

General Description

Paper Format

The paper contains four parts.

The standard format is two candidates and two examiners.

One examiner acts as both interlocutor and assessor and manages the interaction either by asking questions or providing cues for candidates. The other acts as assessor and does not join in the conversation.

Task Types

Social interaction with the interlocutor and the other candidate; transactional long and short turns.

Task Focus

Using transactional, interactional and social language.

Timing

Approximately 15 minutes.

Marks

Candidates are assessed on their performance throughout the test.

Part	Task Type and Focus	Length	Task Format
1	<p>Three-way conversation between the candidates and the Interlocutor</p> <p>Using general interactional and social language</p>	3 minutes	The candidates are asked to respond to one another's questions about themselves, and respond to the interlocutor's questions.
2	<p>Individual long turns with brief responses from second candidate</p> <p>Using transactional language, comparing, contrasting and hypothesising</p>	4 minutes	Each candidate in turn is given visual prompts. They talk about the prompts for about one minute; the second candidate responds as specified.
3	<p>Two-way interaction between the candidates</p> <p>Negotiating and collaborating; reaching agreement or 'agreeing to disagree'</p>	4 minutes	The candidates are given visual and/or written prompts to set up a problem-solving task, involving sequencing, ranking, comparing & contrasting, selecting, etc. Based on this output candidates are asked about their decisions.
4	<p>Three-way conversation between the candidates and the interlocutor</p> <p>Explaining, summarising, developing the discussion</p>	4 minutes	The topic area from Part 3 is opened up by discussing wider issues.

Introduction

The CAE Speaking Test is designed to offer candidates the opportunity to demonstrate their ability to use their spoken language skills effectively in a range of contexts. The test takes about 15 minutes for a pair of candidates. One examiner, the interlocutor, conducts the test and gives a global assessment of 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, the candidate's oral proficiency. The test is divided into four parts and each part sets candidates a different task.

It is essential that students are able to participate in pair and group activities effectively, showing sensitivity to turn-taking and responding appropriately to their partners. Pair and group activities should be a regular feature of classroom learning.

Students should be given extensive practice in listening carefully to instructions and remembering what they are asked to do. They should be encouraged to react to pictures and diagrams, etc., rather than merely describe them, using speculative or hypothetical language whenever possible. Students need to be equipped with the right kind of language for, e.g. exchanging information/opinions, giving reasons, speculating, hypothesising, agreeing, disagreeing, politely justifying and negotiating.

During classroom activities, students should be instructed to speak clearly so that they can be heard and paraphrase effectively when they do not know or cannot remember a word. Students should be familiar with the timing and the focus of each part of the test. They should be able to handle the whole test confidently, yet ask for clarification/repetition if needed.

Part 1

This part of the test gives candidates the opportunity to show their ability to use general interactional and social language. The interlocutor introduces both examiners to the candidates, then candidates ask each other questions about themselves using prompts given by the interlocutor. The interlocutor may ask the candidates further questions about themselves as appropriate. Candidates are expected to respond to their partner's and to the interlocutor's questions, and to listen to what their partner has to say.

Students should be made aware that they are expected to react naturally to their partners and not rehearse speeches for this part of the test. They should show sensitivity to each other's contributions, invite their partners to participate, and not dominate the interaction.

Part 2

In this part of the test, each candidate is given the opportunity to speak for a longer period of time (one minute) without interruption. Each candidate is asked to comment on and/or react to a different set of pictures or photographs. Candidates may be asked to describe, compare, contrast, comment, identify, eliminate and hypothesise or speculate. Tasks may be completely different for each candidate or they may be 'shared', e.g. when there is a group of three candidates. Shared tasks set candidates the same task but each candidate, in turn, receives different visual stimuli.

Candidates are expected to listen carefully to the verbal instructions they are given, show their ability to organise their thoughts and ideas, and express themselves coherently in appropriate language. Candidates should pay attention while their partner is speaking, as they are asked to comment briefly (up to 20 seconds) after their partner has spoken.

Give students practice in talking for one minute on a set subject, or 'holding the floor' in a classroom situation so that they can organise their thoughts and ideas during this long turn. Make students aware that, in this part of the test, it is essential not to interrupt while their partners are speaking.

Students need to be clear about what is considered an inadequate response, e.g. 'In the first picture the scene looks modern, in the other it looks old-fashioned', instead of, e.g. 'Both pictures of the building portray a calm and peaceful setting, but the older scene suggests that there was more traffic on the river at the time, whereas ...' Students should realise that their responses need to go beyond the level of pure description and contain a speculative element. Students who listen carefully to their instructions and follow them will do well.

