

# International English Qualifications

## Frequently asked questions

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# 1 Background

## **Who are City & Guilds?**

With over 125 years of experience City & Guilds are a leading provider of qualifications. We have over 8500 approved centres in over 80 countries offering our qualifications.

## **Are they the same as Pitman?**

Pitman has been part of City & Guilds for over 10 years. Two years ago after a period of dual branding the Pitman brand was finally phased out and now all products use the City & Guilds brand.

## **Where can I get more information on the exams offered by City & Guilds?**

You can check out our website [www.cityandguilds.com](http://www.cityandguilds.com) or contact one of our International branches. Contact details for the branches can also be obtained from the website.

## **Where are City & Guilds International branch offices?**

We have three major international hubs: London (servicing Europe, the Gulf regions, the Caribbean and Americas), Johannesburg (servicing Africa), and Singapore (servicing Asia, Australia and New Zealand).

For further information please visit [www.cityandguilds.com/internationalcontacts](http://www.cityandguilds.com/internationalcontacts)

## **Who are the City & Guilds qualifications recognised by?**

City & Guilds works with employers, governments, professional associations, universities and colleges globally to ensure that our qualifications act as a passport to further learning or employment wherever in the world our learners are. Some of these partners appear on our **recognitions list** – a group of organisations that actively seek City & Guilds qualification holders. (See section 2 of the FAQs for specific information on recognition of our International English Qualifications)

## **Where is City & Guilds based?**

The head office is based in London, but there are a network of regional sales offices in the UK, as well as international branches and representatives.

## 2 International English Qualifications

### **What are International English Qualifications?**

International English Qualifications are aimed at students who need English to work, study or travel in an international arena. Perhaps they work for an international company and need English to communicate with the overseas branches or maybe they need certification of their level of English in order to attend university. Whatever the aim, these qualifications are recognised by employers, educational institutions and professional bodies worldwide. They will give your learners the opportunity to prove and improve their English.

### **What kind of International English Qualifications do we offer?**

We offer three suites of international English qualifications for work, study, teaching and travel.

- **International ESOL and Spoken ESOL** - with general exams at 6 levels (beginner to advanced) for reading, writing, listening and speaking skills.
- **International Business English** – a range of exams from beginner to advanced, focussing on the specific use of English in an international business environment.
- **International Teaching Qualifications** – a certificate in English language teaching for candidates who are new to the field or are looking to improve their English teaching knowledge and skills.

### **Which exams are useful if the learners want to study general English?**

To improve their general level of English for the workplace or to study or travel abroad candidates can choose from the exams in our International English for Speakers of Other Languages (International ESOL) suite.

There are two exams that can be taken separately or together:

- **International ESOL** – which assesses learners' reading writing and listening skills at 6 levels
- **International Spoken ESOL** – which assesses learners' speaking skills at 6 levels.

The exams focus on assessing the learners' general level of English and are not entirely specific to an academic or business environment.

### **What's the difference between International ESOL and International Spoken ESOL?**

The examinations test different skills. The International ESOL exam tests reading, writing and listening skills and the International Spoken ESOL exam tests speaking skills. Both focus on real life use of English however, and they are both set at 6 levels (Preliminary to Mastery).

### **Can the learners take the International ESOL & International Spoken ESOL exams separately?**

They can take the exams separately or together. It's up to each student! They may want to have proof of their level over the 4 skills, or they may want to concentrate on specific skills. If a candidate passes both exams they can convert the qualifications into an International ESOL Diploma. The IESOL Diploma (Expert – C1 level) is recognised as meeting the requirements of the Home Office Border and Immigration Agency's Points Based System

### **What's the difference between the old Pitman ESOL and the new City & Guilds IESOL exams?**

The new exams are set at 6 levels and are linked to the Common European Framework. They also employ more modern methods of assessment and are more communicative i.e. they concentrate on real life use of English.

### Which exams are useful if the learners need English for the workplace?

If they need to improve their English for the workplace they can choose from our suite of general English exams i.e. International ESOL & International Spoken ESOL mentioned above **or** from our suite of specific Business English exams.

We offer three different examinations in our suite of Business English exams:

- **Spoken English Tests for Business (SETB)** – which assesses learners' speaking skills for a business environment (e.g. presentations / phone calls / meetings).
- **English for Business Communications (EBC)** – which assesses learners' ability to read and write the complete range of business communications (from email to memo).
- **English For Office Skills (EOS)** – which assesses learners' ability to proofread and prepare accurate and effective communications in English.

### What exam do the learners need if they want to teach English?

If they want to teach English they can take our ACE certificate - Access to English Language Teaching. It is not necessary to be a native speaker of English to do the course. It is not even necessary to have prior experience in teaching. They just need to follow the assessed practical course, which teaches them language awareness, teaching techniques and learning methodology, and also complete the multiple choice exam.

### What levels of language exam do City & Guilds offer?

All our exams are set at a wide range of levels often from beginner to advanced (although you should check our website [www.cityandguilds.com/ieq](http://www.cityandguilds.com/ieq) for specific details on each examination). This allows learners to start at the right level and then progress at the correct pace.

