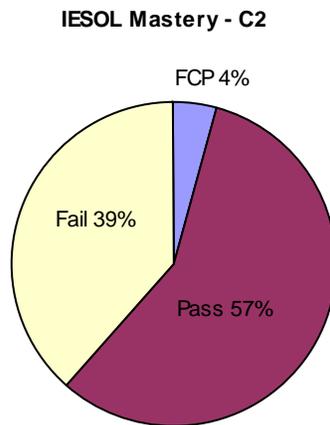


8984 International ESOL - Mastery

Chief Examiner report for 2009/2010

General observations

This has been a level of mixed fortunes. It is encouraging and very pleasing to find that the Fail rate has fallen this year and the Pass rate improved from 40%. However, the most disappointing result has been the dramatic fall in the number of First Class Passes which has dropped from 15% to only 4%. However, as this level is taken by only a few candidates, this statistic could have a variety of explanations.



Areas of good performance

It would seem that if the candidate enters at the right level for this examination, he/she does well across the board. Some markers note reading is particularly strong, while others comment on the high level of written expression, with mastery of a wide range of styles and register, expressing opinions in depth and with a good degree of subtlety.

Areas for development

Weaker candidates are those whose level of English is just not up to it. They may make basic spelling and grammar mistakes, rely heavily on copying from the input text in Writing 1 and lack the ability to manipulate complex and more idiomatic language for Writing 2. They are often not familiar with the conventions of report writing or with a range of topics.

Recommendations

Candidates need practice listening to a wide range of topics which include current affairs and themes commonly under debate in the world at large. They need to practise extended writing of a range of different formats, such as reports and articles, commenting critically on input material which may be in graph format and expressing a personal opinion which is both based on that input but at the same time extends beyond it. A higher level of sophistication and accuracy should be demonstrated at this level.

Tips

- Introduce candidates to a range of written formats by bringing in authentic forms, charts, tables, internet blog extracts, reviews etc for them to look at, interpret and discuss. They should be able to recognise standpoints, distinguish fact from attitude and discuss their own views on the topic.
- By looking then at the different text types, attention should be drawn to register, idiomatic expression, grammar and lexis. These could then become the basis for parallel, guided writing.
- Report writing in general needs emphasising and practising, to contrast with composition in both layout and style. Though not essential, headings help to make a report clear and focused.

Additional comments

The CEFR states that a C2 should be able to ‘understand with ease virtually everything heard or read, ...restructuring arguments and accounts in a coherent presentation,... differentiating finer shades of meaning in more complex situations’. The key words here which seem to epitomise a C2 performance are ‘with ease’, ‘restructuring’ and ‘finer shades’. The strong candidates who do well at this level do indeed demonstrate their skills in these areas but too many candidates currently fall short and would do well to extend their abilities by paying attention to these points.