Part 3

In Part 3, candidates are expected to negotiate and collaborate with each other, discussing a problem-solving task fully, openly and clearly. Candidates may be asked to discuss, evaluate, speculate and/or select. They are given a set of visual prompts on which the task is based. The task gives candidates the opportunity to show their own range of language and their ability to invite the opinions and ideas of their partner. There is no right or wrong answer to this task but candidates are asked to reach a conclusion. They can, however, agree to differ. At the end of this part they are asked to report on the outcome of their discussion.

For this part of the test, candidates need to be able to interact and carry out the task while keeping the conversation going. Encourage students to make use of conversation 'fillers', e.g. 'Well, now, let me see ...', which

they can call upon (sparingly) to give themselves time to think. Expose students to as great a variety of visual stimuli as possible and invite their reactions to them. Students should attempt to demonstrate their command of a wide range of linguistic resources and communication strategies. Simply agreeing or disagreeing with, or echoing, what their partner has said will not enable them to do this. Each student should make a positive contribution to the task in question. Although the completion of the task is not essential, it is advisable for students to attempt to reach the specified outcome within the time allotted.

Part 4

In Part 4, candidates participate in a wider discussion of the issues raised in Part 3. The questions become broader and often more abstract as the discussion develops. Candidates may be asked to respond to the same or different questions.

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

Students should be encouraged to talk about issues of general interest and express an opinion about them so that they can participate fully in the last part of the test. They are asked questions by the interlocutor and they are expected to develop the discussion, rather than simply give one-word answers. Students should be aware that they are not being assessed on their ideas, but examiners can only assess candidates on the language they produce and those candidates who fail to make a contribution will not do well. At this stage of the test, both candidates can interact more freely, giving them a final opportunity to show examiners what they are capable of.

ASSESSMENT AND MARKING

Throughout the test, candidates are assessed not in relation to each other but according to the following criteria: Grammar and Vocabulary, Discourse Management, Pronunciation, and Interactive Communication. These criteria should be interpreted within the overall context of the Cambridge Common Scale for Speaking (page 53), where CAE is at Level 4.

Both examiners assess the candidates. The assessor applies detailed Analytical Scales; the interlocutor applies a Global Scale, which is a less detailed scale based on the Analytical Scales.

Grammar and Vocabulary (Accuracy and Appropriacy)

On this scale, candidates are awarded marks for the accurate and appropriate use of syntactic forms and vocabulary in order to meet the task requirements. At CAE level, candidates are expected to know enough grammar and vocabulary to produce accurate and appropriate language without continual pauses to search for words or structures.

The range and appropriate use of vocabulary are assessed on this scale. However, it should be noted that only the accuracy of the grammar is assessed here as the range of grammatical structures is assessed under Discourse Management.

Discourse Management

On this scale, examiners are looking for evidence of the candidate's ability to express ideas and opinions in coherent, connected speech.

The CAE speaking tasks require candidates to construct sentences and produce utterances (extended as appropriate) in order to convey information and to express or justify opinions. The candidate's ability to maintain a coherent flow of language with an appropriate range of linguistic resources over several utterances is assessed here.

Pronunciation (Individual Sounds and Prosodic Features)

This refers to the candidate's ability to produce comprehensible utterances to fulfil the CAE speaking task requirements, i.e. it refers to the production of individual sounds, the appropriate linking of words, and the use of stress and intonation to convey the intended meaning.

First language accents are acceptable, provided communication is not impeded. It is recognised that at CAE level, even in the top assessment band, candidates' pronunciation will be influenced by features of their first language.

Interactive Communication (Turn-taking, Initiating and Responding)

This refers to the candidate's ability to interact with the interlocutor and the other candidate by initiating and responding appropriately and at the required speed and rhythm to fulfil the task requirements. It includes the ability to use functional language and strategies to maintain or repair interaction, e.g. in conversational turn-taking, and a willingness to develop the conversation and move the task towards a conclusion.

Candidates should be able to maintain the coherence of the discussion and may, if necessary, ask the interlocutor or the other candidate for clarification.

Typical Minimum Adequate Performance

A typical minimum adequate performance at CAE level can be summarised as follows:

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

Candidates are assessed on their own individual performance according to the established criteria and are not assessed in relation to each other.

Assessment is based on performance in the whole test, and is not related to performance in particular parts of the test. The assessor awards marks for each of the four criteria listed above. The interlocutor awards each candidate one global mark.

