



# Learning Resource Network

## **QUALIFICATION SPECIFICATION - International English Language Competency Assessment (IELCA)**

**Qualification Accreditation Number: 601/5035/X,  
601/5029/4, 601/5041/5 and 601/5033/6**

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## BACKGROUND TO LRN

Learning Resource Network - LRN - is an awarding organisation that offers qualifications to candidates, educational institutes, training providers, schools and employers who can access qualifications either through registered educational institutions.

It was founded by a group of educators and business people and specialises in ESOL and management qualifications.

A full list of LRN qualifications can be found on the [register of regulated qualifications](#).

LRN London head office is supported by a team of representatives around the world.

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## **ESOL INTERNATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS**

ESOL International qualifications are designed for candidates who are not native speakers of English and who wish to achieve a high quality, internationally recognised qualification in English that is both available and recognised worldwide and covers the whole range up to the highest level (NQF level 3 / CEF C2). They are suitable for candidates who are preparing for entry to higher education or professional employment in the UK or elsewhere. ESOL International qualifications are designed to reference the descriptions of language proficiency in the Common European Framework Reference for Languages (CEF). The levels in the CEF have been mapped to the levels in the National Qualifications Framework for England, Wales and Northern Ireland (see Pathways to Proficiency: the alignment of language proficiency scales for assessing competence in English Language).

### **BRANDING**

Whilst the submitted title of this qualification is the LRN Entry Level 3 Certificate in ESOL International (IELCA CEF B1), LRN Level 1 Certificate in ESOL International (IELCA CEF B2), LRN Level 2 Certificate in ESOL International (IELCA CEF C1) and LRN Level 3 Certificate in ESOL International (IELCA CEF C2) the brand name of this qualification will be the International English Language Competency Assessment (IELCA). LRN will ensure it provides accurate and correct information regarding the title of this qualification to centres, candidates and other users of this qualification.

### **INTRODUCTION**

This specification document provides an overview and orientation to IELCA for candidates, centres, administrators, teachers and examiners and outlines the key features and administrative procedures required for this test.

### **OBJECTIVE**

IELCA is designed for all "non-native English" speakers that are required to improve their English language skills at CEFR level B1 to C2. Candidates taking IELCA will need to demonstrate they are capable of handling familiar and routine communication in the areas of reading, listening, writing and speaking pitched at level B1, B2, C1 or C2 on the Common European Framework (CEFR).

### **CANDIDATE CATEGORY**

Candidates interested in taking IELCA may include those who:

1. Need access to Higher Education.
2. Are working or seeking work in an English speaking environment.
3. Are living and working in a country where the native and official language is English.

IELCA learners are made up of a range of different national and cultural backgrounds.

## **ENTRY REQUIREMENTS**

There are no entry requirements for candidates taking this qualification. It is also not necessary for candidates to have achieved a qualification in English prior to registering.

However, LRN would recommend that candidates are well-prepared before taking this test.

Downloadable sample materials are accessible through the qualifications section of the LRN website whereby candidates can access sample assessment material. LRN approved centres ensure that candidates are fully prepared to sit IELCA through using fully trained teachers and appropriate resources as laid out in the centre agreement with LRN.

## **PROGRESSION**

IELCA has been designed to reflect the wide variation in candidates' origins, levels of education and career aims. Progression opportunities may, therefore, take a variety of paths. Depending on the level of qualification achieved, it may be appropriate for the candidate to progress to:

- Vocational qualifications
- Access to Higher Education
- Work or Employment

## **RECOGNITION OF PRIOR LEARNING**

Please refer to LRN Recognition of Prior Learning Policy which is available on LRN website.

## **LANGUAGE OF ASSESSMENT**

LRN aims to use English that is plain, clear, free from bias and appropriate to all candidates. LRN will ensure the assessment materials, stimuli and the assessment itself is carried out in English.

