with and that therefore might otherwise be missed out by prospective employers.
- 41
- 42
- 43
- 44
- 45 For example, if you're looking to change in industries, then your letter ought to explain them why you want to make the move, what your motivation is, and what you hope to achieve. If your CV shows that you don't hold a relevant qualification that the job ad has specified it (say, a university degree or a vocational diploma), so you'll need to explain why you should still be considered. It's not easy, and often writing the letter can take twice as long as writing your CV. But because to some extent that is how it should be: a CV is a formal, with structured document that simply imparts information, whereas a letter is your chance to make an impression.
- 46
- 47
- 48
- 49
- 50
- 51
- 52

BEC HIGHER READING

Sample paper answer key

PART ONE

- 1 E
- 2 D
- 3 B
- 4 A
- 5 B
- 6 C
- 7 E
- 8 E

PART TWO

- 9 B
- 10 F
- 11 G
- 12 D
- 13 E
- 14 A

PART THREE

- 15 B
- 16 D
- 17 C
- 18 A
- 19 D
- 20 C

PART FOUR

- 21 D
- 22 B
- 23 B
- 24 A
- 25 D
- 26 C
- 27 B
- 28 A
- 29 D
- 30 A

PART FIVE

- 31 FOR/WITH
- 32 YOURSELF
- 33 MANY
- 34 FEW
- 35 ONE
- 36 THEIR
- 37 WHAT
- 38 WHICH
- 39 SO
- 40 OVER/ACROSS

PART SIX

- 41 THERE
- 42 FOR
- 43 THROUGH
- 44 OUT
- 45 IN
- 46 THEM
- 47 CORRECT
- 48 IT
- 49 SO
- 50 CORRECT
- 51 BECAUSE
- 52 WITH

BEC HIGHER TEST OF WRITING

GENERAL DESCRIPTION

Paper format	The paper consists of two business-related Writing tasks in response to stimuli provided and for a given purpose and target reader.
Timing	1 hour 10 minutes.
No. of parts	There are two parts.
No. of tasks	Two (both are compulsory).
Task types	In task one candidates are required to write a short report. In task two candidates are required to write either a report or a proposal or a piece of business correspondence.
Answer format	Candidates write their answers on the question paper.
Marks	Part 1 carries one third of the total marks available and Part 2 carries two thirds of the total marks available.

STRUCTURE AND TASKS

PART 1

Task type and focus	A short report. Describing or comparing figures from graphic input, making inferences.
Format	Candidates are required to produce a report based on a rubric and graphic input.
No. of tasks and length	One compulsory task. 120–140 words.

PART 2

Task type and focus	A report, proposal or piece of business correspondence. Report: describing, summarising. Correspondence: e.g. explaining, apologising, reassuring, complaining. Proposal: describing, summarising, recommending, persuading.
Format	Candidates are required to produce a report, proposal or piece of business correspondence based on a rubric and possibly supplemented by a brief input text.
No. of tasks and length	One task chosen from three possible options. 200–250 words.

The two parts of the Test of Writing



Part 1 of the Test of Writing carries one third of the total marks available and Part 2 carries two thirds of the total marks available.

■ Expected word length

Candidates are asked to write 120–140 words for Part 1 and 200–250 words for Part 2. Significantly fewer words are likely to mean that the task has not been completed, whereas over-long pieces of writing may involve irrelevance or have a negative effect on the target reader. If this is the case, under-length or over-length answers will be penalised.

■ Irrelevance

The examiners' first priority is to give credit for the candidates' efforts at communication, but candidates are penalised for content irrelevant to the task set, as in the real world this would have a negative impact on the target reader and would interfere with communication.

■ PART 1

This part tests the candidate's ability to produce a short report in reference to graphic input.



Sample questions and scripts: pages 105 and 107–108.

■ Task type and focus

A short report. Medium may be memo or email. The range of functions in the task may include describing or comparing figures from graphic input, making inferences.

■ Task format

This is a guided writing task, in which the candidate produces a brief (120–140 word) report. The task provides a realistic situation in which it is necessary to analyse graphic information and express it in words. The input may consist of graphs, bar charts or pie charts of the type frequently used in the business pages of newspapers, company reports and brochures.

■ PART 2

This part tests the candidate's ability to produce a report, proposal or piece of business correspondence.



Sample questions and scripts: pages 105 and 108–110.

■ Task type and focus

A report, proposal or piece of business correspondence. The range of functions in the tasks may include describing, summarising, explaining, apologising, complaining, recommending or persuading.

■ Task format

In most parts of the BEC Writing tests, all candidates are required to perform the same task because there is no danger of individuals or groups of candidates being disadvantaged by that task. The exception is BEC Higher Writing Part 2: in order to generate the range of language which is characteristic of this level of language

learner, the task contains no input or minimal input, resulting in a relatively high background knowledge requirement from the candidate. In the absence of a choice of tasks this could disadvantage some candidates, so a choice of tasks is given.

Candidates choose from three options: a report, proposal or a piece of business correspondence. The task is supplied by the rubric, which provides an authentic reason for writing, and indicates for whom the piece of writing is being produced. The input is therefore more detailed and specific than that of the traditional 'essay question' task type.

There is no significant difference between the format required for proposals and reports. At this level, reports must be clearly organised and should make some attempt at report format, for example, there should be paragraphs, a heading, introduction and/or conclusion. There is no particular requirement for subheadings, and some widely taught subheadings such as 'introduction', 'terms of reference', 'findings', etc. will not necessarily be appropriate for all tasks.

■ Accuracy and appropriacy in emails

Nowadays a significant proportion of written business communication is transmitted electronically, both within the company and to people outside the company.

In some contexts, this technological change may have changed the nature of what people actually write. It may be argued that a new genre has emerged, characterised by brevity, informality and a lack of conventions and even of regard for linguistic accuracy.

However, linguistic inaccuracy and inappropriate informality within electronic business communications is considered unacceptable by many individuals and organisations, and can be counterproductive if employed in real life.

As well as being used informally, email is also widely used within business cultures in which appropriacy and accuracy are perceived to be important, and this is the context of use on which BEC focuses.

Preparation

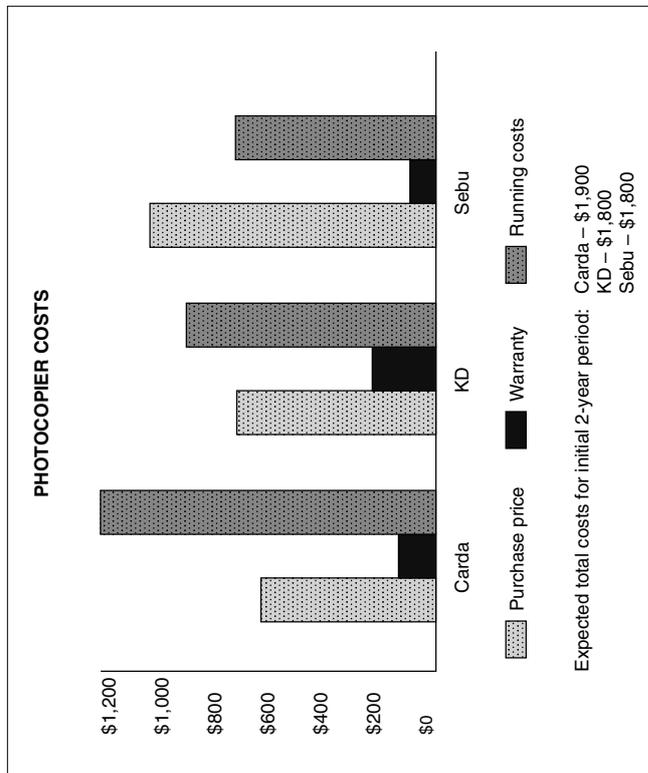
■ The first Writing task involves the kind of graphic input of information which is common in the business world, and candidates should be exposed to a wide range of examples of graphs and charts from newspapers, magazines, company literature, etc. The interpretation involved is the translating of the graphic input into prose, rather than the recommending of action. Candidates should have practice in the clear and concise presentation of written information. Specific vocabulary and phrasing should also be developed.

