

English for Business Communications (8959)

Marking Guide for Tutors



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Introduction

These examinations should be assessed according to how effective they are as written communications ie whether the candidates have interpreted the source documents correctly, whether their replies convey the right message, and whether they would achieve results.

At all three levels, correct language is important, but the emphasis is on successful communication.

In recognition of the realistic nature of the examination tasks, candidates may use a monolingual (English-English) or bilingual dictionary in the examination. Calendars and calculators may also be used. Candidates may use a word processor or typewriter to complete the examination tasks where possible.

Three levels

The City & Guilds English for Business Communications examinations are offered at three levels:

Level	Suitable for
1	Clerical and administrative staff who have to read and draft routine communications in English according to clear instructions
2	Staff who are expected to read a variety of communications in English and reply to them independently and in appropriate style
3	Staff who are expected to read the full range of work related documents in English, including those that require complex replies, and to draft documents where choice and tone of expression may be critical to the success of the transaction

To be awarded a Pass, candidates must achieve a total of 60 marks (60%) or more. A First Class Pass will be awarded to candidates achieving 75% or more in the whole examination, provided they attempt all the tasks.

The candidate is assessed on the degree of success with which he or she completes the tasks. Marks are awarded for language and content. Neatness and legibility are taken into account. Layout is assessed for two (only) of the written tasks, a memo and a letter. Tasks assessed for layout are specified on the examination paper.

Level 1

In level one, there are four tasks. Each of the four tasks is worth 25 marks (25%).

Candidates should demonstrate the ability to understand simple business communications and to respond to them correctly. Candidates at this level are expected to convey basic messages with moderate success, but with little precision or subtlety. Regular inaccuracies in basic usage are likely to be apparent. Candidates should be able to understand familiar business names, words and simple sentences. Candidates should be able to read short simple texts and find specific information in simple business material such as orders and requisitions, quotations, invoices, delivery notes, simple charts and timetables. They will be expected to write short, simple pieces of business communication which fulfil the following functions:

Enquiry

Acknowledgement

Confirmation and/or thanks

Provision of routine information

Level 1 First Class	Can understand sentences and frequently used expressions related to business communication. Can communicate in simple and routine tasks requiring a direct exchange of information on familiar and routine matters. Can read, understand and obtain information from short documents, familiar sources, signs and symbols. Can write to communicate with some awareness of the intended audience.
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Level 1 Pass	Can understand and use familiar everyday expressions and very basic phrases satisfying practical needs in connection with business. Can introduce him/herself and others and can ask and answer questions about basic business procedures and documents. Can read and understand short texts on familiar topics and obtain information from common signs and symbols. Can write short simple phrases and sentences in documents such as letters, memoranda, faxes and form letters/word processing templates.
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Weighting

Layout 8% assessed on 2 questions only (letter and memorandum).

Language 60% mechanics:
 grammatical accuracy (16%)
 spelling and punctuation (16%) tone and fluency (28%)

fluency = degree of success with which message is conveyed

tone = appropriateness of style, register and vocabulary for the purpose of the task

Content 32%

Mechanics**Grammar** – maximum = 4 marks**Spelling and Punctuation** – maximum = 4 marks

Mark	Descriptor
4	No significant errors. The signatory would be happy to send this communication without amendment
3	A few corrections needed before this communication could be sent*
2	Quite a lot of errors but still understandable – could be sent out after amendments were made
1	A total re-write would be necessary before this could be sent
0	No work submitted or nothing correct

Tone and Fluency – maximum = 7 marks

Mark	Descriptor
7	Message conveyed effectively and fluently with appropriate tone
6	Message conveyed effectively but tone/fluency could be improved
5	Message conveyed but organisation/fluency could be improved
4	Most of message conveyed but organisation/fluency poor
3	Barely comprehensible/insufficient message conveyed/message obscured
2	A total re-write would be necessary before this could be sent
1	Very little material produced. What there is would need a total re-write
0	No work submitted or nothing correct

Level 2

At level two there are five tasks worth 20 marks each (20%).

