

The Pitman Guide to
**English
Language
Examinations**

**Susan Davies
Richard West**

Second Edition

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English Language Examinations

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Pitman

This expanded new edition has been fully updated by the authors to cover all the new examinations and syllabus changes introduced since publication of the first edition. Special features include:

- * full descriptions of the examinations plus specimen questions and details of future changes, all produced with the cooperation of the examining bodies
- * coverage of the whole range of English examinations taken by non-native speakers with greater emphasis on English for special purposes
- * revised appendices containing useful names and addresses, glossary of terms, and improved tables for easy comparison of the levels of examinations

Extract from a review of the first edition

'Already essential for every EFL/ESL administrator, this book must be hailed by everyone for whom it was intended...a simple, obvious and essential book' *ARELS Journal*

Susan Davies, BEd, DipTEFL and MSc(Applied Linguistics), and Richard West, BA, PGCE, MA(Linguistics for ELT) have been teachers of English in the UK, Zambia and Iran, and now continue to work in the educational field as writers and consultants.

Pitman is a world leader in technical and commercial education. As well as its publishing activities, it runs schools and examinations for students from over 70 countries.

Introduction to the first edition

This Guide is intended to be of use to students whose mother tongue is not English, to teachers, to schools and colleges and to employers.

The examinations which have been included have been chosen because they are predominantly UK-based English language examinations widely taken by non-native speakers. There are 3 types of examination described:

- a* Examinations in English as a foreign language specifically designed for non-native speakers.
- b* Examinations in English language designed for native speakers but taken widely by non-native speakers (excluding those taken in state schools, ie GCE and CSE examinations).
- c* Special purpose examinations, particularly those in commercial or scientific/technical English.

A number of examinations have been excluded because they are outside the scope of the Guide, ie those not taken widely by non-native speakers, those developed for specific purposes within institutes and those which are not UK-based. The examinations are presented in alphabetical order; thus the order is no reflection of the relative merits of each examination.

Each examination is described in a uniform way as follows:

- A Title** The full name of the examination (abbreviation in brackets).
- B Conducted by** The examining body with its address and telephone number. Any affiliations to the examining body are mentioned here.
- C Status** Details of whether the examination is recognized by an outside body, whether it is part of another qualification or can stand on its own.
- D Aims** Details of the aims of each examination, and whether it assesses a candidate's knowledge of general English or English for a specific purpose (ESP).
- E Level** Levels are related approximately to the standards of GCE, CSE and the examinations of the Cambridge Syndicate. Compara-

tive levels of different examinations are given in the tables in Appendices 1 and 2.

F Availability Details of when, where and to whom each examination is available.

G Content A summary of the content of each examination is given with specimen questions. The time allocated to the examination and to individual questions as well as to the marks allocated are given where appropriate.

H Results Details are given on how the results are graded, what constitutes a pass and whether a pass counts towards a further qualification. An outline of group certificate schemes in commercial education is given in the table in Appendix 3.

I Further information Here are listed the information and publications available from examining bodies. Details of prices and postage rates should be obtained from the examining bodies.

Other information contained in the Guide is:

a A multilingual explanation of the headings used in the description of each examination (A to I above). This will be of particular use to institutes overseas and students coming to the United Kingdom to further their education.

b A summary of the most widely-used examinations for teachers of EFL (Appendix 4).

c An appendix listing the names and addresses of various professional institutes setting English language or Communication papers as part of their examinations for membership or associateship (Appendix 5).

d An appendix listing the names and addresses of various overseas examinations councils (Appendix 6).

e Finally, there is a Glossary defining the terms used in the descriptions of the examinations which have special meaning in the context of language testing.

The Pitman Guide to English Language Examinations has been designed so that it can be revised simply and regularly to keep pace with syllabus changes and the introduction of new examinations.

Susan Davies & Richard West
1981

Introduction to the second edition

The 1970s were a period of great innovation in foreign language teaching – one thinks particularly of the work of the Council of Europe (developing notional/functional syllabuses, preparing the Waystage and Threshold syllabus specifications, and introducing the idea of unit/credit examinations), the trend towards more ‘communicative’ approaches to language learning, and the emergence of English for specific purposes (ESP). Innovations in language examinations inevitably lag behind developments in teaching, but by 1981, when the first edition of *The Pitman Guide to English Language Examinations* was published, many of these trends were being reflected in new English language examinations.

In the three years since the publication of the first edition these trends have become firmly established, with the introduction of new examinations and the extensive revision of most existing ones. The result is that this second edition has had to be completely revised and expanded to take account of these developments. Nearly all examining boards now recognize that English is a language to be used for international communication rather than simply a system of grammatical rules, and, with the introduction of the new Institute of Linguists’ EFL examinations, we see the first papers geared to Council of Europe levels. There has also been an increase in the number of ESP examinations, especially those designed for students following occupational or vocational courses.

In order to chart the developments in EFL/ESL examinations in the last decade, we have drawn up ten questions, each with two possible answers – type *a* and type *b*. An examination designed in the late sixties would produce type *a* responses to each question, while an examination of the eighties will be more likely to bring a string of type *b* responses. In this way it is possible to trace the developments in English language examining in general, or to assess any one examination in particular.

- 1 What apparently is the underlying aim of language learning?**
 - a* The acquisition of linguistic (ie grammatical) competence.
 - b* The acquisition of communicative competence (ie the ability to use the language for effective communication).
- 2 What is the basic approach to language testing?**
 - a* Synthetic, ie a language is composed of the sum of its parts and we can test knowledge of the whole by sampling knowledge of the parts.
 - b* Analytic, ie communication involves more than the assembly of isolated parts and we should test the ability to combine the parts effectively.
- 3 What type of language knowledge is to be tested predominantly?**
 - a* Usage, ie accurate knowledge of the grammatical rules of the language.
 - b* Use, ie the ability to use the language to communicate fluently.
- 4 What types of question are used principally?**
 - a* Discrete point, eg a battery of multiple-choice questions each testing a single language point.
 - b* Global, eg free-response questions drawing on a range of language skills.
- 5 What types of texts and tasks are used in the questions?**
 - a* Idealized texts specially produced for the examination; unrealistic tasks not required of candidates outside the examination hall.
 - b* Authentic texts not designed for examination purposes; realistic tasks such as those required of candidates in the real world.
- 6 What range of skills is tested?**
 - a* Narrow, concentrating on the receptive skills of reading and listening.
 - b* A full range, including the productive skills of speaking and writing.
- 7 How much attention is paid to contextualization?**
 - a* Very little; sufficient only to indicate the response required.
 - b* Full context supplied in the belief that meaning is derived from linguistic and situational context.
- 8 What is the primary purpose of English language examining?**
 - a* Attainment testing designed to measure and compare the amount of language candidates have accurately mastered.

- Therefore examinations should be primarily norm-referenced.
- b* Proficiency testing designed to assess whether candidates will be able to perform the language tasks required of them. Therefore examinations will be primarily criterion-referenced.

9 What is the main criterion of a 'good examination'?

- a* Reliability, ie it is statistically consistent from centre to centre, year to year.
- b* Validity, ie it tests and can be seen to test relevant language skills.

10 What range of candidates should an examination be suitable for?

- a* Broad, ie covering a wide range of candidates with a single examination.
- b* Narrow, ie the examination is designed for a more specific audience whose language aims can be identified more precisely (although related papers may be available at other levels or in different skills).

Other developments in EFL/ESL examinations in the past decade relate to practicalities rather than content or format. These developments include the more frequent availability of examinations – increasingly, papers are available several times a year or even, in the case of PEI, available on demand. Secondly, an extension of the ESP approach is the so-called 'mode 3' system now available from the RSA, under which examination papers can be set at specified levels but to reflect the individual syllabuses of particular schools or groups of learners. Thirdly, there has been an expansion of the unit/credit idea proposed by the Council of Europe, allowing candidates to be given credit for parts (units) of an examination taken successfully without having to resit the whole examination at a later date.

We should like to thank everyone who has commented on the first edition and encouraged us to produce a second.

Susan Davies and Richard West
1984

Acknowledgments

We wish to acknowledge the help and advice received from the examining bodies who approved the relevant summaries of examinations included in this Guide, and to thank them for permission to use copyright material which is included in the main specimen questions.

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Examination Summaries

Explanation of the headings used in the description of each examination

Title	Titel	Τίτλος	Titulo	Titre	Titulo	A اسم الامتحان
Conducted by	Durchgeführt von	Διεξάγεται από	Dirigido por	Dirigé par	Conduzidos	B الهدف المشرقة عليه
Status	Wertbemessung	Αξιολόγηση	Grado	Statut	Posição	C أمية
Aims	Ziele	Σκοποι	Objetos	Buts	Objectivos	D أهداف
Level	Niveau	Έπιπεδο	Nivel	Niveau	Nível	E مستوى
Availability	Zulassung	Διαθεσιμότητα	Habilitación	Disponibilité	Disponibilidade	F إمكانية التقديم الى هذا الامتحان
Content	Umfang	Περιοχόμενο	Contenido	Contenu	Conteúdo	G تفاصيل الامتحان
Results	Ergebnisse	Αποτελέσματα	Resultados	Résultats	Resultados	H الدرجات المطلوبة
Further information	Weitere Einzelheiten	Περαιτέρω Πληροφορίες	Información adicional	Renseignements obtenus après enquête	Informação adicional	I معلومات إضافية

1 Associated Examining Board (AEB)

1.1 English language – professional and business use

The Associated Examining Board (AEB)
Wellington House, Aldershot, Hampshire GU11 1BQ
Tel: Aldershot (0252) 25551

A single-subject GCE O level examination.
An examination designed for English mother-tongue students in sixth forms and in further education who plan to enter the professions or to follow a career in business or commerce.
A GCE Ordinary (Alternative) level examination set at a level somewhat beyond GCE O level English Language papers.
Available only through educational establishments registered as AEB examination centres. Examinations are held once a year in June. Centres wishing to enter candidates for this examination must inform AEB not later than 16 October the preceding year.