## **QUALIFICATION OVERVIEW**

IELCA is based on the CEFR in that it reflects the level(s) of language ability which are as defined by the CEFR. IELCA is a single unit qualification. Candidates are assessed in all four components of reading, listening, writing and speaking. The total qualification time is 327 hours for this qualification. The breakdown of total qualification time (as below):

<b>Guided learning hours (GLH)</b>	<b>250</b>	
<b>Self study (SS)</b>	<b>70</b>	
Formative Assessment	3 hours 59 minutes	<b>Total Assessment Time (TAT)</b>  <b>7 hours</b>
Summative Assessment	3 hours 01 minutes	
<b>Total Qualification Time (TQT)</b>	<b>327 Hours (GLH+SS+TAT)</b>	

## QUALIFICATION FEATURES

IELCA is a four language skills qualification which assesses four sub skills of the English language: reading, listening, speaking, and writing through one of two routes - Academic or General Training. References to the CEFR are made in the IELCA Mark Scheme in order to demonstrate linkage between the qualification construct and CEFR. The information below is a breakdown of IELCA qualification features.

<p><b>Reading</b></p> <p>40 questions divided into three sections to measure reading ability against the levels B1 (independent user) – C2 (proficient User) on the CEFR.</p>	<p><b>Listening</b></p> <p>40 questions, divided into three sections to measure listening ability against the levels B1 (independent user) – C2 (proficient User) on the CEFR.</p> <p>Part 1 – part 3 consists of up to 8 short listening extracts, all lasting approximately 12 minutes in total.</p>	<p><b>Writing</b></p> <p>Section 1 - a written or visual prompt, for example: writing a report, explaining graphical or tabular information, responding to an e mail.</p> <p>Word count: 120 – 150 words.</p>	<p><b>Paper 4 – Speaking</b> (interview with LRN examiner)</p> <p>Section 1 - a short introduction where the candidate is asked a series of lead in questions to warm up.</p>
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Reading	Listening	Writing	Speaking
<p>Question types include: 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.</p> <p>Texts are taken from a range of authentic sources such as: journals, newspapers, web articles, magazines, extracts from academic books and scientific articles.</p>	<p>Question types include: multiple choice, completing notes/summary/diagram/flowchart/table, error correction, identifying information (True/False/Not Given), cloze; identifying the writer's views /claims, summarising, sentence completion, matching and ordering.</p> <p>Texts are taken from a range of authentic sources such as: public announcements; recorded messages; weather forecasts; traffic or tourist information; publicity texts; monologues; conversations between 2 or more people; routine commands and instructions; radio reports/interviews.</p> <p>Extracts may be monologue/solo speakers or based on conversations between two or more speakers either in a face to face situation or on the telephone.</p>	<p>Section 2 - a statement in which candidates must respond to, for example: responding to an argument, statement or point of view.</p> <p>Word count: 180 – 220 words.</p>	<p>Section 2 - gives the candidate the opportunity to 'take the floor' regarding a statement for a period of 2 minutes, without interruption followed by questions from the examiner.</p>

<p>Skills tested include: understanding the context &amp; implications; demonstrating an understanding of the text as a whole; skim reading in order to understand overall gist; skim reading to locate specific detail; distinguishing fact from opinion, demonstrating the ability to interpret the author's style and attitude; demonstrating detailed understanding and inferring meaning from context.</p> <p>Duration: 1 hour 20 minutes</p>	<p>Skills tested include: listening for gist / the main ideas presented in a conversation or monologue; following instructions and directions; recognising the role of the speakers; distinguishing fact from opinion; listening for detail and specific factual information; identifying the speaker's attitude and opinion by following a conversation involving negotiation of meaning; identifying the speaker's attitude and opinion through the understanding of tone of voice; intonation and stress.</p> <p>Duration: 30 minutes</p> <p>Candidates listen to texts once.</p>	<p>Skills tested include: organising a piece of writing within the word count stipulated; responding formally and appropriately to a given prompt; describing and reporting a sequence of events; producing findings in a report; organising data; comparing and contrasting evidence and data; explaining processes; justifying opinion; evaluating and summarising ideas; using a range of lexical and grammatical items accurately, showing awareness of audiences and genre.</p> <p>Duration: 1 hour</p> <p>(Writing )</p> <p>All examiners are trained to assess candidates' level against the LRN ESOL International mark scheme, mapped to the CEFR measuring: task achievement, coherence and cohesion, lexical resource, grammatical range and accuracy.</p>	<p>Section 3 - a discussion where the candidate and examiner enter a short discussion in relation to the task set in section 2.</p> <p>Each section gives candidates enough space to demonstrate competency at their level enabling examiners to judge their scale of proficiency against the CEFR.</p> <p>Duration: 11 minutes</p> <p>(Speaking)</p> <p>All examiners are trained to assess candidates' level against the mark scheme, mapped to the CEFR measuring: pronunciation, fluency, language accuracy and appropriacy &amp; task fulfilment.</p>
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## CEFR Global Scale