■ The second Writing task requires candidates to plan carefully in order to be able to produce successful answers. Exposure to and discussion of as wide a range as possible of relevant texts would be beneficial. Candidates should be given practice in considering:

- the target reader
- the purpose of writing
- the requirements of the format (letter, report, etc.)
- the main points to be addressed
- the approximate number of words to be written for each point
- suitable openings and closings
- the level of formality required.

PART ONE
Question 1

- The bar chart below shows the cost of buying three different photocopiers, the cost of a warranty on each machine, and their expected running costs for the first two years.
- Using the information from the chart, write a short **report** comparing the costs for the three machines.
- Write **120 – 140** words on page 3.



PART TWO
Questions 2 – 4

- Write an answer to **one** of the questions 2 – 4 in this part.
- Write **200 – 250** words on pages 5 and 6.
- Write the question number in the box at the top of page 5.

Question 2

- Your manager is keen to introduce new practices into your company. He has asked you to write a report which includes details of two practices from another company which you would suggest adopting in your own company.
- Write the **report** for your manager, including the following information:
 - what you admire about the other company
 - which two of its practices you would adopt
 - why your company would benefit from them.

Question 3

- Your company has employed an outside consultant to organise an exhibition of your products, to be held next month. His work is unsatisfactory, and your boss has now decided that you should take over full responsibility instead. Your boss has asked you to write to the consultant to explain why he has been replaced.
- Write the **letter** to the consultant:
 - giving two reasons why he has been replaced
 - telling him he will be paid for this work
 - asking him to brief you on the current situation.

Question 4

- Your company has decided to conduct an investigation into the possibility of increasing the number of ways in which technology is used throughout the organisation. You have been asked to write a proposal concerning the use of technology in your department for the Managing Director.
- Write your **proposal**, including the following:
 - a brief outline of the current uses of technology in your department
 - a description of what technological improvements could be made
 - an explanation of the benefits these changes might bring
 - recommendations for the kind of training that would be necessary.

Assessment of Writing

Trained examiners award a mark to each piece of writing using two mark schemes – the General Mark Scheme and the Task-Specific Mark Scheme. The General Mark Scheme summarises performance with reference to content, organisation and cohesion, range and accuracy of vocabulary, range and accuracy of grammatical structures and effect on the target reader across five bands. The Task-Specific Mark Scheme focuses on criteria specific to each task.

Candidates are penalised for dealing inadequately with the requirements of the Task-Specific Mark Scheme. The accuracy of the language, including spelling and punctuation, is assessed on the General scale for all tasks.

■ Marking

A mark is awarded to each piece of writing.

A panel of expert examiners is divided into small teams, each with a very experienced examiner as Team Leader. A Principal Examiner guides and monitors the marking process. Examiners discuss the Task-Specific and General Mark Schemes and refer to them regularly while they are working.

During marking, each examiner is allocated scripts chosen at random from the whole entry in order to ensure that there is no concentration of good or weak scripts or of one large centre or one country in the allocation of any one examiner.

The BEC Higher General Mark Scheme is interpreted at Council of Europe Level C1.

A summary of the General Mark Scheme is given, right. Examiners, who are co-ordinated prior to each examination session, work with a more detailed version, which is subject to updating.

■ Spelling and punctuation

These are important aspects of accuracy and are always taken into account. American spelling is equally valid, but there should be consistency.

■ Handwriting

If handwriting interferes with communication without preventing it, the candidate will be penalised. Totally illegible scripts receive Band 0.

■ Irrelevance

The examiners' first priority is to give credit for the candidates' efforts at communication, but candidates are penalised for content irrelevant to the task set.

BEC Higher Summary of General Mark Scheme

BAND 5	Full realisation of the task set. <ul style="list-style-type: none">• All content points included.• Controlled and natural use of language; minimal errors.• Wide range of structure and vocabulary.• Effectively organised, with appropriate use of cohesive devices.• Register and format consistently appropriate. Very positive effect on the reader.
BAND 4	Good realisation of the task set. <ul style="list-style-type: none">• All major content points included; possibly minor omissions.• Natural use of language; errors only when complex language is attempted.• Good range of structure and vocabulary.• Generally well-organised, with attention paid to cohesion.• Register and format on the whole appropriate Positive effect on the reader.
BAND 3	Reasonable realisation of the task set. <ul style="list-style-type: none">• All major content points included; some minor omissions.• Reasonable control, although a more ambitious attempt at the task may lead to a number of non-impeding errors.• Adequate range of structure and vocabulary.• Organisation and cohesion is satisfactory.• Register and format reasonable, although not entirely successful. Satisfactory effect on the reader.
BAND 2	Inadequate realisation of the task set. <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Some major content points omitted or inadequately dealt with; possibly some irrelevance.• Errors sometimes obscure communication and are likely to be numerous.• Limited range of structure and vocabulary; language is too elementary for this level.• Content is not clearly organised.• Unsuccessful attempt at appropriate register and format. Negative effect on the reader.
BAND 1	Poor realisation of the task set. <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Notable content omissions and/or considerable irrelevance.• Serious lack of control; frequent basic errors.• Narrow range of structure and vocabulary.• Lack of organisation.• Little attempt at appropriate register and format. Very negative effect on the reader.
BAND 0	Achieves nothing. Either fewer than 25% of the required number of words or totally illegible or totally irrelevant.

Sample scripts and commentaries

Question One

Script A

Report: Photocopier Costs

Of the three types of photocopiers, Carda, KD and Sebu, the purchase price of the Carda is the lowest. It is slightly more than \$600 but its expected running cost for the first two years is the highest with its warranty cost at the mid-level of the three photocopiers.

In comparison, the purchase price of the KD is a little more than that of the Carda which is \$700; whereas the expected running cost of the KD is much less than that of the Carda which is \$1,200. However, the KD's warranty cost is the highest of the three at \$200. In comparison the Sebu's purchase price is the highest of the three, i.e. \$1000, but it costs consumers the least in warranty and running for the first two years.

What's more, the expected total cost of the Carda for the initial 2-year period is \$1,900, more than that of both the Sebu and KD, \$1,800.

In conclusion it would be advisable to buy the KD photocopier which is generally more advantageous in cost than its competitors.

EXAMINER COMMENTS

Band 5

Full realisation of the task set, with a natural use of language and appropriate use of linkers.

Script B

This report was compiled to present the data about the costs of buying three different photocopiers, the cost of a warranty on each machine, and their expected running costs for the first two years. The photocopiers being described are Carda, KS and Sebu.

Certainly the most expensive one is Carda as its total cost for initial 2-year period is \$1,900. This includes running costs of \$1,200 and cost of a warranty which is \$100. The remaining part of costs – about 30% of the total costs – is the purchase price.

Total cost of both KD and Sebu photocopiers are equal, however, their particular ingredients differ. KD's warranty is the most pricey and costs \$200 whereas Sebu's costs \$70. Running costs of KD and Sebu photocopiers are \$900 and \$800, respectively. Taking

into consideration purchase price, the most expensive one is Sebu which costs \$1000 whereas KD's is cheaper than Sebu by \$200. Total costs for the 2-year period of these machines is \$1,800.

I trust that the above data will be useful and helpful for the buyer to make the best possible choice.

EXAMINER COMMENTS

Band 4

Good realisation of the task set, with all content points included. Ambitious range of structure and vocabulary, which is not always successful. Generally well-organised with evidence of internal cohesion.

