Learning Resource Network

Guide for Stakeholders

IELCA - International English Language Competency Assessment

Contents

IELCA - International English Language Competency Assessment

IELCA assesses four aspects of English language that include reading, listening, speaking, and writing and offers two routes - academic and general training- with the former route assessing candidate ability to access undergraduate or postgraduate courses in educational institutions, colleges, and/or universities of English speaking countries. The latter route (General Training) assesses English language skills in a wide range of frameworks and is also appropriate for people who want to study in secondary education, immigration purposes, work experience and other training purposes.

Both routes assess four components of the language ability i.e., reading, listening, speaking and writing.

IELCA - International English Language Competency Assessment

ACADEMIC

Writing (60 minutes)
•Task 1: Report writing (150-180 words)
•Task 2: Essay writing   (180-220 words)

Speaking (11 minutes)
•Answering questions related to personal life, expressing opinions on a given topic and answering questions related to a given topic.

Reading (100 minutes)
•Texts are taken from a range of authentic sources such as: journals, newspapers, web articles, magazines, extracts from academic books and scientific articles.

•multiple choice; identifying the topic / function of the text; identifying information (True/False/Not Given); identifying the writer's views/claims (Yes/No/Not Given); matching information; matching headings; short-answer questions; error correction; matching; cloze; gap filling; sentence completion and open questions

Listening (30 minutes)
•Texts are taken from a range of authentic sources such as: public announcements; recorded messages; weather forecasts; traffic information; tourist information; publicity texts; monologues; conversations between 2 or more people; routine commands and instructions; radio reports / interviews.

•multiple choice, completing notes/summary/diagram/flow chart/table, error correction, identifying information (True/False/Not Given), cloze; identifying the writer's views/claims, summarising, sentence, completion, matching and ordering.

GENERAL TRAINING

Writing (60 minutes)
•Task 1: Letter/email Writing (150-180 words)
•Task 2: Essay writing   (180-220 words)

Speaking (11 minutes)
•Answering questions related to personal life, expressing opinions on a given topic and answering questions related to a given topic.

Reading (100 minutes)
•Texts are taken from a range of authentic sources such as: journals, newspapers, web articles and magazines.

•multiple choice; identifying the topic / function of the text; identifying information (True/False/Not Given); identifying the writer's views/claims (Yes/No/Not Given); matching information; matching headings; short-answer questions; error correction; matching; cloze; gap filling; sentence completion and open questions

Listening (30 minutes)
•Texts are taken from a range of authentic sources such as: public announcements; recorded messages; weather forecasts; traffic information; tourist information; publicity texts; monologues; conversations between 2 or more people; routine commands and instructions; radio reports / interviews.

•multiple choice, completing notes/summary/diagram/flow chart/table, error correction, identifying information (True/False/Not Given), cloze; identifying the writer's views/claims, summarising, sentence, completion, matching and ordering.

READING AND LISTENING

The marking of Reading and Listening components of IELCA are completed by clerical markers using answer keys for each question paper. To ensure standardisation of each exam, the Reading and Listening clerical markers completed induction training followed by standardisation exercises prior to each paper (where required).

SPEAKING & WRITING

The speaking examination is conducted by one examiner, trained by LRN, and is recorded on a dictaphone. Marks are allocated for speaking and writing skill to each candidate in accordance with the IELCA mark scheme. IELCA is 100% externally assessed by an LRN examiner.

Scores

LRN will take average of all four facets skills and will score 10-50, below are the CEFR level and overall scores.

IELCA Scores

Scores	CEFR
10	A2
20	B1
30	B2
40	C1
50	C2

LRN Item Writers

Item writers are initially expected to have sufficient background in test writing or materials development and CEFR so that they can produce quality items/questions that reflect the relevant CEFR levels. All item writers are trained to LRN's standards prior to starting work, with monitoring procedures in place.