Many of the exams are linked to the Common European Framework (CEF) which facilitates a clear understanding of how our levels compare to the levels offered by other awarding bodies.

### Are there any qualifications for young learners?

There are two exams for young learners:

- **ESOL for Young Learners** (two levels – basic and elementary) testing reading, writing and listening
- **Spoken ESOL for Young Learners** (two levels – basic and elementary) testing speaking skills.

The test tasks are lively and interesting and cover topics and contexts that most children at these ages find interesting.

### How do the City & Guilds exams compare to other English language qualifications?

The table below shows the levels that are **broadly equivalent**

City & Guilds IESOL & ISESOL	City & Guilds SETB	Common European Framework	Cambridge main suite	Cambridge IELTS
Mastery	Stage C	C2	CPE	+7.5
Expert		C1	CAE	6.5/7.0
Communicator	Stage B	B2	FCE	5.0/5.5/6.0
Achiever		B1	PET	3.5/4.0/4.5
Access	Stage A	A2	KET	3.0
Preliminary		A1		

Please see the section 4 on the Common European Framework for further details on equivalencies.

**Are the qualifications recognised by colleges and universities?**

Our qualifications are recognised by a wide range of universities, professional bodies and employers worldwide. For full details, see our website: [www.cityandguilds.com/recognitions](http://www.cityandguilds.com/recognitions)

## 3 Taking the examinations

### **When can centres offer the City & Guilds examinations?**

All the International English Qualifications are administered on demand i.e. at the centres' convenience.

### **How many weeks before the exam date does a centre need to register?**

Centres may set their own deadlines but 4-6 weeks before the exam date is an average timeframe for candidate registration. For further information you should contact City and Guilds customer relations [INTCG@cityandguilds.com](mailto:INTCG@cityandguilds.com) or your local branch/representative (see web for details).

### **Are there other centres offering City & Guilds International English Qualifications?**

There are 2000 centres worldwide offering our international qualifications. For a full list please contact your local branch/regional office (see web for details).

### **How much does it cost to take an International English Qualification with City & Guilds?**

Fees vary according to the exam. This is due to the different degrees of assessment that are involved. For further details please contact your local branch office/representative (see web for details).

### **What's the minimum/maximum age limit for candidates?**

This is at the centre's discretion. There is no real age limit, although for younger learners (pre 14) we would recommend our suite of young learner exams if the levels are appropriate.

### **How do we know which level of exam the learner needs to sit?**

We find that, generally speaking, teachers are excellent judges of their learners' ability in English. By looking at the sample questions provided on the website, teachers should be able to assess whether a student can cope with the demands of a certain level of examination after a brief interview. However, we also provide a placement test on our online Smartscreen service which will facilitate accurate placement of the learners on our language proficiency scale (for more details see [www.smartscreen.co.uk](http://www.smartscreen.co.uk)).

### **What if the learner fails part of the exams, can they retake that section?**

Unfortunately, if they fail an exam because of their performance on a single section of the exam, they need to retake the whole exam.

## 4 Common European Framework

### **What is the CEF or CEFR?**

CEF(R) stands for the Common European Framework (of Reference). The CEFR is basically a framework that describes language use and competence at 6 common reference levels. This framework is used in Europe (although it is also becoming popular in an international context) as a way of defining a learner's level of English across the four language skills and within a range of contexts.

### **Are the City & Guilds examinations linked to the CEF?**

Certain examinations in the International English Qualification suite are linked to the CEF. The International ESOL, International Spoken ESOL and Spoken Tests for Business examinations were all developed using the CEF as a reference tool where the exam specifications, tasks and assessment criteria were all developed using the CEF as a source document.

### **How do the City & Guilds International English examinations relate to the CEF?**

The table illustrated on the previous pages shows how the International ESOL and Spoken ESOL levels are broadly equivalent to the CEF levels. The table also shows examinations that are provided by other awarding bodies and how these compare to our levels and those of the CEF. It is worth remembering that even if an exam listed in the table may be broadly equivalent in terms of language level, the examination itself may have been designed for a different purpose and can not therefore be considered to be exactly the same.

### **Are the Business English examinations aligned to the CEF?**

Apart from the Spoken English Tests for Business the other business English examinations are not linked to the CEF. The skills tested in these examinations are very specific to a business context, whereas the CEF describes levels of general language proficiency.



## 5 Examination preparation

### **Does the learner have to do a preparatory course before sitting the exam?**

It is not compulsory for learners to take a course before sitting our examinations, although we do recommend that a centre should provide their learners with a certain degree of preparation beforehand.

Generally speaking, learners benefit greatly from having completed a course prior to taking the exam. It is, however, entirely up to the centre how they chose to organise this - for example the course could be aimed at actually raising the learners' level of English or solely focused on providing practice of the tasks that the learners will meet in the exam.

### **Do City & Guilds provide learning/support materials?**

Each International English Qualification has a qualification handbook which lists the syllabus and provides sample papers, and often worked examples, at each level. All of these materials are available to download free of charge from the web.

For International ESOL & Spoken ESOL City & Guilds have published a suite of exam practice textbooks for learners and teachers that can be purchased directly from City & Guilds. For more information and to order materials, please see the web or email: [learningmaterials@cityandguilds.com](mailto:learningmaterials@cityandguilds.com)

For International ESOL & Spoken ESOL there is also a CD set of sample papers that are available to buy (please see [www.cityandguilds.com/ieq](http://www.cityandguilds.com/ieq) for details), and an online service called Smartscreen that supports learners and teachers as they prepare for these exams (for more details please go to [www.smartscreen.co.uk](http://www.smartscreen.co.uk)).

For ACE, our teaching qualification, there are a set of FELT (Foundations of English Language Teaching) booklets, produced by City & Guilds which are made available upon registration for the qualification.

### **Do the learners have to follow a certain course book?**

They do not have to complete a particular text book, although we strongly recommend that they cover the exam preparation materials contained in the City & Guilds text books before taking the exam. If the learners need to considerably improve their level of English, there are a number of general English course books that can be used alongside our exam practice books such as Headway, Cutting Edge etc.

### **Do you recommend any specific course books?**

The list of suggested materials is available on the website.

### **Where can I buy the City & Guilds learning materials?**

You can order the City & Guilds published exam practice books from the Branch Office, from your local representative, from our website (please see above) or by e-mailing [learningmaterials@cityandguilds.com](mailto:learningmaterials@cityandguilds.com).

### **Is there support material available on the internet?**

Our City & Guilds website offers a range of material to download free of charge (e.g. sample papers, syllabus, exam tips etc). In addition, centres can subscribe to a Smartscreen service that will give access student & teacher materials (see [www.smartscreen.co.uk](http://www.smartscreen.co.uk) for details).

**Are there any sample exam papers?**

We provide at least one sample paper per level of exam free of charge on the website.

For English for Business Communications and English for Office Skills there are additional copies of sample papers available in a separate handbook (also available on the website).

For International ESOL & Spoken ESOL qualifications there is also a CD set of sample papers available to buy. This set provides centres with an additional two sample papers per level of the IESOL examinations. For details on how to order this set please see our website

[www.cityandguilds.com/ieq](http://www.cityandguilds.com/ieq)

## 6 Assessment

### **How is the learners' language assessed?**

The assessment varies according to the skills that are being tested, but apart from the ACE teaching qualification the assessment is all exam based.

Some questions are multiple choice, others require the learners to write or speak in English. The examinations are assessed by trained examiners.

### **What kind of tasks will the learners have to complete in the exams?**

Wherever possible we use tasks that are similar to the language tasks that they would be expected to deal with in real life e.g. reading a series of letters and emails; presenting information; organising an evening out; making a phone call; writing a letter.

### **Does the centre get involved in the assessment?**

No, apart from the ACE qualification which involves a degree of internal assessment, the International English Qualifications are externally marked by trained examiners.

### **How are the spoken exams assessed?**

For the spoken examinations the learners are required to complete an oral interview that is conducted by an 'interlocutor'. The role of the interlocutor is played by a representative from the centre (please see handbook for further details). The interlocutor could be a teacher or other member of staff and their job is to ask the learners questions and set up activities that will enable them to demonstrate their abilities in English. The interlocutors are provided with strict guidance on how to conduct the examinations and elicit the performance of the candidates. The learners' performance is recorded and then sent to a trained examiner for assessment.

### **Can the learners use a dictionary during the exam?**

During the IESOL they will be allowed to use a monolingual dictionary.

During the EBC examination they will be allowed to use a mono or bilingual dictionary.

### **How do you decide the results/what is the pass mark?**

For most of the exams the results are decided on the basis of the learners' performance and are marked according to specific criteria. If they reach the criteria set, then they will pass the exam. Usually the final mark is calculated from the various grades and marks they get on the individual sections of an exam paper.

For the ACE qualifications the learners' results are calculated on the basis of course work, practical teaching experience and the results of a multiple choice examination.

### **What grades do you award?**

For the examinations the grades awarded are: First Class Pass, Pass or Fail.

## 7 Results and certification

### **When will the learners receive their results?**

They should receive their results within 3-4 weeks of the receipt of the exam papers.

Learners can find out when to expect their results using the exam calculator tool on our website:  
[www.cityandguilds.com/calculator](http://www.cityandguilds.com/calculator)

### **How will they receive their results?**

City & Guilds informs each centre directly.

### **What information is provided with the results?**

For candidates that fail the exam we also provide a report with performance codes that gives a clearer indication of the areas of weakness in learners' examinations, providing key information to help identify required remedial work.

### **When is the certificate issued?**

Certificates for International English qualifications should be issued within 6-8 weeks of our receipt of the exam papers.

### **How long does the certificate last?**

The certificate is valid indefinitely.