Script C

This report compares the costs of three photocopiers, called Carda, KD and Sebu.

Firstly, we will consider running costs. Far the highest is Carda's (\$1200) followed by KD's which is equal to \$1000 and the lowest one at the moment is Sebu's (\$600). It also has the lowest warranty cost which is about \$100. That is very close to the cost of Carda machine, which is just a bit higher (\$630). But KD's cost is for about 100 percent higher than the mentioned two. If we look at purchase prices and start with the highest we firstly have to mention Carda. It's purchase price is \$600, moving to KD with a price of about \$700 and finish with the highest purchase price which is \$1200 and comes from Sebu.

If we analyse the facts I mentioned above we can calculate the expected total costs for initial 2-year period. Carda has the highest total cost which is \$1900, so it would be cheaper buying the other two, which both have a total price of \$1,800.

EXAMINER COMMENTS

Band 3

This is a well-organised response to the task, which displays internal coherence. All content points are covered. The register is more informal than might generally be considered appropriate, but this is used consistently. There are errors but these are generally non-impeding.

Script D

The upper is the comparison of the costs of 3 different photocopiers, including the purchase price, warranty costs and expected running costs for initial 2-year. From that, we can see Carda gets the highest expected

total costs of \$1,900. The others, KD and Sebu are likely the same reaching \$1,800.

The reason why Carda is the most expensive is due to its running costs, which covers more than 60 percent in the expected total cost. While KD and Sebu cost lower than that, no more than \$1,000. In which Sebu's cost in running cost is only \$800 around. But Sebu's buying cost the highest over \$1,000. At the same time, Carda costs only \$600, KD \$700 or so. As to the cost of a warranty on them, KD is more than \$200, Carda \$120 and Sebu less than \$100.

EXAMINER COMMENTS

Band 2

Inadequate attempt at the task set, due mainly to the low level of language. Errors sometimes obscure communication, for example 'the upper', 'In which Sebu's cost in running cost is only \$800'. However, the major content points are addressed and the writing has reasonable organisation.

Question Two

Script E

Report on the introduction of new practices.

The report sets out to describe the most attractive features of the Olive Garden chain restaurants staff Management policies and to suggest introduction of several items into the restaurant department of the Hinton Firs hotel. The presented information has been obtained during the Assistant Manager's visit to the former company.

It was found that one of the American chain restaurants is exposed to an exceptionally innovative management that has recently developed a new policy in order to maintain high standards in all aspects of the service provided to their guests.

It seems that two of its recently introduced practices may well be borrowed and implemented in our business.

Firstly, all the waiting staff are exposed to a check-up before starting their lunch and dinner shifts so as to ensure maintenance of hygiene and compliance with the company's dress code.

Secondly, the evening briefings conducted on a regular basis in order to inform the staff about the basic changes in the menu and wine supplies have proved effective, and therefore could be applied in our restaurant department as well.

It is clear that a successful introduction of the two procedures is sure to reflect on the quality of such service in issues of the waiting staff's better awareness and an improvement in the hotel's image.

EXAMINER COMMENTS

Band 4

Good organisation and realisation of the task set; all content points are included. Natural use of language, with a wide range of vocabulary and reasonably accurate use of structure and cohesive devices.

Script F

The purpose of this report is to established which practices should we accept in our company from company "Johnson". The company Johnson is well respected company in Europe. They own their succes to inovation and team work. This is a well organised company with 300 employees. All their employees know what is expected from them. The company is divided in to departaments; Production, finances, marketing and salles.

They have strict behaviour rules which includes non smoking and clothing polici. Inspite of this strict rules there is an open-level management. Every two weeks the main director receves employees that come with new ideas and they are reworded if the idea is accepted. Johnson has also an complain service in which pesonel can come to express their dissatisfaction.

In our company I would strongly sugest that we also adopt open-level management where we could widen our prospectives and get new ideas.

I also reccomend complain service center where we could find out how to motivate our staff.

EXAMINER COMMENTS

Band 2

Inadequate attempt at the task set. All content points addressed but not always adequately dealt with. Errors (particularly of spelling) are numerous and sometimes obscure communication.

Question Three

Script G

Dear Mr Jones

My name is Svenja Pietzonka, I am an employee of a

company Ardo, where you were employed. I have been given this unpleasant job of contacting you and explaining why you have been replaced. Another reason for writing you is to inform you that I will take over your responsibility and to ask for your help.

The reasons for your replacement are, as you can assume, that you didn't know our products well enough. You obviously didn't quite understand which are the features of our products that attract potential customers and what our marketing strategies are. This led to the lack of ideas that you had. We know that you introduced a few ideas, but we think you would agree that none were satisfactory. We hope that you understand why we decided so.

We confess that your failure to succeed is also our fault. We should have introduced you to our products better and we should have let you know what the objectives of our company are and which market strategies we use to achieve them. Taking all these factors into account, we agreed that we should pay you the work you have done.

I would like to ask you if you could brief me on the current situation. You probably know that it is extremely hard to start a project when someone was working on it before you, so I honestly hope that you will be prepared to assist me with your help.

I am looking forward to hearing from you soon.

Yours sincerely
Svenja Pietzonka

EXAMINER COMMENTS

Band 4

Good achievement of the task set, mainly due to tone and content, which would have the desired impact on the target reader. However, there are some non-impeding errors and an occasional awkwardness in expression.

Script H

Dear sir,

Thank you for the work you have done to organise an exhibition. Most things are kept in order in the stage of the whole process and your job is confirmed and phrased by our boss to some extent. However, there still remains some shortcomings. As is known to all, you are a very excellent consultant in many respects. You have lots of experience in advising. But that it is based on outside conditions does not fit us very much. The policies, the strategies seem a bit different

from what we own. And that causes some barriers among our people. So with the development of the process, the organising work may not be well done. To avoid such shortcomings, we may appreciate someone with local experience in the next stage of the process. Probably he will be helpful to the co-operative work, and accepted by the inside ones. He may not be as creative as you but somehow suits the situation now.

We will pay you according to your creative work and helpful advice and you will be thanked for your favour in our company.

As I will take your place and hopefully I intend to get some help from you. If you could brief the work on the current situation, I shall be very grateful. Thank you very much again.

Look forward to hearing from you.

Regards.

Jessica Choi
Company Advisor

EXAMINER COMMENTS

Band 2

All content points are included. Reasonable register and format. However, an ambitious attempt at language results in frequent impeding errors and lack of clarity.

Question Four

Script I

Purpose

As requested, the purpose of this proposal is to describe and analyse the possible use of technology in the Marketing Department.

Current use of technology

Up to now the members of our department have taken advantage of technological equipment i.e. computers, in order to launch our products most successfully. Not only have we arranged promotional and advertising campaigns but we have also conducted market research via the internet so as to meet our consumers growing demands.

Technological Improvements

In our work we have used computer software and hardware which has already become obsolete and urgently needs modernisation. Therefore, the purchase of up-to-date programmes and equipment is of prime importance.

Benefits

There is no denying that these improvements will bring vast profits to the company. Our team will be able to work faster, more effectively and make greater use of technological innovations. Moreover, our company will be more likely to easily overcome fierce competition in the market.

Training

It seems obvious that our staff does not possess the knowledge of how to use new software. Thus, training on the use of modern programmes would be recommended as necessary.

Conclusion

To sum up, it seems obvious that the introduction of new technology into the Marketing Department will enable the company to gain huge profits. Our position in the market will be strengthened.

EXAMINER COMMENTS

Band 5

Very good realisation of the task, with good use of structure and vocabulary. Well-organised and cohesive, with natural use of language.