The requirements for item writers are:

Knowledge and Experience	
At least 5 years experience of teaching EFL or levelling in an EFL setting	E

Qualifications	
DELTA qualified / MA in applied linguistics/English Language Testing	E

Skills and Abilities	
Knowledge and experience of item writing	E
Have sound, working knowledge of the CEFR	E
Demonstrate strong attention to detail in relation to levels & skill sub sections in the CEFR.	E
Be able to work to tight deadlines	E
Good knowledge of assessment and testing mechanisms (in linguistics)	D
Knowledge of grade setting	D
Work as part of a team & also independently	D
Creativity	E
Competent user of Microsoft word, excel and other applications	D
Have good interpersonal skills	E

Professional Membership	
Continued commitment to CPD	D

"E" = Essential, "D" = Desirable

Monitoring

Yearly monitoring takes place and a record is kept. During the monitoring session the following points are observed: punctuality, teamwork (if relevant), attention to detail, appearance, responsiveness, flexibility, knowledge of regulations, basic knowledge of LRN. Suggestions for improvement or re-training are then offered if necessary.

LRN item writers get regular feedback from LRN's co-coordinator related to their performance. All item writers undergo an annual performance review through LRN's appraisals process.

Test Development Process

1. COMMISSIONING

Each qualification cycle is commissioned in order to enable the necessary resources for each item writing team with commissioning meetings held at least twice a year or more frequently when required.

2. CONTENT DEVELOPMENT

Content development meetings are attended by the content development team and relate directly to non-item development but impact directly on the item writing process.

3. ITEM WRITING REVIEW CYCLE

Item writers write items with peer review taking place (up to one re-write allowed on item writer's work) on each other's work to the reviewer's checklist. Once an item has been rewritten more than once it is deemed invalid. Reviewer's returns are also sampled by the test development co-ordinator. Items that require further work are returned to the item writers, who make amendments based on feedback from the reviewer, before re-submission.

4. QWG REVIEW

Once written and reviewed, items are submitted to the Qualifications Working Group (QWG) who are asked to evaluate the qualification within its totality, considering the following:

1. Appropriateness of the whole paper to the testing cohort
2. Presentation and layout of the paper
3. Appropriateness and sensitivity

5. PILOTING

The piloting phase takes place in order to ensure that items can be used in subsequent live tests.

Feedback is collected from:

▶ Candidates

▶ Examiners
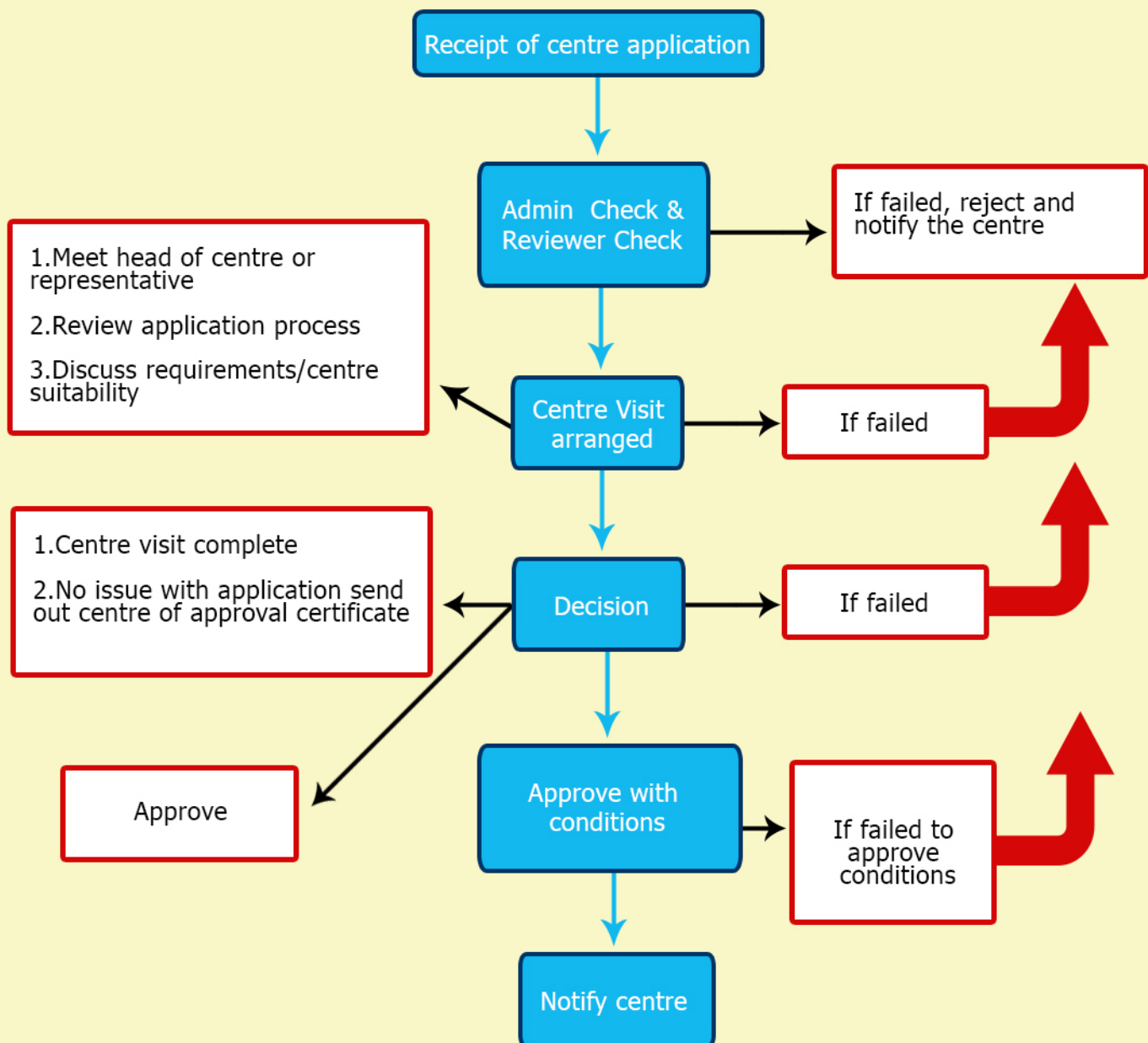
▶ Teachers/tutors (where applicable)

The results of the pilot test are then shown to experts who follow LRN psychometric guidelines to measure the validity considering the content and difficulty of the item based on the pilot data, to ensure the test meets the required standards.

TEST DELIVERY

Accessible

- LRN exam is available in 150 test centres in 58 countries.
- Flexible test dates

TEST CENTRE APPROVAL PROCESS

```
                    Receipt of centre application
                                │
                                ▼
1.Meet head of centre or        Admin Check &          If failed, reject and
  representative      ◄───────  Reviewer Check  ─────► notify the centre
2.Review application process
3.Discuss requirements/centre        │
  suitability                        ▼
                            Centre Visit arranged ────► If failed
                                │
1.Centre visit complete             ▼
2.No issue with application     Decision  ──────────► If failed
  send out centre of approval
  certificate
                    Approve         │
                                    ▼
                            Approve with              If failed to
                            conditions     ─────────► approve conditions
                                │
                                ▼
                            Notify centre
```

Test Centre Auditing

Centres are expected to perform an annual internal audit, the results of which they submit to LRN. In addition, LRN will send an officer to carry out an external audit of the centre once a year. This process is likely to take up to two days. LRN's officer works with the centre at this time to determine to what extent the centre is meeting LRN's requirements, identify issues with the centre (if any), and devise an action plan to bring the centre more closely into compliance with LRN's standards if this is deemed necessary.

In addition, unannounced audit visits will be carried out carried out by LRN.

Mystery Shopping

LRN conducts Mystery shopping, where 'mystery candidates' will visit centres on our behalf posing as 'real candidates' to evaluate the service, quality and impression that your centre offers. Mystery shopping is an indispensable tool used to improve business in many ways including:

- Adhering to the policies, processes and procedures set by LRN
- Provide feedback on the level of customer service
- Measure employee integrity and client satisfaction
- Quality and comfort of facilities
- Level of professionalism displayed by centre staff
- The level of compliance the centre is delivering on behalf of LRN

Book an exam

Acceptable Identification

All candidate identification must be checked by centre staff and invigilators in all instances prior to the assessment. LRN will only accept the following forms of identification:

- Original Passport (non-expired)
- Original National Identity Card (non-expired)

Test day Photograph

Test day photograph of each candidate is captured on the test day.

Book an exam

Special requirements

In cases where alternative test versions are needed, two months advanced notice is required. Examples of alternative versions are as follows:

- lip-reading versions for listening tests
- braille versions for reading tests
- amended graphical versions for candidates with dyscalculia

It is also possible for candidates with other disabilities to apply for special arrangements to be made. Examples are such as extra time or a scribe. Further examples of this would relate to candidates with a physical disability (that would impair speed in writing) dyspraxia or dyslexia.

Examiners

The requirements for examiners are:

Knowledge and Experience

At least 5 years experience of teaching EFL or levelling in an EFL setting	E
Current examining experience (based on the CEF) for an awarding body	D

Qualifications

CELTA qualified / or equivalent qualification	E
DELTA qualified / or equivalent qualification	D

Skills and Abilities

Have strong interpersonal & verbal communication skills – ability to liaise with and communicate confidently, courteously and clearly to head office, participating centres, candidates / students	E
Have sound knowledge of the CEFR	E
Demonstrate strong attention to detail in relation to CEFR level descriptors and levels.	D
Punctual	E
Work as part of a team & also independently	E
Follow up relative paperwork accordingly within the deadline set	E
Competent user of Microsoft word, excel and other applications	D

Professional Membership

Continued commitment to CPD	E

"E" = Essential, "D" = Desirable

Examiner Training

All examiners are required to attend mandatory blended face to face and online induction and training. In order to ensure consistency in examiner performance a combination of online and face to face standardisation is required every 12 months in addition to ongoing performance monitoring to LRN's standard performance benchmark. This enables accurate performance management of the TDU's rater team.

Monitoring

Monitoring is divided into two categories:

- Examiner Performance
- Professional conduct

Security

The purpose of this document is to lay out the procedures followed by centres, examiners and moderators to ensure candidate ID checking meets LRN's security standards, avoiding malpractice at all costs.

This document also lays out recommendations on current practice in relation to current examinations offered by LRN, where best practice can be implemented both inside and outside the UK, covering all modes of delivery including:

- Speaking assessments
- Written assessment

Security

Below is a snapshot of the current process in place for verifying candidate identity.