<b>Proficient User</b>	<b>C2</b>	Can understand with ease virtually everything heard or read. Can summarise information from different spoken and written sources, reconstructing arguments and accounts in a coherent presentation. Can express him/herself spontaneously, very fluently and precisely, differentiating finer shades of meaning even in more complex situations.
	<b>C1</b>	Can understand a wide range of demanding, longer texts, and recognise implicit meaning. Can express him/herself fluently and spontaneously without much obvious searching for expressions. Can use language flexibly and effectively for social, academic and professional purposes. Can produce clear, well-structured, detailed text on complex subjects, showing controlled use of organisational patterns, connectors and cohesive devices.
	<b>B2</b>	Can understand the main ideas of complex text on both concrete and abstract topics, including technical discussions in his/her field of specialisation. Can interact with a degree of fluency and spontaneity that makes regular interaction with native speakers quite possible without strain for either party. Can produce clear, detailed text on a wide range of subjects and explain a viewpoint on a topical issue giving the advantages and disadvantages of various options.
<b>Independent User</b>	<b>B1</b>	Can understand the main points of clear standard input on familiar matters regularly encountered in work, school, leisure, etc. Can deal with most situations likely to arise whilst travelling in an area where the language is spoken. Can produce simple connected text on topics, which are familiar, or of personal interest. Can describe experiences and events, dreams, hopes & ambitions and briefly give reasons and explanations for opinions and plans.
	<b>A2</b>	Can understand sentences and frequently used expressions related to areas of most immediate relevance (e.g. very basic personal and family information, shopping, local geography, employment). Can communicate in simple and routine tasks requiring a simple and direct exchange of information on familiar and routine matters. Can describe in simple terms aspects of his/her background, immediate environment and matters in areas of immediate need.
<b>Basic User</b>	<b>A1</b>	Can understand and use familiar everyday expressions and very basic phrases aimed at the satisfaction of needs of a concrete type. Can introduce him/herself and others and can ask and answer questions about personal details such as where he/she lives, people he/she knows and things he/she has. Can interact in a simple way provided the other person talks slowly and clearly and is prepared to help.

## CAN DO SUMMARY

### The ALTE 'Can Do' Project

The CAN do Project has been developed by [Association of Language Testers in Europe \(ALTE\)](#) which offers a framework that covers six levels of language competency that is aligned to the [Council of Europe Common European Framework \(CEFR\)](#) – see Appendix D of the CEFR for more information. The CAN do summary outlines how language candidates can perform and what they can do at each level. They are divided into three areas, Social & Tourism, Work and Study, and are detailed below for CEFR Level B1 to C2 and give examples of typical ability.