Script J

The purpose of the proposal is to explain why our Design Department need to improve technology in our department regarding the introduction of more portable PCs and laser printers, and recommend some necessary training.

As designers in Design Department, it is our routine job to design our product consistent with the requirement of our clients. With the expanding of our company, we receive more orders. Most of our equipment, fax machines, color boards, etc. perform less help to us with our heavy workload. Our efficiency was affected.

There is therefore an urgent need for us to buy some more computers. Because, so many things can be done by computers, you can choose colors, textile types, etc on them. And it is amazing to see the whole process on computer. Furthermore it is faster and quality is improved too.

We usually attend some seminars or shows abroad. And we feel it is very inconvenient to take many design papers, and documents with us, and sometimes they are in a mess. So I think we should buy some portable computers for our designers, if possible.

Besides that, it is paramount for us to get the latest

information from all over the world. We could get them through internet with our portable computers anywhere, any time.

As our routine work has little connection with computers and internet, most of us can't use them freely. So it is necessary for us to bring in some training courses for computers and internet.

EXAMINER COMMENTS

Band 3

Reasonable achievement of task set. All content points are included and the organisation is satisfactory. However, an ambitious attempt at the task results in errors of structure and vocabulary, although these are mainly non-impeding.

BEC HIGHER

TEST OF LISTENING

GENERAL DESCRIPTION

Paper format The paper consists of three parts. Each part comprises a recorded text or texts and a Listening task.

Timing 40 minutes, including time for the transfer of answers to the answer sheet.

No. of parts There are three parts.

No. of questions 30.

Task types Gap-filling, multiple-matching and 3-option multiple choice.

Task focuses These include understanding specific information, gist, attitude, opinion, topic, context, function, main points and detail.

Text types Monologues: these include presentations, lectures, announcements, briefings, etc.
Interacting speakers: these include meetings, discussions, interviews, etc.

Answer format Candidates are advised to write their answers in the spaces provided on the question paper. There are ten minutes at the end of the test to copy the answers onto a separate answer sheet. Candidates indicate their answers by shading a box or writing a word, or words, on a machine-readable answer sheet.

Marks Each correct answer receives one mark.

STRUCTURE AND TASKS

PART 1

Task type and focus Gap-filling.
Listening for and noting specific information.

Format Informational monologue of approximately 2–3 minutes. Heard twice.

No. of Qs 12.

PART 2

Task type and focus Multiple-matching.
Listening to identify topic, context, function, speaker's opinion, etc.

Format Five short monologues linked by theme or topic from five different speakers. The recording lasts approximately 3–4 minutes and is heard twice.

No. of Qs 10.

PART 3

Task type and focus 3-option multiple choice.
Listening for gist, specific information, attitudes, etc.

Format Conversation, interview, discussion between two or more people of approximately 3–4 minutes, heard twice.

No. of Qs 8.

The three parts of the Test of Listening

■ PART 1 – GAP-FILLING

This part tests the candidates' ability to listen for specific information.



Sample task and answer key: pages 113 and 117.



Each correct answer in Part 1 receives 1 mark.

An informational monologue: heard twice.

This is a sentence-completion, gap-filling or note-taking task. The candidate has to supply only the key words of the answer, which will not be more than three words per question.

The spoken text lasts about two to three minutes and is a monologue (or a series of long turns by more than one speaker). The text is heard twice. It is informational and focuses on a series of identifiable facts. Topics might involve instructions, changes in arrangements, the programme for an event or meeting, or details of company performance. The setting for the task could be someone giving information over the telephone, a speaker addressing a roomful of delegates at a conference or people on a training course, or a Managing Director addressing staff.

Listening tasks may be based on recorded material taken from authentic sources or (more usually) based on scripted material. There are 12 questions, which are distributed evenly throughout the text, so that candidates have time to record their answers. Answers to questions may be numbers or amounts of money, but these will not involve the candidate in any calculations. Items of information are tested in the same order in which the information occurs in the text. Correct spelling of the words in the answer is expected.

■ PART 2 – MULTIPLE-MATCHING

This part tests the candidates' ability to identify topic, context, function, speaker's opinion, etc.



Sample task and answer key: pages 113 and 117.



Each correct answer in Part 2 receives 1 mark.

Five short monologues from five different speakers: heard twice.

This is a matching task based on five short extracts linked by theme or topic and spoken by five different speakers, in monologue form. The texts last a total of approximately three to four minutes.

There are two tasks for each of the five extracts. These tasks relate to the content and purpose of the extracts, and candidates are asked to do any combination of the following: identify speakers, interpret context, recognise the function of

what is said, identify the topic, understand specific information, identify a speaker's opinion or feelings.

The series of extracts is heard twice, and candidates must attempt both tasks during this time. It is for the candidates to decide whether they choose to do the first task the first time they listen to the text, and the second task the second time, or whether to deal with the two tasks for each extract together. For each task, they have a list of eight options to choose from.

Materials for this task are scripted, and relate to a business topic or situation.

■ PART 3 – 3-OPTION MULTIPLE CHOICE

This part tests the candidates' ability to follow the main points of a text and retrieve specific information.



Sample task and answer key: pages 114 and 117.



Each correct answer in Part 3 receives 1 mark.

Conversation interview/discussion: heard twice.

This task consists of a dialogue, or a discussion between three or more speakers. There are eight questions, which are 3-option multiple choice. The task relates to a topic of interest or concern in the world of work.

Preparation

- All listening practice is helpful for students, whether authentic or specially prepared. In particular, discussion should focus on:
 - the purpose of talks, conversations or discussions
 - the roles of speakers
 - the opinions expressed
 - the language functions employed
 - relevant aspects of phonology such as stress, linking and weak forms, etc.
- In addition, students should be encouraged to appreciate the differing demands of each task type. It is helpful not only to practise the task types in order to develop a sense of familiarity and confidence, but also to discuss how the three task types relate to real-life skills and situations.
- The first task is note-taking (and therefore productive), and students should reflect on the various situations in which they take notes from a spoken input. They should also be encouraged to try to predict the kinds of words or numbers that might go in the gaps.
- The second task is a matching (with discrimination) exercise, featuring differing styles and registers.
- The third task involves the correct interpretation of spoken input, with correct answers often being delivered by more than one speaker.
- In all three tasks, successful listening depends on correct reading, and students should be encouraged to make full use of the pauses during the test to check the written input.

PART ONE
Questions 1 – 12

- You will hear the introduction to a seminar, called the Business Master Class, about the use of Information Technology in the workplace.
- As you listen, for questions 1 – 12, complete the notes, using up to three words or a number.
- You will hear the recording twice.

THE BUSINESS MASTER CLASS

SEMINAR NOTES

Arrangements for participants

- The event will take place over
- Seminar organised by
- The title of the last session will be
- To use the New City Hotel car park, delegates must obtain a

Dr Sangalli

- Dr Sangalli has advised many
- The name of his consultancy is
- He is the author of
- In Europe, he is the best-known

The Business Master Class

Two problems for companies:

- to become more
 - to establish new
- Two outcomes of session:
- design your own
 - take away documents containing actual

PART TWO
Questions 13 – 22

- You will hear five different business people talking about trips they have recently been on.
- For each extract there are two tasks. For Task One, choose the purpose of each trip from the list A – H. For Task Two, choose the problem described from the list A – H.
- You will hear the recording twice.

TASK ONE – PURPOSE

- For questions 13 – 17, match the extracts with the purposes, listed A – H.
- For each extract, choose the purpose stated.
- Write one letter (A – H) next to the number of the extract.