01 Candidate registration

02 Examiner administers ID checks

03 Examiner conducts assessment (recorded on dictaphone)

04 Examiner allocates mark per candidate

05 Candidates leave

06 Examiner refers to dictaphone data if necessary
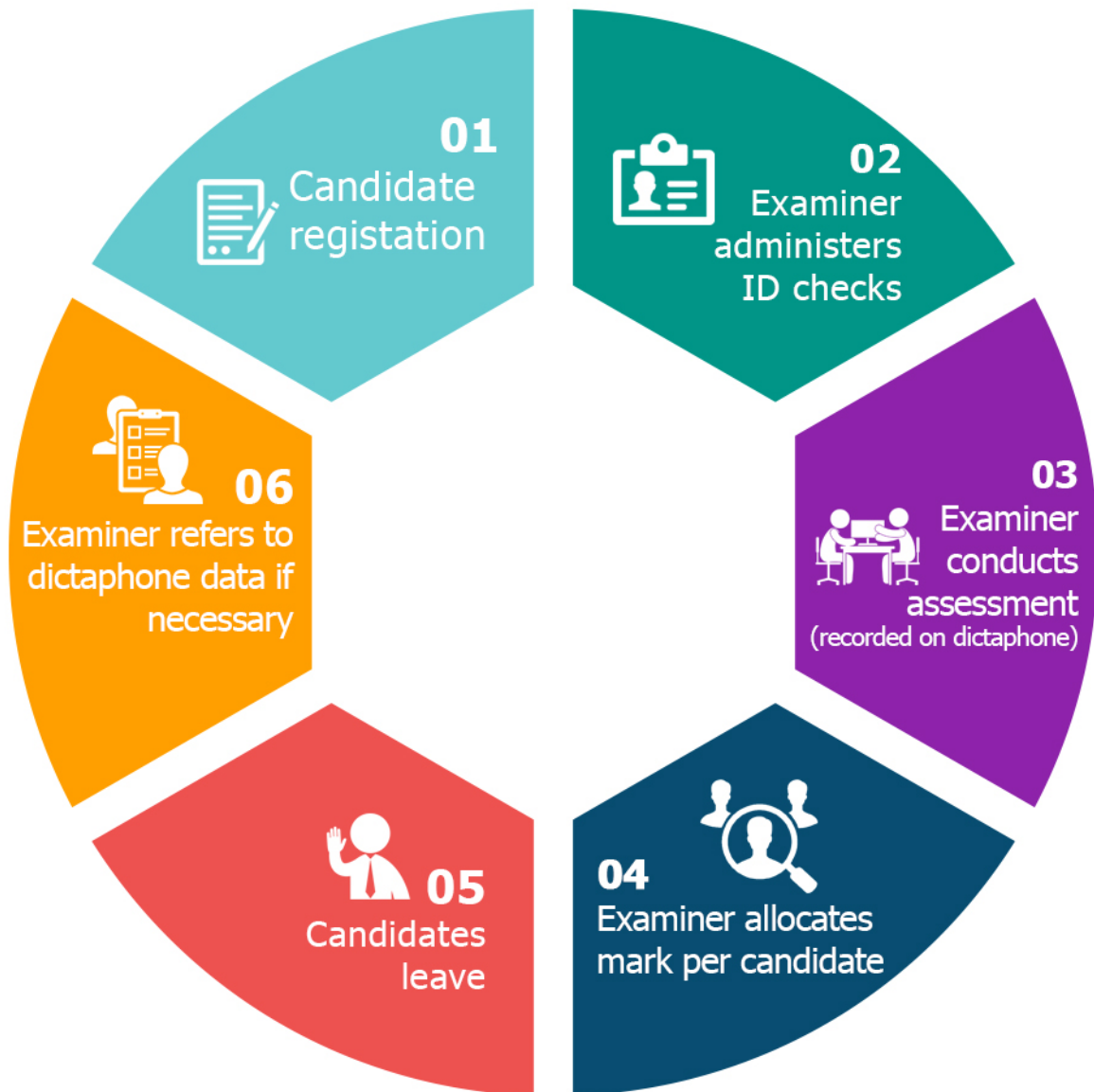
LRN's approach to security

LRN's approach to increased security includes the following steps as common practice:

- Externally recruited and trained examiners are used to administer Speaking and Writing tests

- All identification is checked before proceeding with the assessment

- Examiners are trained to check identification prior to starting the assessment

- 'Test day' photographs are taken to ensure validity of identification

- Annual centre training to include: identification of fraudulent activity; imposter training; identifying facial discrepancies.

LRN Verification Service is a free, secure online service which allows you to verify that an applicant is presenting a genuine Certificate.

TEST DEVELOPMENT & TEST DELIVERY AUDITING PROCESSES

LRN takes the auditing of its tests, both their development and their delivery to candidates, very seriously. All processes are clearly documented and kept on record, and these processes are regularly audited both to LRN's own internal standards and to the standards imposed by the regulatory body, Ofqual.

Internal Auditing

Each year, LRN's various policies and procedures are audited according to industry standards. Detailed forms exist for the development process, the process of exam delivery, and the methods used for scoring and interpreting scores.

The form for test development auditing contains questions about, among other things: how the exam's content was chosen, how the validity of the items making up the exam was verified, how the item bank from which items are selected is developed and maintained, and who was involved at each stage of the development process.

The form for exam delivery deals with the application process for exams, the locations of exams and how they meet the necessary requirements, how examiners are selected and what standards are expected of them, and how security of testing materials and test results are ensured.

The form for scoring and interpretation deals with how exams are scored, how the accuracy of the results given by examiners is verified, how confidentiality and security is assured in terms of candidate records, and who is involved at each stage.

On each of these forms the auditor provides evidence of how the criteria have been met, and outlines areas of concern, if any, so they can be addressed by LRN. The auditor also provides recommendations, if he or she has any, for how LRN should proceed in order to bring the process into line with industry standards.

Also, the process of certification is subject to on-going auditing, with all exam results and subsequent certifications being kept on record and analysed each year.

External Auditing

To remain recognised by the regulatory body Ofqual, all awarding bodies have to submit a Statement of Compliance each year. This contains evidence of all the criteria set by Ofqual and covers every aspect of the work done by the awarding body.

LRN engages with a dedicated Education Committee group whose role is to advise on meeting Ofqual criteria, with regular meetings by LRN staff and Education Committee members in preparation for the Ofqual deadline each year.

With regard to test development and validation, LRN also sponsors academics to conduct research into the areas of language testing and applied linguistics, and the results of this research inform the auditing of the test development procedures. This is to ensure the validity of items and of the methods used to interpret results.

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