Candidates at this level are expected to convey messages with moderate confidence, and to display an appreciation of register and style. Errors may occur but should not impede understanding.

Level 2 First Class Can understand the main ideas of complex communication on both concrete and abstract topics, including technical business discussions. Can adapt to take account of the target audience, the context and the medium. Can obtain information from different sources. Can communicate clearly and in detail on a wide range of subjects and explain a viewpoint giving the advantages and disadvantages of various options, varying length, format and style appropriate to purpose and audience.

Level 2 Pass Can understand the main points of clear standard communication on matters regularly encountered in business contexts. Can convey information on familiar topics, using appropriate formality. Can deal with most situations likely to arise where English is used in a business context. Can produce a simple connected text on familiar business topics, adapting to the intended audience. Can describe events and briefly give relevant explanations.

Weighting

Layout 8% assessed on 2 questions only (letter and memorandum).

Language 60%

mechanics:

grammatical accuracy (20%)

spelling and punctuation (20%) tone and fluency (20%)

(fluency = degree of success with which message is conveyed)

(tone = appropriateness of style, register and vocabulary for the purpose of the task)

Content 32%

Mechanics

Grammar – maximum = 4 marks

Spelling and Punctuation – maximum = 4 marks

Mark	Descriptor
4	No significant errors. The signatory would be happy to send this communication without amendment
3	A few corrections needed before this communication could be sent*
2	Quite a lot of errors but still understandable – could be sent out after amendments were made
1	A total re-write would be necessary before this could be sent
0	No work submitted or nothing correct

Tone and Fluency – maximum = 4 marks

Mark	Descriptor
4	Message conveyed effectively with appropriate tone
3	Message conveyed effectively but tone/fluency slightly off-key
2	Barely conveys message but organization/tone/fluency weak
1	Some information conveyed but little evidence of organisation/tone/fluency
0	No work submitted or nothing correct

Level 3

There are six tasks. Four tasks are worth 20 marks (20%) and the remaining two tasks are worth 10 marks each (10%).

Candidates at this level are expected to cope with a wide range of sources of an advanced level and to respond appropriately and with confidence. Writing should be fluent and reasonably error-free. Candidates should demonstrate flexibility of style and tone to meet varying situations.

Level 3 First Class	Can understand with ease virtually everything read. Can summarise information from different 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.
Level 3 Pass	Can understand a wide range of demanding, longer texts, and recognise implicit meaning. Can use the language fluently and spontaneously without much obvious searching for expressions. Can respond to extended information and narratives, follow detailed explanations and complex instructions, adapting response to audience, medium and context. Can use language flexibly and understand a range of texts of varying complexity and length for business purposes. Can produce clear well-structured, detailed text on complex subjects, showing controlled use of organisational patterns, connectors and cohesive devices. Can communicate ideas and opinions effectively, using length, format and style appropriate to purpose, content and audience.

Weighting

Layout 8% assessed on 2 questions only (letter and memorandum).

Language 60%

mechanics:

grammatical accuracy (20%)

spelling and punctuation (20%) tone and fluency (20%)

(fluency = degree of success with which message is conveyed)

(tone = appropriateness of style, register and vocabulary for the purpose of the task)

Content 32%

Mechanics

Grammar – maximum = 4 marks

Spelling and Punctuation – maximum = 4 marks

Mark	Descriptor
4	No significant errors. The signatory would be happy to send this communication without amendment
3	One or two corrections needed before this communication could be sent*
2	Quite a lot of errors but still understandable – could be sent out after amendments were made
1	A total re-write would be necessary before this could be sent
0	No work submitted or nothing correct

Tone and Fluency – maximum = 4 marks

Mark	Descriptor
4	Message conveyed effectively with appropriate tone
3	Message conveyed effectively but tone/fluency slightly off-key
2	Barely conveys message but organization/tone/fluency weak
1	Some information conveyed but little evidence of organisation/tone/fluency
0	No work submitted or nothing correct