- | | | | |
|----|-------|---|--------------------------------|
| 13 | ..... | A | to supervise staff training |
| 14 | ..... | B | to hold job interviews |
| 15 | ..... | C | to introduce new policy |
| 16 | ..... | D | to visit possible new premises |
| 17 | ..... | E | to observe working practices |
| | | F | to meet a new manager |
| | | G | to sign a new contract |
| | | H | to deal with a complaint |

TASK TWO – PROBLEM

- For questions 18 – 22, match the extracts with the problems, listed A – H.
- For each extract, choose the problem described.
- Write one letter (A – H) next to the number of the extract.

- | | | | |
|----|-------|---|-----------------------------------|
| 18 | ..... | A | I forgot a document. |
| 19 | ..... | B | My hotel was noisy. |
| 20 | ..... | C | I was late for a meeting. |
| 21 | ..... | D | I didn't understand some figures. |
| 22 | ..... | E | The service at my hotel was bad. |
| | | F | I had some wrong information. |
| | | G | I didn't have an interpreter. |
| | | H | I experienced computer problems. |

BEC HIGHER LISTENING

Part 3 (questions 23–30)

PART THREE

Questions 23 – 30

- You will hear part of a conversation between a management consultant and the Human Resources Manager of Jenkins, a company which manufactures children's clothing.
- For each question 23 – 30, mark one letter **A**, **B** or **C** for the correct answer.
- You will hear the recording twice.

23 What is said about the ownership of Jenkins?

- A** The founder has sold the company to someone else.
- B** Jenkins has merged with another company.
- C** There has been no change of ownership.

24 What does the Human Resources Manager see as the main external threat to Jenkins?

- A** Their retailers are becoming less willing to pay their prices.
- B** Consumers are buying more top-of-the-range children's clothes.
- C** More and more companies are producing children's clothes.

25 The Human Resources Manager sees the company's main strength as the fact that

- A** it has several long-term contracts.
- B** it makes products of high quality.
- C** its distribution system is efficient.

26 The Human Resources Manager believes that Jenkins's main weakness at present is that

- A** the machinery is inadequate for current requirements.
- B** the management style is out of line with modern demands.
- C** the relations between management and workers are poor.

27 According to the Human Resources Manager, why do many machinists choose to leave?

- A** They think that they can get better paid work elsewhere.
- B** They feel that too much is expected of them.
- C** They lack confidence in the company's future.

4

03533 (1/25) New02

28 When working to produce a batch of clothes

- A** each team is responsible for a particular operation.
- B** each member of the team produces a complete item.
- C** each person carries out one part of the production process.

29 What change has been made to the range of goods?

- A** A smaller number of different items is produced.
- B** Each item is now made in smaller quantities.
- C** Fewer new styles are introduced each year.

30 What is said about the machinists?

- A** More of their work is falling below the required standard.
- B** Some of them are earning less than they used to.
- C** They have to spend longer learning to operate new machines.

You now have ten minutes to transfer your answers to your Answer Sheet.

5

03533 (1/25) New02

BEC Higher Listening

Tapescript for Listening

Part One. Questions 1–12.

F: Good morning everyone and welcome. Thanks for coming. My name is Jane Watson and I look forward to meeting you all personally. Some of you are here just for today, others, I know, will be attending for all three days. I'm just going to say a few words on behalf of my company who have organised this event, Global Conferences plc. As you know today's seminar is The Business Master Class to be conducted by our distinguished guest who I will introduce in a moment. But first a few quick points of organisation which perhaps you'd like to note. All the sessions will take place in this hotel except for the last session on Tomorrow's Software, which will be at the New City Hotel. We will meet there at 2 p.m. and this will give us a chance to see in action some of the things we have been discussing. A map with directions to the New City Hotel is available from me if you wish to make your own way. Alternatively there will be a bus going there at 1.30 p.m. There is limited car parking at the New City Hotel so if you wish to drive there you will need a permit. You can get one from the conference office.

Now to the reason we are all here. We are very fortunate to have a seminar today led by Dr Martin Sangalli, one of the most prominent and well-respected commentators in the world business community. He has been asked to advise many large corporations. He is a specialist in the strategic use of information technology in banking, pharmaceuticals and retail. He has his own company called Logic Solutions which consults with some of the biggest names in the world of business. He is also an adviser to Intertel and a non-executive director of Global Conferences. Thousands of business and technology managers have benefited from reading his best-selling book, *Intelligent Change*. Always inspiring and thought-provoking, his ideas have helped hundreds of organisations to gain a glimpse of the future. He is Europe's most famous IT Analyst. Dr Sangalli – welcome.

M: Thank you Jane for that flattering introduction. I hope I can live up to it. So to begin. There are two main difficulties facing all corporations today. Firstly, how to make themselves more customer-driven. Secondly, and as a result of that, is the question of how to go about the major task of developing and implementing new organisational structures. This is a senior management session and is designed to provide you with two things. I hope that by the end of the session you will be equipped to design your own framework for action. To help you do this you will also be able to take away documentation of real-life case studies that I have been involved in. So, if you would like to look at the screen ...

— *** —

Part Two. Questions 13–22.

- M: Of course, I was looking forward to it. I mean, it meant seeing the results of quite a lengthy process to find the right person, which I myself had invested quite a lot of time in. It's a demanding post, with a lot of responsibility. I think the potential we thought we'd spotted is being realised, and that she's going to deliver the sort of new initiatives we hoped for. She's already got the team adapting to her approach. But I did feel a bit stupid in the meeting, sitting there without the right figures. I just can't believe I didn't pick up the chart. I could still see it, sitting on my desk.
- F: Well, the whole thing was a serious challenge, and if I'm honest I didn't really feel up to it in the first place. It wasn't a good time to be going away from the office, and I certainly didn't feel happy, being asked to present pretty different ideas at this stage of the game. I completely understand that the last thing they wanted was to have someone dropping in from above, as it were, and saying, oh, well, we've decided to change the rules, etcetera. They'd been applying the system as it was in good faith. And then I was just so tired. What with the wedding celebration going on in the hotel, I definitely didn't get enough rest, and that left me disorientated and so I under performed.
- M: I wasn't happy to be going out there when there was so much that had to be dealt with, just left there on my desk. My secretary's extremely good, but she can't do the impossible, obviously. But it was clearly crucial to get some kind of idea of what it looked like, whether we were on to the right kind of thing. Getting the right location and space is vital. I'm more or less convinced that this is right for what we want. It will attract customers. The trouble is, I had out-of-date architect's plans with me, so I kept getting confused about the dimensions. But the hotel staff were really helpful when we were trying to get the up-to-date stuff faxed through.
- F: It's the first time I've been over there since we decided to go ahead with the expansion and I must say I was impressed with the number of really good candidates there were. It really is a good region, in terms of being able to attract and recruit the right people and I'm confident we chose the right people. I wish the same thing was true for the other branches. What I just can't believe is that I managed to set such a bad example by arriving a whole hour after we should have started. I felt like a real fool, going on about heavy traffic, when I'd never accept that kind of excuse myself!
- M: They said it was all different, and they certainly weren't wrong! I could hardly believe some of it! It's definitely eye-opening to see what policy can mean in reality. But the way they're applying it, I mean the actual techniques, really is impressive. I didn't say anything, of course, just took my notes, and I will be drawing up my report as soon as I can. I'll definitely be recommending that some of their ways of going about things get applied

in the other branches. It was confusing at the same time, I have to admit. They were showing me all these graphs, different models of analysis, and I couldn't really follow that way of presenting the data. And then that guy's accent! Great hotel, though.

— *** —

Part Three. Questions 23–30.