### Summary of overall ability

ALTE Level	Listening/Speaking	Reading	Writing
ALTE Level 5	CAN advise on or talk about complex or sensitive issues, understanding colloquial references and dealing confidently with hostile questions.	CAN understand documents, correspondence and reports, including the finer points of complex texts.	CAN write letters on any subject and full notes of meetings or seminars with good expression and accuracy.
ALTE Level 4	CAN contribute effectively to meetings and seminars within own area of work or keep up a casual conversation with a good degree of fluency, coping with abstract expressions.	CAN read quickly enough to cope with an academic course, to read the media for information or to understand non-standard correspondence.	CAN prepare/draft professional correspondence, take reasonably accurate notes in meetings or write an essay which shows an ability to communicate.
ALTE Level 3	CAN follow or give a talk on a familiar topic or keep up a conversation on a fairly wide range of topics.	CAN scan texts for relevant information, and understand detailed instructions or advice.	CAN make notes while someone is talking or write a letter including non-standard requests.
ALTE Level 2	CAN express opinions on abstract/cultural matters in a limited way or offer advice within a known area, and understand instructions or public announcements.	CAN understand routine information and articles, and the general meaning of non-routine information within a familiar area.	CAN understand routine information and articles, and the general meaning of non-routine information within a familiar area. CAN write letters or make notes on familiar or predictable matters.

ALTE Level 1	CAN express simple opinions or requirements in a familiar context.	CAN understand straightforward information within a known area, such as on products and signs and simple textbooks or reports on familiar matters.	CAN complete forms and write short simple letters or postcards related to personal information.
ALTE Breakthrough Level	CAN understand basic instructions or take part in a basic factual conversation on a predictable topic.	CAN understand basic notices, instructions or information.	CAN complete basic forms, and write notes including times, dates and places.

### Social & Tourist Skill Area

ALTE Level	Listening/Speaking	Reading	Writing
ALTE Level 5	CAN talk about complex or sensitive issues without awkwardness.	CAN (when looking for accommodation) understand a tenancy agreement in detail, for example technical details and the main legal implications.	CAN write letters on any subject with good expression and accuracy.
ALTE Level 4	CAN keep up conversations of a casual nature for an extended period of time and discuss abstract/cultural topics with a good degree of fluency and range of expression.	CAN understand complex opinions/arguments as expressed in serious newspapers.	CAN write letters on most subjects. Such difficulties as the reader may experience are likely to be at the level of vocabulary.
ALTE Level 3	CAN keep up a conversation on a fairly wide range of topics, such as personal and professional experiences, events currently in the news.	CAN understand detailed information, for example a wide range of culinary terms on a restaurant menu, and terms and abbreviations in accommodation advertisements.	CAN write to a hotel to ask about the availability of services, for example facilities for the disabled or the provision of a special diet.

ALTE Level 2	CAN express opinions on abstract/cultural matters in a limited way and pick up nuances of meaning/opinion.	CAN understand factual articles in newspapers, routine letters from hotels and letters expressing personal opinions.	CAN write letters on a limited range of predictable topics related to personal experience and express opinions in predictable language.
ALTE Level 1	CAN express likes and dislikes in familiar contexts using simple language such as 'I (don't) like....'.	CAN understand straightforward information, for example labels on food, standard menus, road signs and messages on automatic cash machines.	CAN complete most forms related to personal information.
ALTE Breakthrough Level	CAN ask simple questions of a factual nature and understand answers expressed in simple language.	CAN understand simple notices and information, for example in airports, on store guides and on menus.  CAN understand simple instructions on medicines and simple directions to places.	CAN leave a very simple message for a host family or write short simple 'thank you' notes.

### Work Skill Area

ALTE Level	Listening/Speaking	Reading	Writing
ALTE Level 5	CAN advise on/handle complex delicate or contentious issues, such as legal or financial matters, to the extent that he/she has the necessary specialist knowledge.	CAN understand reports and articles likely to be encountered during his/her work, including complex ideas expressed in complex language.	CAN make full and accurate notes and continue to participate in a meeting or seminar.
ALTE Level 4	CAN contribute effectively to meetings and seminars within own area of work and argue for or against a case.	CAN understand correspondence expressed in non-standard language.	CAN handle a wide range of routine and non-routine situations in which professional services are requested from colleagues or external contacts.