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

The Team Leaders are responsible to a Senior Team Leader who is the professional representative of Cambridge ESOL for the oral examinations. Senior Team Leaders are appointed by Cambridge ESOL and attend an annual co-ordination and development session in the UK. Team Leaders are appointed by the Senior Team 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 the co-ordination sessions, examiners watch and discuss sample Speaking Tests recorded on video, and then conduct practice tests with volunteer 'candidates' in order to establish a common standard of assessment.

The sample tests on video are selected to demonstrate a range of task types and different levels of competence, and are pre-marked by a team of experienced examiners.

CAMBRIDGE LEVEL 5

CPE

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'.

CAMBRIDGE LEVEL 4

CAE

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.

CAMBRIDGE LEVEL 3

FCE

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.

CAMBRIDGE LEVEL 2 (Threshold)

PET

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.

CAMBRIDGE LEVEL 1 (Waystage)

KET

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.

Pre-Waystage Level

Zero

PART 2 (4 minutes)

11. Protective Clothing (Compare, contrast and speculate)

Interlocutor In this part of the test I'm going to give each of you the chance to talk for about a minute and to comment briefly after your partner has spoken.

First, you will each have the same set of photographs to look at. They show people wearing protective clothing.

Hand over the same set of photographs to each candidate.

Candidate A, it's your turn first. I'd like you to compare and contrast two or three of these photographs, saying what kind of clothing the people are wearing and why you think the protection might be necessary.

Don't forget, you have about one minute for this.

All right? So, Candidate A, would you start now, please?

Candidate A Approximately one minute.

Interlocutor Thank you. Now, Candidate B, can you tell us who you think is in the greater need of protection?

Candidate B Approximately 20 seconds.

Interlocutor Thank you.

12. A Quiet Day on the Coast (Compare, contrast and speculate)

Interlocutor Now, I'm going to give each of you the same pair of cartoons to look at. They show two images of a day by the sea.

Hand over the same pair of cartoons to each candidate.

Now, Candidate B, it's your turn. I'd like you to compare and contrast these pictures, saying how the people might be feeling and what the disadvantages of each situation might be.

Don't forget, you have about one minute for this.

All right? So, Candidate B, would you start now, please?

Candidate B Approximately one minute.

Interlocutor Thank you. Now, Candidate A, can you tell us which situation you think is the more realistic?

Candidate A Approximately 20 seconds.

Interlocutor Thank you.

PART 1 (3 minutes)

Interlocutor Good morning (afternoon / evening). My name is ... and this is my colleague And your names are ...?

Can I have your mark sheets, please? Thank you.

First of all, we'd like to know a little about you.

(Select one or two questions as appropriate.)

Where do you both/all live?

What do you enjoy about living there?

How long have you been studying English?

Have you been studying English together?

Now I'd like you to ask each other something about:

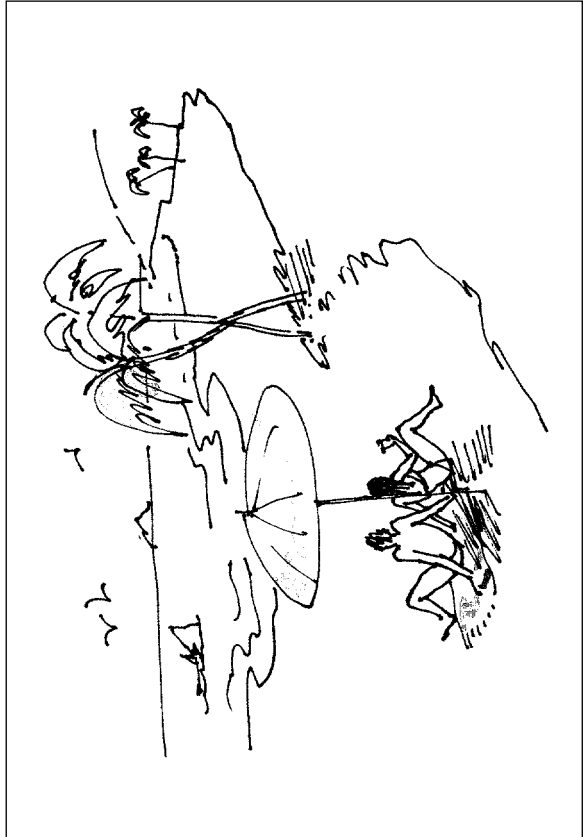
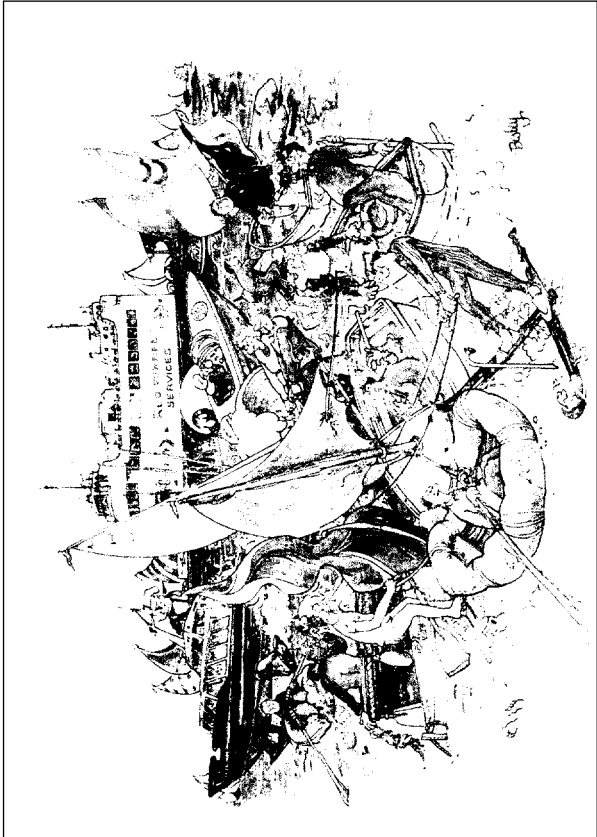
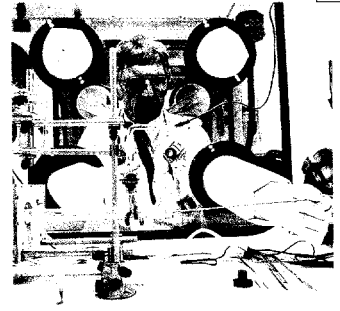
(Select two or three prompts in any order as appropriate.)

- your interests and leisure activities
- your feelings about life in this country
- your reasons for studying English
- places of interest you have visited in this country

(Ask candidate(s) further questions as necessary.)

- What have you both/all enjoyed/disliked most about studying English?
- What interesting things have you done recently?
- How would you feel about going to live abroad permanently?
- Looking back on your life, what do you consider to be the most memorable event?
- What do you hope to achieve in the future?

Thank you.



PARTS 3 and 4

Famous First (Discuss, evaluate and select)

Test Material 28

Part 3 (4 minutes)

Interlocutor

Now, I'd like you to discuss something between/among yourselves, but please speak so that we can hear you.

Here are some pictures showing when some famous events first took place.

Place picture sheet 28 in front of the candidates.

Talk to each other about the effect each of these events has had on the world we live in, and then decide which one has had the greatest influence on people's lives.

You have about four minutes for this.

Candidates A&B Approximately four minutes.

Interlocutor

Thank you.

So, which have you chosen?

Retrieve picture sheet 28.

.....

PART 4 (4 minutes)