- F: Good morning, nice to meet you. Do sit down.
- M: Thank you.
- F: Now you're Human Resources Manager of Jenkins, aren't you? Give me some background on the company – so I get a general picture.
- M: Stephen Jenkins founded the company nearly thirty years ago, and named it after himself, and he ran it for a long time. Last year one of our competitors proposed combining, with the idea that separately the two companies were too small to survive. They were probably right, but anyway Stephen turned down the offer. Then, because he was getting on, he handed over the day-to-day running to his daughter, Catherine, while retaining full control himself.
- F: And you make children's clothes, don't you? Aren't there problems in the sector?
- M: Well, we mostly sell to retail chains, which sell them under their own brand labels. Things aren't as easy as they were, what with cheap imports, and the more expensive children's boutiques making inroads at the top end of the market. But we position ourselves in the middle range, so we're not too badly affected. We're under increasing pressure to cut our profit margins, though, because of growing competition between high street retailers.
- F: What would you say is the company's strength?
- M: It certainly helps that we supply those large retailers I mentioned, and in fact some of them have been customers for years. I suppose, though, that we wouldn't have survived this long if it wasn't that we don't send anything out unless it meets very exacting standards. Our customers appreciate that, plus the fact that we aim to keep the time from order to delivery very short, and they're prepared to pay a premium for it.
- F: What about weaknesses?
- M: Well, we've got a poor record in providing training on the machines we're currently using. And I have to say that Stephen used to run the company in a very old-fashioned, autocratic way, which alienated a lot of the workers. Despite Catherine's more enlightened approach, it's an uphill struggle to try to change attitudes and improve co-operation.
- F: Never an easy task!
- M: No.
- F: You mentioned on the phone that there's a problem with a particular group of workers.

- M: Yes, there's very high turnover among the machinists, that's the people who actually make the clothes. They say they're faced with unreasonable demands all the time, like having to learn to operate several machines instead of just one or two. Many of them think they could get an easier job for the money, because there are plenty of other jobs on offer locally. The reasonably healthy state of our order books gives them a certain amount of job security, but they just don't seem to care.
- F: How's their work organised?
- M: We've changed to a 'sectionalised flow' approach, which means the machinists work in teams. Rather than each machinist being assigned a complete item of clothing, the work is divided into batches involving various operations, each of them undertaken by one machinist. As that person finishes, the work is passed on to the machinist responsible for the next stage.
- F: Has that had any impact on what you produce?
- M: Yes, it's enabled Catherine to introduce a policy of rapid diversification of the product range, so the number of itemised clothes has leapt. That's the total number of different styles, in all the different sizes. And that's reduced batch sizes: long runs on an item are a thing of the past. At least half the styles used to be carried through from one year to the next, but now only a quarter are, so as you can see, it's had quite an impact on the rate of change.
- F: What's the effect on the machinists?
- M: That policy was part of a raft of changes, one of which is that the machinists are now paid on a piecework basis, rather than at an hourly rate. They're furious about that, though to be fair, the rate that's paid for learning to use a new machine has been calculated so as to make sure that no-one loses out in the short term. And they're also aggrieved because so much is new, and far more batches of work fail quality inspections and have to be redone.
- F: Now tell me something about training ...

BEC HIGHER LISTENING

Sample paper answer key

PART ONE

- 1 THREE DAYS
- 2 GLOBAL CONFERENCES PLC
- 3 TOMORROW'S SOFTWARE/
TOMORROWS SOFTWARE
- 4 PERMIT
- 5 LARGE CORPORATIONS
- 6 LOGIC SOLUTIONS
- 7 INTELLIGENT CHANGE
- 8 IT ANALYST
- 9 CUSTOMER(-)DRIVEN
- 10 ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURES/
ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURES
- 11 FRAMEWORK FOR ACTION
- 12 (REAL-LIFE) CASE STUDIES

PART TWO

- 13 F
- 14 C
- 15 D
- 16 B
- 17 E
- 18 A
- 19 B
- 20 F
- 21 C
- 22 D

PART THREE

- 23 C
- 24 A
- 25 B
- 26 C
- 27 B
- 28 C
- 29 B
- 30 A

BEC HIGHER TEST OF SPEAKING

GENERAL DESCRIPTION

Paper format	The Test of Speaking consists of three parts.
Timing	16 minutes.
No. of parts	3.
Interaction pattern	Two candidates and two examiners. One examiner acts as both interlocutor and assessor and manages the interaction either by asking questions or by providing cues for candidates. The other acts as assessor only and does not join in the interaction.
Task types	Short exchanges with the interlocutor; a mini-presentation by each candidate; a collaborative task which candidates do together.
Task focus	Exchanging personal and factual information, expressing and finding out about attitudes and opinions.
Marks	The interlocutor gives an impression mark based on a global achievement scale, while the assessor applies detailed analytical scales and gives separate marks for grammar and vocabulary, discourse management, pronunciation and interactive communication.

STRUCTURE AND TASKS

PART 1

Task type and format	Conversation between the interlocutor and each candidate. The interlocutor encourages the candidates to give information about themselves and to express personal opinions.
Focus	Giving personal information and expressing opinions.
Timing	3 minutes.

PART 2

Task type and format	A 'mini-presentation' by each candidate on a business theme. The candidates are given prompts which generate a short talk on a business-related topic.
Focus	Organising a larger unit of discourse. Giving information and expressing and justifying opinions.
Timing	6 minutes (including a 1-minute 'long turn' for each candidate).

PART 3

Task type and format	A collaborative task which candidates do together. The candidates are presented with a discussion on a business-related topic. The interlocutor extends the discussion with prompts on related topics.
Focus	Turn-taking (initiating and responding appropriately), negotiating, collaborating, exchanging information, expressing and justifying opinions, agreeing and/or disagreeing, suggesting, speculating, comparing and contrasting, and decision-making.
Timing	7 minutes.

The three parts of the Test of Speaking

■ Format

The paired format of the BEC Higher Test of Speaking (two examiners and two candidates) offers candidates the opportunity to demonstrate, in a controlled but non-threatening environment, their ability to use their spoken language skills effectively in a range of contexts. The test lasts 16 minutes. One examiner, the interlocutor, conducts the test and gives a global assessment mark for each candidate's performance. The other, the assessor, does not take any part in the interaction but focuses solely on listening to and making an assessment of certain aspects of the candidates' oral proficiency.

At the end of the Test of Speaking, candidates are thanked for attending, but are given no indication of the level of their achievement.

The standard format is two examiners and two candidates, and wherever possible, this is the form which the Test of Speaking takes. In cases where there is an uneven number of candidates at a centre, the last test of the session is taken by three candidates together instead of two. The test format, test materials and procedure remain unchanged but the timing is longer: 22 minutes instead of 16.

The Test of Speaking consists of three parts, each of which is assessed. Throughout the test, the interactional pattern varies: between the interlocutor and each candidate, between the two candidates, and among all three. The patterns of discourse vary within each part of the test.

■ PART 1 – INTERVIEW

This part tests the candidates' ability to respond to questions and expand on responses



Assessment criteria: page 132.

For this part of the test, the interlocutor asks the candidates questions on a number of personal or work-related subjects.

■ PART 2 – LONG TURN

This part tests the candidates' ability to sustain a 'long turn'.



Sample task and assessment criteria: pages 123, 124, 126–129 and 132.

In this part, each candidate's task is to choose one topic from a set of three, and to talk about it for one minute. Candidates have one minute in which to prepare, and should use this time to make brief notes. While one candidate speaks, the other listens, and then asks a question at the end of the talk. Candidates may make notes while listening to their partner. Each candidate is given a different set of three tasks from

which to choose.

It is wise to structure the one-minute talk, with an introduction and conclusion (however brief these must, of necessity, be), and to make the structure explicit when giving the talk, in order to show some evidence of planning. Candidates should approach the task as if giving a presentation in a business environment.

Examples of topic areas include: advertising, career planning, communications, customer relations, finance, health and safety, management (personnel, production, transport, etc.), marketing, recruitment, sales, technology, training and travel.