Performance Codes

Candidates who fail to achieve 60% are advised of their areas of weakness by the following codes:

English For Business Communications 8959-11-011 (Level 1) 8959-12-012 (Level 2) 8959-13-013 (Level 3) Performance Codes				
		Level 1	Level 2	Level 3
	Narrow fail	AA	AA	AA
	Insufficient work submitted	AB	AB	AB
	Failure to follow instructions	AC	AC	AC
	Questions misinterpreted	AI	AI	AI
	Communication weak	DJ	DJ	DJ
	Range of language limited	DK	DK	DK
	Language not appropriate to business content	DO	DO	DO
	Layout - memo	EE	EE	EE
	Layout - letter	EF	EF	EF
	Language - mechanics	EG	EG	EG
	Language – tone/fluency	EH	EH	EH
	Content – inappropriate	EI	EI	EI
	Content – incomplete	EJ	EJ	EJ
	Organisation	EK	EK	EK

Support materials for English for Business Communications

As well as preparing for the exam, we also recognise that some learners may need to do more work on their language skills, taking their ability to use and understand English up to the next level. For this reason, we have included a range of course materials that have been recommended by other City & Guilds centres. They are also providing language training and preparing learners for our exams, so their experience is invaluable when it comes to suggested support materials.

Web materials – free of charge

On the IEQ pages of the City & Guilds website you will find a wealth of resources to support our examinations and help with preparation. Visit www.cityandguilds.com/ieq for any of the following:

Sample papers

Complete with answer keys, there is at least one full set of sample papers for each examination.

Worked answers

For our English for Business Communications (EBC) qualification our candidates are required to write a variety of business correspondence. In order to illustrate more clearly what is required, we provide examples of ideal responses to the questions.

Examination report

These reports are written by our Chief Examiners and describe candidates' performance in a specific examination at a specific level. They provide

- an indication of areas of good performance
- an indication of areas for development
- recommendations.

These reports also contain exam tips, advice and information to help candidates avoid pitfalls and help them perform to the best of their ability.

Qualifications handbook

The comprehensive guide to the qualification, assessment and standards. It tells you what a candidate needs to know or do in order to pass an examination. For teachers, it is the instruction manual for exam success and is the foundation for any exam preparation course.

Additional suggested support materials

There are many excellent course books aimed at English Language on the market. What follows is a selection of titles recommended by City & Guilds examiners and centres. We have given the details of the student's book in each series, but it's worth noting that most publishers also offer other resources such as workbooks, resource packs and CDs to complement these courses. We would recommend that centres check the appropriacy of these materials in terms of context and relevance before adopting them as course books. Exhaustive information about the following materials can be found on the publishers' websites:

Oxford University Press: www.oup.com

Macmillan: www.macmillaneducation.com

Longman: www.longman.com

Pen Lan Associates www.pen-lan.co.uk

City & Guilds EBC level	Oxford	Macmillan	Others
1	Pre Intermediate International Express Business Objectives Essential Business Grammar and Practice	Incompany Pre- Intermediate Business Grammar Builder Email English	Market Leader Elementary (Longman) Market Leader Pre intermediate (Longman) English for Business Communication level 1 (Pen Lan Associates)
2	Intermediate International Express Business Opportunities Handbook of Commercial Correspondence Correspondence workbook Business Grammar and Practice	Incompany Intermediate Email English Business Grammar Builder	Market Leader Intermediate (Longman) Market Leader Upper Intermediate (Longman) English for Business Communication level 2 (Pen Lan Associates)
3	Upper Intermediate International Express Business Options Handbook of Commercial Correspondence Correspondence workbook Business Grammar and Practice	Incompany Upper Intermediate Business English handbook Email English Business Grammar Builder	Market Leader Advanced (Longman) English for Business Communication level 3 (Pen Lan Associates)

* Please note that some of the books mentioned in the table above cover all four language skills i.e. reading, writing, listening and speaking, whereas others focus on the specific areas required for our exams.

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