ALTE Level 3	CAN take and pass on most messages that are likely to require attention during a normal working day.	CAN understand most correspondence, reports and factual product literature he/she is likely to come across.	CAN deal with all routine requests for goods or services.
ALTE Level 2	CAN offer advice to clients within own job area on simple matters.	CAN understand the general meaning of non-routine letters and theoretical articles within own work area.	CAN make reasonably accurate notes at a meeting or seminar where the subject matter is familiar and predictable.
ALTE Level 1	CAN state simple requirements within own job area, such as 'I want to order 25 of...'. .	CAN understand most short reports or manuals of a predictable nature within his/her own area of expertise, provided enough time is given.	CAN write a short, comprehensible note of request to a colleague or a known contact in another company.
ALTE Breakthrough Level	CAN take and pass on simple messages of a routine kind, such as 'Friday meeting 10 a.m.'. .	CAN understand short reports or product descriptions on familiar matters, if these are expressed in simple language and the contents are predictable.	CAN write a simple routine request to a colleague, such as 'Can I have 20X please?'

### Study Skill Area

ALTE Level	Listening/Speaking	Reading	Writing
ALTE Level 5	CAN understand jokes, colloquial asides and cultural allusions.	CAN access all sources of information quickly and reliably.	CAN make accurate and complete notes during the course of a lecture, seminar or tutorial.
ALTE Level 4	CAN follow abstract argumentation, for example the balancing of alternatives and the drawing of a conclusion.	CAN read quickly enough to cope with the demands of an academic course.	CAN write an essay which shows ability to communicate, giving few difficulties for the reader.
ALTE Level 3	CAN give a clear presentation on a familiar topic, and answer predictable or factual questions.	CAN scan texts for relevant information and grasp main point of text.	CAN make simple notes that will be of reasonable use for essay or revision purposes.

ALTE Level 2	CAN understand instructions on classes and assignments given by a teacher or lecturer.	CAN understand basic instructions and messages, for example computer library catalogues, with some help.	CAN write down some information at a lecture, if this is more or less dictated.
ALTE Level 1	CAN express simple opinions using expressions such as 'I don't agree'.	CAN understand the general meaning of a simplified text book or article, reading very slowly.	CAN write a very short simple narrative or description, such as 'My last holiday'.
ALTE Breakthrough Level	CAN understand basic instructions on class times, dates and room numbers, and on assignments to be carried out.	CAN read basic notices and instructions.	CAN copy times, dates and places from notices on classroom board or notice board.

## RESULTS

LRN trained examiners are allowed to mark the writing and speaking components of the IELCA. Marks are allocated for each candidate in accordance with the IELCA mark scheme for writing and speaking. The timescales in which LRN will issue its results is 10 days (upon receiving the candidate results from the test centre).

## 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).

Results are then moderated by the moderation team in accordance with LRN's moderation policy. Moderated results are then forwarded to the Lead Moderator for final approval.

## 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.

Results are then moderated by the moderation team in accordance with LRN's moderation policy. Moderated results are then forwarded to the Lead Moderator for final approval.

## MARKING

The receptive components for IELCA and Reading Listening contain 40 items (per sub skill) with each correct item awarded one mark. The maximum raw score a candidate can achieve on either paper is 40. Scores ranging from 10 to 50 are awarded to candidates on the basis of their raw scores.

The tables below indicate the mean raw scores achieved by candidates at various levels in each sub skill. IELCA Academic Reading, IELCA General Reading and IELCA Listening provide an indication of the number of marks required to achieve a particular score.

<b>IELCA Listening</b>	
Score & CEFR Level	Raw score out of 40
10 A2	0-13
20 B1	14-23
30 B2	24-34
40 C1	35-39
50 C2	40

<b>IELCA Academic Reading</b>	
Score & CEFR Level	Raw score out of 40
10 A2	0-10
20 B1	11-22
30 B2	23-34
40 C1	35-39
50 C2	40

<b>IELCA General Reading</b>	
Score & CEFR Level	Raw score out of 40
10 A2	0-11
20 B1	12-22
30 B2	23-35
40 C1	36-39

50 C2	40
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When marking the Writing and Speaking components, raters (examiners and moderators) use detailed performance descriptors that cover the relevant performance for that component (speaking or writing). Scores ranging from 10 to 50 are awarded to candidates on the basis of their raw scores.

The tables below indicate the mean raw scores achieved by candidates at various levels in each of the Academic & General Writing and Speaking provide an indication of the number of marks required to achieve a particular score.

<b>IELCA Academic Writing</b>	
Score & CEFR Level	Raw score out of 83
10 A2	0-37
20 B1	38-50
30 B2	51-64
40 C1	65-74
50 C2	75-83
<b>IELCA General Writing</b>	
Score & CEFR Level	Raw score out of 83
10 A2	0-39
20 B1	40-50
30 B2	51-55
40 C1	56-74
50 C2	75-83

<b>IELCA Speaking</b>	
Score & CEFR Level	Raw score out of 100
10 A2	0-39
20 B1	40-59
30 B2	60-88



40 C1	89-97
50 C2	98-100

## GRADING

Results are reported as pass or fail grades.

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

<b>Overall Score for IELCA</b>	
Score & CEFR	Raw Scores out of 200
10 A2	0-79
20 B1	80-119
30 B2	120-159
40 C1	160-199
50 C2	200

## **RELIABILITY AND VALIDITY**

IELCA has been designed in line with the Common European Framework for Reference for Languages (CEFR) and follows the principles of reliability and validity through the following steps:

### **Validity**

1. Producing quality items to the required standard that measure performance with links to the CEFR.
2. Validating performance through piloting and feeding back into the test development cycle to ensure consistency of items.

The validity of LRN tests is evaluated in terms of the uses and interpretations of scores. The two main concerns in validation studies are:

1. The uses and their meaning to which scores are put in terms of the latent trait(s) they engage and measure. Several validation frameworks, such as Messick (1989) and Kane (2012), emerge from this. Supporting evidence of validity arguments potentially vary from test to test as every test produced has a unique validity argument.

The following inferences are included, following Kane's framework (2012):

- a. Evaluation - clear and sufficient domain definition and operationalisation.
- b. Generalisation - how confidently performance can be extrapolated on the test to a universe of the tasks.
- c. Explanation - analogous to conventional construct validity.
- d. Accuracy of scores - representing the amount of the latent trait under assessment.
- e. Extrapolation - analogous to conventional criterion validity.
- f. Accuracy of candidate performance on the test - prediction of performance on similar devices as well as the target language domain.

Tests developed by LRN are subjected to rigorous data analysis methods in order to ascertain the validity of the uses and interpretations of scores. Consultation is received by a team of experts who assist in undergoing latent trait model analysis on data sets in order to determine the quality of the test.

Evidence yielded from these analyses is used to judge the validity argument of the test.

### **Reliability**

1. Delivering examiner training against IELCA mark scheme with links to the CEFR.
2. Conducting standardisation and monitoring to ensure consistent interlocutor performance and accurate grading.
3. Carrying out moderation to ensure consistent, accurate and reliable results.
4. The LRN validation team work with a variety of models relevant to language testing and psycholinguistics. Validation studies for each qualification are produced for every 800 - 1000 responses / grades generated.

## **ADMINISTRATION AND ASSESSMENT DELIVERY**

The duration of IELCA is 3 hours and 1 minute with the main test sitting (reading, listening and writing) lasting 2 hours and 50 minutes in one continuous assessment session on the same day (with a short break in between each component). Speaking tests are scheduled between one and three days before or after the main test sitting.

One invigilator is assigned to, every 15 candidates, for reading, listening and writing sub skills with an additional invigilator to accompany candidates, in instances where they leaving the assessment room for any reason. The invigilator is also responsible for checking candidate identification and is always present for the duration of the assessment. Invigilators are also responsible for ensuring candidates have no unauthorised materials in the examination room.