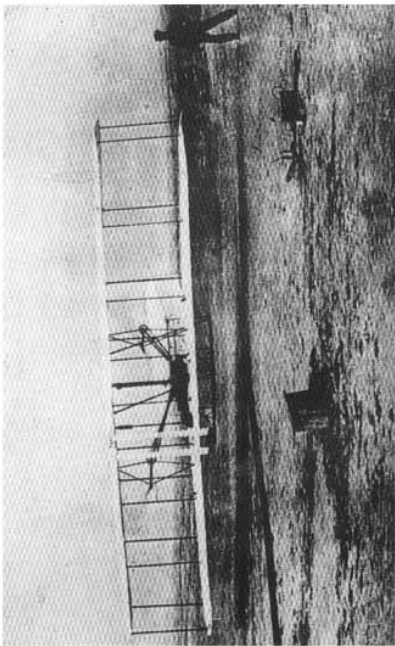
Interlocutor

Select any of the following questions as appropriate

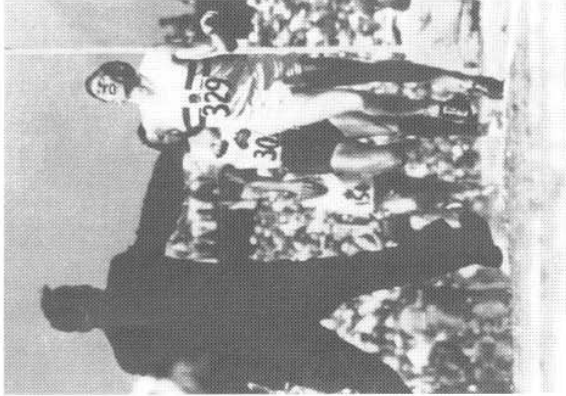
- Which famous event would you like to have been involved in?
- How important is it to enjoy new experiences in life? (Why?)
- Some people say nothing can be achieved without an effort. How far do you agree?
- What aspects of life today do you think will be remembered in the future?
- How do you think life will change in this century?

Thank you. That is the end of the test.

Check that all test materials have been replaced in the file.



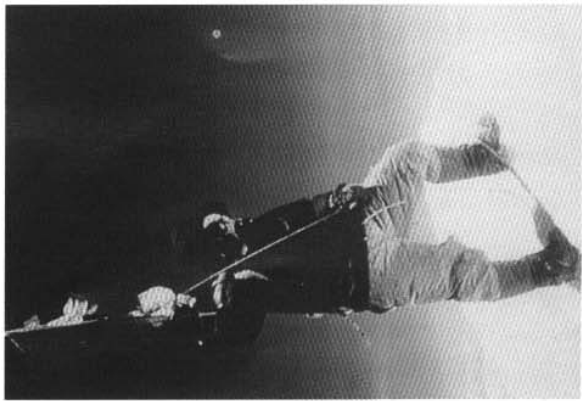
First powered flight, 1908



First man to run a mile in four minutes, 1954



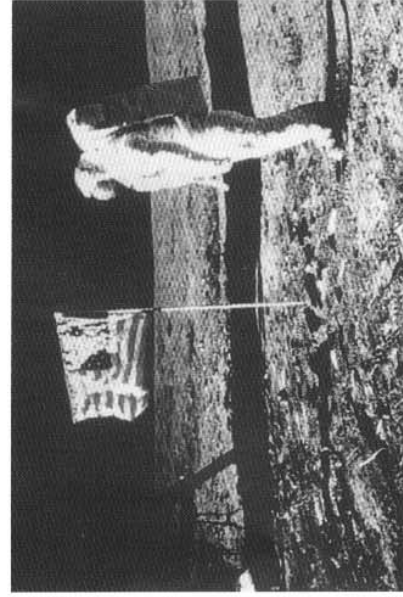
Discovery of first antibiotic, 1928



First ascent of Mount Everest, 1953



First long-distance telephone call, 1892



First man on the moon, 1969

GENERAL

What is the mark allocation for each paper?

Each paper is equally weighted at 40 marks.

An overview of the marks allocation:

Paper 1

Parts 1 & 4 – 1 mark for each correct answer

Parts 2 & 3 – 2 marks each for each correct answer

Paper 2

Each of the 2 questions is marked out of 5

Paper 3

1 mark for each correct answer

Paper 4

1 mark for each correct answer

Paper 5

Each candidate is assessed out of 30

The total for each paper is weighted to 40, bringing the maximum total to 200.

What is the pass mark?

To pass the examination with Grade C it is necessary to achieve approximately 60% of the total marks available (200).

Must candidates achieve a pass on each paper to pass the examination?

No. Candidates cannot pass or fail any individual paper. The candidate's grade is based on their total score from all five papers. There are no 'hurdles' or minimum levels of achievement required.

Can candidates make notes on the question paper?

Yes, but their notes won't be marked.

Is the use of dictionaries allowed?

No.

Do I need to take a course if I want to take the CAE examination?

No, it is not necessary, although most candidates take a preparatory course before they take the examination.

What is the mark allocation?

One mark is given for each correct answer to the multiple-matching tasks; two marks are given for each correct answer to the multiple-choice and gapped-text tasks. The total score is then weighted out of a maximum 40 marks for the whole paper.

As the Paper is 1 hour 15 minutes long, what would be the recommended timing for each Part?

This very much depends on candidates' own strengths and preferred way of working, but it is worth bearing in mind how the tasks are weighted (see above). Normally 50% of the marks are allocated to the two multiple-matching tasks (First and Fourth texts) while the other two tasks (multiple-choice and gapped-text) account for the remaining 50%.

If candidates make a mistake in filling in their answer sheets, is this picked up by the computer?

If they omit a question, the computer accepts the answer sheet. If they fill in more than one lozenge for a question, the computer rejects it.