■ PART 3 – COLLABORATIVE TASK

This part tests the candidates' ability to communicate with one another, negotiate, initiate, and respond in an appropriate way.



Sample task and assessment criteria: pages 125, 130, 131 and 132.

This is a two-way collaborative task based on a prompt which is given to both candidates. The prompt consists of several sentences presenting a business-related situation followed by two discussion points. Candidates are given time to read the prompt and then discuss the situation together.

Candidates need to approach the task as a simulation, imagining themselves in a work environment, faced with a real situation to discuss, and on which they should try to reach decisions. The opinions they express, however, will be their own, as they are not required (as in some kinds of role play) to assume particular attitudes or opinions.

Preparation

- Candidates should be made familiar with the seating arrangements and paired assessment procedures that the Speaking test employs. Any speaking practice should be of benefit, in particular paired and small group work.
- Activities designed to develop fluency are of considerable benefit, as the students need to demonstrate as wide a range of language as possible within the time limits of the test.
- It should be noted that the test is designed to minimise the possibility of attempts to use rehearsed speech, and that examiners will quickly identify it.
- For Part Two, candidates need to develop the ability to prepare effectively for their 'long turn'. They should be given help in building up a range of discourse features to make their speech both coherent and cohesive. It is also important for them to listen to each other's talks, and be ready to ask relevant questions.
- For Part Three, candidates will benefit from practice in simulations where they are placed in a work environment and required to collaborate whilst discussing and deciding issues.

They should be helped to build up a range of resources for turn-taking and the general negotiating of ideas and opinions.

N.B. In some centres candidates from the same school are paired together. However, where candidates from a number of different educational establishments are entered at the same centre, some candidates may find that they are paired with a candidate from another establishment. Students should check with the centre through which they are entering to find out the local procedure.

BEC HIGHER SPEAKING

Tasks are included from Parts 2 and 3 of the Test of Speaking, together with the interlocutor frame for these parts.

Material is not included for Part 1, in which the interlocutor asks the candidates questions directly, rather than asking them to perform a task.

1

A: Customer Relations: the importance of making customers feel valued

B: Company Growth: the importance to a company of controlling expansion

C: Research and Development: how to ensure that a company's policy towards research and development is cost effective

BEC HIGHER SPEAKING

Sample Part 2 Example 2 Candidate card

2

A: Market Research: the importance of finding out about customers habits and attitude

B: Financial Management: how to identify ways of reducing costs in a company

C: Communications: how to achieve an effective working relationship between different departments within a company

1

Incentive Scheme

Your company is considering setting up an incentive scheme for the staff. You have been asked to make some recommendations.

Discuss and decide together:

- what benefits an incentive scheme would bring to the company
- what types of incentives could be offered.

BEC HIGHER SPEAKING

Sample Part 2 Example 1 Interlocutor frame

PART 2 6 minutes (8 minutes for groups of three)

Now, in this part of the test, I'm going to give each of you a choice of three different topics. I'd like you to select one of the topics and give a short presentation on it for about a minute. You will have a minute to prepare this and you can make notes if you want. After you have finished your talk, your partner will ask you a question.

All right? Here are your topics. Please don't write anything on the booklet.

[Hand each candidate a Part 2 booklet (open at appropriate task) and a pencil and paper for notes.]

🕒 60
seconds

Now, *B*, which topic have you chosen, *A*, *B* or *C*?

A, please listen carefully to *B*'s talk and then ask him/her a question about it.

🕒 about
60 seconds

Thank you. Now, *A*, please ask *B* a question about his/her talk.

Thank you, *B*. Now, *A*, which topic have you chosen, *A*, *B* or *C*?

B, please listen carefully to *A*'s talk and then ask him/her a question about it.

🕒 about
60 seconds

Thank you. Now, *B*, please ask *A* a question about his/her talk.

Thank you.

Can I have the booklets, please?

[Retrieve Part 2 booklets, pencils and paper.]

1

A: Customer Relations: the importance of making customers feel valued

B: Company Growth: the importance to a company of controlling expansion

C: Research and Development: how to ensure that a company's policy towards research and development is cost effective

BEC HIGHER SPEAKING

Sample Part 2 Example 2 Interlocutor frame

PART 2 6 minutes (8 minutes for groups of three)

Now, in this part of the test, I'm going to give each of you a choice of three different topics. I'd like you to select one of the topics and give a short presentation on it for about a minute. You will have a minute to prepare this and you can make notes if you want. After you have finished your talk, your partner will ask you a question.

All right? Here are your topics. Please don't write anything on the booklet.

🕒 60
seconds

[Hand each candidate a Part 2 booklet (open at appropriate task) and a pencil and paper for notes.]

Now, *B*, which topic have you chosen, *A*, *B* or *C*?

A, please listen carefully to *B*'s talk and then ask him/her a question about it.

🕒 about
60 seconds

Thank you. Now, *A*, please ask *B* a question about his/her talk.

Thank you, *B*. Now, *A*, which topic have you chosen, *A*, *B* or *C*?

B, please listen carefully to *A*'s talk and then ask him/her a question about it.

🕒 about
60 seconds

Thank you. Now, *B*, please ask *A* a question about his/her talk.

Thank you.

Can I have the booklets, please?

[Retrieve Part 2 booklets, pencils and paper.]

2

A: Market Research: the importance of finding out about customers habits and attitude

B: Financial Management: how to identify ways of reducing costs in a company

C: Communications: how to achieve an effective working relationship between different departments within a company

BEC HIGHER SPEAKING

Sample Part 3 Interlocutor frame

PART 3

7 minutes (9 minutes for groups of three)

Now, in this part of the test you are going to discuss something together.

[Hold the Part 3 booklet open at the task while giving the instructions below.]

You will have 30 seconds to read this task carefully, and then about three minutes to discuss and decide about it together. You should give reasons for your decisions and opinions. You don't need to write anything. Is that clear?

🕒 30 seconds

[Place the booklet open at task 1 in front of the candidates so that they can both see it.]

I'm just going to listen and then ask you to stop after about three minutes. Please speak so that we can hear you.

🕒 about
3 minutes

Can I have the booklet, please?

[Retrieve Part 3 booklet.]

[Select one or more of the following questions as appropriate, to redress any imbalance between candidates in Part 3, or to extend the discussion.]

- Which incentives do you think are most effective to make people work harder?
- What disadvantages could there be in incentive schemes? (Why?)
- Is it essential for companies to reward extra effort? (Why?/Why not?)
- How do you think a company can inspire loyalty in their employees?
- How important do you think the traditional employer/employee relationship will be in the future? (Why?)

Thank you. That is the end of the test.

1

Incentive Scheme

Your company is considering setting up an incentive scheme for the staff. You have been asked to make some recommendations.

Discuss and decide together:

- what benefits an incentive scheme would bring to the company
- what types of incentives could be offered.

Assessment of Speaking

Throughout the test candidates are assessed on their own individual performance and not in relation to each other. The assessor awards marks according to five analytical criteria:

- Grammatical Resource
- Vocabulary Resource
- Discourse Management
- Pronunciation
- Interactive Communication.

The interlocutor awards a Global Achievement mark, which is based on the analytical scales.

These criteria should be interpreted within the overall context of the Cambridge ESOL Common Scale for Speaking on page 133, where BEC Higher is at Level C1.

■ Grammatical Resource

This refers to the accurate and appropriate use of a range of both simple and complex forms. Performance is viewed in terms of the overall effectiveness of the language used in spoken interaction.

■ Vocabulary Resource

This refers to the candidate's ability to use a range of vocabulary to meet task requirements. At BEC Higher level, the tasks require candidates to speculate and exchange views on unfamiliar topics. Performance is viewed in terms of the overall effectiveness of the language used in spoken interaction.