Title
Conducted by
Status
Aims
Level
Availability

Paper 1 (2 hours)

Content

- | | Marks |
|--|-------|
| 1 Composition A composition of a minimum length of 400 words on one topic from a choice of 7. Topics are related to candidates' background, experience and proposed career. | 50 |
| <i>Examples</i> | |
| a Television commercials | |
| b Should strikes be made illegal? | |
| 2 Summary An exercise requiring the use of summarizing techniques on a passage of prose approximately 600 words in length. | 30 |

Paper 2 (2 hours)

- 1 **Reading comprehension** 8–10 free-response questions 40

testing understanding of the ideas and language in a prose passage of not more than 600 words.

2 Composition 2 questions chosen from the following:

a Letter-writing

20

Writing a letter or a sequence of letters to fit a given situation.

Example

You are a member of the Committee of a Sports Club (choose your own sport). At its last meeting, your Committee was disappointed at the way the sport was developing in the area and felt that it would be useful to host a one-day meeting of representatives of all other clubs in the area to discuss the situation. You have been asked to draft a circular letter to be sent to the secretaries of these clubs. In it you should explain why you feel the meeting is necessary and what it hopes to achieve. Give full information of the date, time and place. You should also draft an appropriate reply slip, to be included with the letter.

b Factual writing

20

The drafting of a short report, a memorandum, an advertisement, a notice or a questionnaire from material supplied.

Example

Your school/college recently held a dance at which there was a small fire caused by an electrical fault on the hired equipment. One of those present also received burns to her right hand, though fortunately no one else was hurt. The Head/Principal has called for a full report to be put to the Governors. As Secretary of the Dance Committee you are required to write the report; add any further details which you consider important.

c The interpretation of statistics or graphic material.

20

Paper 3 (10–15 minutes)

A test of spoken English conducted internally.

1 Oral report A report on a prepared topic delivered from notes.

2 Discussion, interview or telephone conversation An exchange of information and ideas with one other person.

Results Papers are graded at 5 levels of pass – A, B, C, D and E – and U (unclassified).

Further information Available from AEB: Syllabuses, Section II: past papers; reports of examiners, Section 2, for recent years; *How examination papers are set and marked*; *Criteria and assessment in English*; *Notes for guidance on the assessment of the spoken English component*.

1.2 Test in English for educational purposes (TEEP)

Title

The Associated Examining Board (AEB)
Wellington House, Aldershot, Hampshire GU11 1BQ
Tel: Aldershot (0252) 25551

Conducted by

An examination for overseas students applying for admission to institutions of further and higher education in the United Kingdom.
The examination assesses a candidate's ability:

Status

Aims

- a* to produce adequate written English for formal academic writing tasks
- b* to understand spoken English for listening to lectures and discussions
- c* to understand written English for reading textbooks and other sources of information both intensively and extensively
- d* to produce adequate spoken English for taking part in an academic discussion and presenting papers

The examination is designed for students considering embarking on academic courses ranging from GCE A level to university postgraduate level.

Level

Available at AEB-approved centres, initially in the UK only. Examinations are held 3 times a year, in January, May and September. Open to non-native speakers of English from the UK or overseas.

Availability

The examination is held in 3 sessions:

Content

Session 1

Part 1 Reading ability (1½ hours)

Candidates have to complete 2 tasks:

- a* To write a summary of parts of a passage, assisted by brief notes taken during reading.
- b* To write short answers to a number of questions on the same passage.

Part 2 Ability to understand spoken English (10 minutes)

Candidates hear a dictation recording once only. During pauses in the recording, they have to write down what the speaker has said.

Part 3 Ability to understand spoken English (50 minutes)

- a* Candidates hear a tape recording of a short lecture once only and

- have to take notes with the aid of a printed framework of questions and statements. After the lecture, they have to use the notes to write answers to the questions based on the lecture.
- b* Candidates have to write a summary of parts of the lecture, using the lecture outline provided and their own notes.

Session II

Part 1 Reading ability (50 minutes)

Candidates have to complete 2 tasks based on 2 different reading passages:

- a* Establishing where words are missing from a passage and writing these words in spaces provided.
- b* Writing short answers to a number of questions based on a second passage.

Part 2 Ability to understand spoken English (30 minutes)

Candidates hear a tape recording of a short interview once only and have to take notes with the aid of a printed framework of questions. After the interview, they have to use the notes to write answers to the questions on the interview.

Part 3 Ability to write English (65 minutes)

- a* Writing a summary using notes made on the second passage in Part 1 and relevant information from Part 2.
- b* Rewriting a short passage which contains a number of errors, making all the necessary corrections.

Session III

Ability to speak in English

- a* Candidates have to speak about themselves for one minute.
- b* Candidates have to respond to a number of remarks that might be made to them, or to situations they might find themselves in when they are in Britain.
- c* Candidates have to listen to a discussion and at certain points they have to answer questions or give their opinions.
- d* Candidates have a specific task to complete which involves asking questions relating to non-verbal information, eg charts, diagrams, graphs, etc.