Do questions in the multiple-choice task follow the order of the text?

Yes, with global questions at the end.

What about the danger in Part 2, for example, that if a candidate makes one mistake, this may have a knock-on effect on at least one other question?

The statistical analysis produced when material is pretested shows whether candidates are choosing wrong answers, so this potential problem can be spotted in advance.

Is each Part worth equal marks?

Yes.

If candidates do include the address when writing a letter, will they be penalised?

Candidates do not need to include addresses, but they will not be penalised if they do. Occasionally the instructions may ask for addresses.

Should candidates write their answers in pen or pencil?

Pen should always be used, as answers in pencil may not always be legible.

PAPER 3 ENGLISH IN USE

What is the mark allocation overall?

There is one mark for each question.

If candidates write two possible answers to a question, how are they marked?

If both are correct, the candidate is awarded the mark(s); if one is incorrect, no marks are awarded. (This is also the same for Paper 4.)

What if the answer is right, but a candidate has misspelt it?

All spellings must be correct in Paper 3.

How should answers for the 'punctuation/spelling' type task in Part 3 be recorded?

The correct spelling of the incorrect word, or the punctuation mark together with the word which precedes or follows it, should be written on the answer sheet.

In Part 5, can a cognate of one of the words used in the first text be used in the answer?

No. This task requires candidates to find a new way of expressing the information from the first text.

What happens if a candidate writes more than two words as an answer in Part 5?

No marks will be awarded for an answer of more than two words.

PAPER 4 LISTENING

Is there any background noise on the tape?

No. Sound effects may be used to 'set the scene', but are not used while there is speech. Very subdued audience reaction may be heard when a speaker is giving a talk, but this is never intrusive.

Does spelling have to be correct?

Common words and those which are easy to spell are expected to be correct.

How do you guarantee that the different versions are all equal in difficulty?

For security purposes, there are several versions of the

Listening Test in use at each session. As for the other papers, the material for the Listening Tests is pretested in advance, in order to check that it is suitable in terms of content as well as levels of difficulty. At the test construction stage, papers are put together at the same level of difficulty, as shown by pretesting statistics. After the examination has been taken, before grading takes place, the Listening Test results are analysed and the average marks gained by candidates in each test are compared.

PAPER 5 SPEAKING

Is Part 1 assessed?

The examiners assess performance throughout the whole test.

Is 2:2 the only possible format?

The standard format is 2:2 and, wherever possible, this will be the form which the Speaking Test will take. At centres where there is an uneven number of candidates, the last candidate will form a group of three with the previous pair of candidates. In exceptional circumstances only a 1:1 format will be allowed.

Are candidates from the same school paired together?

In some centres candidates from the same school are paired together. However, where candidates from a number of different schools are entered at the same centre, some candidates may find that they are paired with a candidate from another school. Candidates should check with the centre through which they are entering for the local procedure.

Does knowing your partner make it easier or harder to do well?

There is no evidence to suggest that candidates perform better when examined with someone they know or vice versa. Some candidates feel relaxed and confident when paired with someone they know; others may feel inhibited. In both cases, the examiners are trained to provide equal opportunities for all candidates to perform to the best of their ability.

Does it matter if a candidate uses slang or speaks with a regional or other accent?

The use of slang is acceptable provided that it is appropriate. Different varieties of standard English accents, e.g. UK, North American, Australian, etc. are also acceptable.

May candidates interrupt or ask questions during their partner's 'long turn' in Part 2?

No. Listening candidates should allow their partner to speak without interruption in this part of the test.

What about the mis-matching of candidates, e.g. a shy person with an extrovert?

Examiners are trained to deal with this kind of situation and ensure no-one is disadvantaged. Everyone has the chance to show what they can do. However, candidates must remember that, while it is important not to dominate a weaker candidate, it is vital that they make the best use of the time available to show off their language skills.

ENTRIES & RESULTS**What is the date of the CAE examination?**

The CAE examination can be taken three times a year, in March, June and in December. The dates are published in the Examination Regulations. Check with your Cambridge ESOL Local Secretary or British Council Office.

Where can candidates enrol?

The Cambridge ESOL Local Secretary or British Council Office can give you information about centres where the examination is taken. Do not apply to Cambridge ESOL directly. Fees are payable to the local centre, and will vary slightly from place to place.

How do I get my results?

Results are issued to Local Secretaries approximately six weeks after the examination has been taken. Certificates are issued about a month after that.