■ Discourse Management

This refers to the candidate's ability to link utterances together to form coherent speech, without undue hesitation. The utterances should be relevant to the tasks and should be arranged logically to develop the themes or arguments required by the tasks.

■ Pronunciation

This refers to the candidate's ability to produce intelligible utterances to fulfil the task requirements. This includes stress and intonation as well as individual sounds. Examiners put themselves in the position of a non-ESOL specialist and assess the overall impact of the pronunciation and the degree of effort required to understand the candidate.

■ Interactive Communication

This refers to the candidate's ability to take an active part in the development of the discourse. This requires an ability to participate in the range of interactive situations in the test and to develop discussions on a range of topics by initiating and responding appropriately. This also refers to the

deployment of strategies to maintain interaction at an appropriate level throughout the test so that the tasks can be fulfilled.

■ Global Achievement

This refers to the candidate's overall effectiveness in dealing with the tasks in the three separate parts of the test. The global mark is an independent impression mark which reflects the assessment of the candidate's performance from the interlocutor's perspective.

Marking

Assessment is based on performance in the whole test, and is not related to performance in particular parts of the test.

In many countries, Oral Examiners are assigned to teams, each of which is led by a Team Leader who may be responsible for approximately 15 Oral Examiners. Team Leaders give advice and support to Oral Examiners, as required.

The Team Leaders are responsible to a Professional Support Leader, who is the professional representative of Cambridge ESOL for the Speaking tests. Professional Support Leaders are appointed by Cambridge ESOL and attend an annual co-ordination and development session in the UK. Team Leaders are appointed by the Professional Support Leader in consultation with the local administration.

After initial training of examiners, standardisation of marking is maintained by both annual examiner co-ordination sessions and by monitoring visits to centres by Team Leaders. During co-ordination sessions, examiners watch and discuss sample Speaking tests recorded on DVD and then conduct practice tests with volunteer candidates in order to establish a common standard of assessment.

The sample tests on DVD are selected to demonstrate a range of nationalities and different levels of competence, and are pre-marked by a team of experienced assessors.

Cambridge ESOL Common Scale for Speaking

The Cambridge ESOL Common Scale for Speaking has been developed to help users to:

- interpret levels of performance in the Cambridge Speaking tests from beginner to advanced
- identify typical performance qualities at particular levels
- locate performance in one examination against performance in another.

The Common Scale is designed to be useful to test candidates and other test users, e.g. admissions officers or employers.

The Common Scale is a general scale. Examiners for BEC use a separate mark scheme, designed specifically for use in the BEC Test of Speaking.

The description at each level of the Common Scale aims to provide a brief general description of the nature of spoken language ability at a particular level in real-world contexts. In this way the wording offers an easily understandable description of performance which can be used, for example, in specifying requirements to language trainers, formulating job descriptions and specifying language requirements for new posts.

LEVEL MASTERY

C2 Fully operational command of the spoken language

- Able to handle communication in most situations, including unfamiliar or unexpected ones.
- Able to use accurate and appropriate linguistic resources to express complex ideas and concepts and produce extended discourse that is coherent and always easy to follow.
- Rarely produces inaccuracies and inappropriacies.
- Pronunciation is easily understood and prosodic features are used effectively; many features, including pausing and hesitation, are 'native-like'.

LEVEL EFFECTIVE OPERATIONAL PROFICIENCY

C1 Good operational command of the spoken language

- Able to handle communication in most situations.
- Able to use accurate and appropriate linguistic resources to express ideas and produce discourse that is generally coherent.
- Occasionally produces inaccuracies and inappropriacies.
- Maintains a flow of language with only natural hesitation resulting from considerations of appropriacy or expression.
- L1 accent may be evident but does not affect the clarity of the message.

LEVEL VANTAGE

B2 Generally effective command of the spoken language

- Able to handle communication in familiar situations.
- Able to organise extended discourse but occasionally produces utterances that lack coherence and some inaccuracies and inappropriate usage occur.
- Maintains a flow of language, although hesitation may occur whilst searching for language resources.
- Although pronunciation is easily understood, L1 features may be intrusive.
- Does not require major assistance or prompting by an interlocutor.

LEVEL THRESHOLD

B1 Limited but effective command of the spoken language

- Able to handle communication in most familiar situations.
- Able to construct longer utterances but is not able to use complex language except in well-rehearsed utterances.
- Has problems searching for language resources to express ideas and concepts resulting in pauses and hesitation.
- Pronunciation is generally intelligible, but L1 features may put a strain on the listener.
- Has some ability to compensate for communication difficulties using repair strategies, but may require prompting and assistance by an interlocutor.

LEVEL WAYSTAGE

A2 Basic command of the spoken language

- Able to convey basic meaning in very familiar or highly predictable situations.
- Produces utterances which tend to be very short – words or phrases – with frequent hesitations and pauses.
- Dependent on rehearsed or formulaic phrases with limited generative capacity.
- Only able to produce limited extended discourse.
- Pronunciation is heavily influenced by L1 features and may at times be difficult to understand.
- Requires prompting and assistance by an interlocutor to prevent communication from breaking down.

The BEC Higher examination is set at Level C1.

Glossary of terms used in this handbook

- ASSESSOR:** the Test of Speaking examiner who assigns a score to a candidate's performance, using analytical criteria.
- CLOZE TEST:** a type of gap-filling task in which whole words have been removed from a text and which candidates must replace. In an 'open cloze' candidates supply the missing words. In a 'multiple-choice cloze' candidates choose the missing word from a set of options.
- COHERENCE:** language which is coherent is well planned and clear, and all the parts or ideas fit well so that they form a united whole.
- COLLABORATIVE TASK:** the opportunity in Part 3 of the Test of Speaking for the candidates to engage in a discussion and work together towards a negotiated outcome of the task set.
- CONTENT POINTS:** the points contained in the Writing questions, which must be included in the candidate's response.
- DISTRACTOR:** each incorrect option in a multiple-choice or matching question.
- GAP-FILLING QUESTION:** any type of question which requires the candidate to insert some written material – letters, numbers, single words, phrases, sentences or paragraphs – into spaces in the text. The response may be supplied by the candidate or selected from a set of options.
- GIST:** the central theme or meaning of a text.
- IMPEDING ERROR:** an error which prevents the reader or listener from understanding a word or phrase.
- INPUT MATERIAL:** the text and notes on which candidates have to base their answers in the Test of Writing.
- INTERLOCUTOR:** the Test of Speaking examiner who conducts the test and makes a global assessment of each candidate's performance.
- KEY:** the correct answer to a question.
- LONG TURN:** the opportunity in Part 2 of the Test of Speaking for a candidate to talk uninterrupted for a period of time, enabling them to produce an extended piece of discourse.
- MULTIPLE CHOICE:** a task where candidates are given a set of several possible answers of which only one is correct.
- NEUTRAL STYLE:** a writing style with no specific features of formality or informality.
- OPENING AND CLOSING FORMULAE:** the expressions, either formal or informal, that are usually used to open and close letters, e.g. 'Dear Maria ... With best wishes from ...', or 'Dear Mr Dakari ... Yours sincerely ...'.
- OPTIONS:** the individual words in the set of possible answers for a multiple-choice question.
- PRETESTING:** a stage in the development of test materials at which questions are tried out with representative samples from the target population in order to determine their difficulty.
- REGISTER:** the tone of a piece of writing. The register should be appropriate for the task and target reader, e.g. a letter of application is written in formal register.
- TARGET READER:** the intended recipient of a piece of writing. It is important to ensure that the effect of a written task on a target reader is a positive one.

Acronyms

- ALTE:** The Association of Language Testers in Europe.
- CEF:** Common European Framework.
- ESOL:** English for Speakers of Other Languages.
- UCLES:** University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate.