

English Yardstick Exam (the EYE)

TEST SPECIFICATIONS (valid from February 11, 2019)

INTRODUCTION

The end-of-year language proficiency exam for first-year students at IEAS, the English Yardstick Exam (the EYE) is a skills-based exam that measures students' competence in English in relation to the requirements set for second-year students pursuing a full-time undergraduate course at IEAS. The exam is designed to test general English as well as English for Academic Purposes (EAP). The EYE is intended to measure language proficiency described at level C1 of the Common European Framework of Reference (see the description of C1 at the end of this document).

The exam consists of five sections: a Listening Test, a Reading Test, an integrated Reading-Writing Test, a Writing Test, and a Speaking Test. While the Reading, the integrated Reading-Writing and the Writing Tests focus on measuring EAP, the Listening and Speaking Tests are designed to test general English.

The written exam (Listening, Reading, Integrated Reading-Writing and Writing tests) will take ca. 190 minutes, including a twenty-minute break after the first 70 minutes. The use of mono- or bilingual dictionaries is not allowed in any components of the EYE, as in both the productive and receptive tasks students are expected to demonstrate their own knowledge of English vocabulary. This feature of the exam is intended to generate a positive washback effect on students' vocabulary learning habits.

The score for each paper and the total score for the EYE are expressed in percentages. Students' performance in the five sections is equally weighted (5 x 20% = 100%). Students' sub-scores and final scores, which will be converted into grades, as well as the pass marks for each paper will be announced only after all the tests (both the written and oral parts) have been administered. In order to earn an overall pass,

students must pass all the exam components. This means that if a student fails on any one component, s/he has failed the whole exam and so a total score will not be computed in such cases. The final score of a student who has failed on one or more exam components is invalid even if his/her score is above the overall pass mark.

All students must take the EYE in the May-June examination period. There are three exam dates to comply with the regulations of the university. However, the third exam (EYE3) will be administered as a resit exam. Anyone who has failed an exam component in EYE1 or EYE2 will be required to retake only the failed exam component(s). Students can take the EYE only if they have registered for the exam via NEPTUN. For the EYE speaking exam students must sign up in pairs in the institute office (Room 114). The dates of the examinations will be announced minimum 1 month prior to the exam. For quality assurance reasons, the oral resit exams in EYE3 will be digitally recorded to make the reevaluation of the exam performances possible. Those students who fail to comply with this regulation will be automatically excluded from the reevaluation procedure.

Students with special needs (e.g. students with a visual or hearing difficulty) are asked to contact the exam coordinator (Dr. Csépes Ildikó) no later than the end of April so that special arrangements can be made for them.

Students can access sample tasks for each examination component and the criteria for assessment for the Writing, Reading-Writing and Speaking Tests on the institute website [<http://ieas.unideb.hu/index.php?p=912>].

The following table describes the structure of the EYE in the order of administering the different components of the exam:

Mode	Skills/Paper	Length	No. of tasks	Weighting	
Written	Listening	30 min.	3-4	20%	
	Reading	40 min.	2-3	20%	
	BREAK		20 min.		
	Reading-Writing	40 min.	1	20%	
	Writing	60 min.	1	20%	
Oral	Speaking	ca. 20 min./pair	2	20%	

THE LISTENING TEST

General description and aims

The Listening Test of the EYE aims to measure students' ability to listen for gist or specific information in a variety of spoken texts. The spoken texts compiled for the exam will display the natural features of spoken English (standard British and American English) but they may represent a mixture of authentic and scripted recordings.

Skills to be tested in the Listening Test

- listening for gist
- listening for specific information
- inferring speakers' attitude and/or opinion
- focusing on relevant and appropriate information

The texts

- must relate to the candidates' world knowledge
- may relate to general topics (friendship, career, etc.) and/or themes within the Arts

Possible text types

- interviews
- news broadcasts
- talk shows
- reports

Task types

- gap-filling
- guided note-taking
- short answer questions (the number of words in each answer is limited to 3-5)
- multiple choice (3 options)
- fill-in-the grid/table

The task types may vary from year to year, but the total number of items must be 20-25 for each paper.

The Listening Test contains all the instructions, texts and breaks. Students will have about one minute to read through the questions provided in the Test before hearing the recordings. The short texts for the first task will be played only once while the other texts will be played twice. The task instructions will guide students beforehand whether the text is going to be repeated.

Scoring

Each item is equally weighted. The total score is converted into a percentage score out of 20%.

THE READING SECTION

General description and aims

Reading skills are assessed in the EYE both separately and integratively. The integrated Reading-Writing Test includes test items that focus on testing reading skills only, and there is one task - a summary writing task - that measures reading and writing skills simultaneously.

Skills to be tested in the reading section

- reading for gist as well as for specific information
- extracting main ideas from supporting details
- distinguishing arguments for and against specific statements/points of views
- inferring meaning of unfamiliar vocabulary items from context
- understanding the structure of texts
- distinguishing facts from opinion

The texts

- must come from an authentic source
- can be edited in order to simplify vocabulary or to make an extract a coherent passage

- must relate to the candidates' world knowledge
- may relate to general topics (friendship, career, etc.) and/or themes within the Arts

Possible text types

- extracts from fiction (short stories and/or novels)
- magazine / newspaper articles
- leaflets / advertisements
- reports
- biographies

Task Types

In the separate Reading Test (2 or 3 tasks): any of the following (between 400-600 words)

- short answer questions (the number of words in the answers is limited to 3-5)
- multiple-choice (4 options)
- gap-filling (open or banked, where the options are given)
- matching (words / sentences / clauses to gaps in text)
- gapped summary

In the Integrated Reading-Writing Test: summary writing (150-180 words) based on a 300-350-word text.

The task types in the separate Reading Test may vary from year to year, but the total number of items must be 18-22 for each paper.

Scoring

For the objectively assessable parts, each item is equally weighted. In the case of the subjectively assessed summary writing task, the score is derived on the basis of students' coverage of the content points and their ability to produce a coherent text that reflects the main points of the input text.

The total score for both the Reading Test and the Reading-Writing Test is converted into a percentage score out of 20%.

THE WRITING SECTION

General description and aims

Before students enter the second year, they must be able to identify the main points in reading passages and produce a coherent written summary of the main ideas. They must also be able to write essays. In order to meet these goals, writing skills in the EYE are tested in the Reading-Writing Test integratively and in the Writing Test separately. In the integrated Reading-Writing test, students have to write a summary (150-180 words based on a 300-350 word text) while in the separate Writing Test they are expected to produce a 300-350 word essay, which will relate to either an input task (with topic, audience & purpose specified) or a short reading text (max. 200 words). In the case of input texts, the comprehension of the text will not be assessed, as the text is to provide students with a springboard only: they have to produce an argumentative essay drawing on the standpoints/arguments presented in the text.

Possible sources for the input text

- magazine / newspaper articles
- blurbs from book jackets
- formal/informal letters
- extracts from fiction and non-fiction

Task types

In the integrated Reading-Writing Test: summary writing

In the separate Writing Test: argumentative essay

Assessment

The assessment of the argumentative essay will be based on a six-point scale (0-5) using four criteria: ideas and communicative quality, composition features, grammar and vocabulary. Out of the six levels, only four will be defined using a band descriptor while two levels, which are between two defined levels, will be left as empty bands. The empty bands (2 and 4) are provided for evaluating performances that are better than the level below, but worse than the level above.

In the case of the subjectively assessed summary writing task, the score is derived on the basis of students' coverage of the content points and their ability to produce a coherent text that reflects the main points of the input text. The assessment of the summary writing task will also be based on a six-point scale with two empty bands. It contains four criteria: content points and topic development, composition features, grammar and vocabulary.

The total score for the Writing Test and the Reading Writing Test will be converted into a percentage score out of 20%.

THE SPEAKING TEST

General description and aims

The Speaking Test of the EYE will be administered to pairs of students. Candidates are allowed to choose their partners as familiarity between them has been shown to enhance the quality of their performances (measured in scores). In one examination session two students will participate simultaneously: for the first task the students perform individually to display their presentation skills but for the second task they talk to each other in order to demonstrate their interactional competence.

If a student is unable to find a peer partner and signs up for the exam alone, s/he will be allocated a partner by the exam coordinator on the day of the examination.

The structure of the Speaking Test

Phase		Purpose	Time	Preparation time
1.	Warmer (unassessed)	to put the candidates at ease	1-2 min.	None
2.	Task 1: Individual long turn	to assess students' presentation skills	4-5 min.	15-20 min. (before the exam)
3.	Task 2: Collaborative task	to assess candidates' interactional skills	5-6 min.	30 seconds

Before the exam starts, each of the two students draws a task number for Phase 2 of the exam. The interlocutor (examiner) gives each student a Task Sheet that goes with the chosen number. The instructions for Task 2 are given in writing on the Task Sheet, which also contains the prompt for the presentation task. They have ca. 15-20 minutes to prepare for their presentation. For this phase of the exam they are allowed to prepare notes, but they cannot read out the notes later when giving their presentation.

When the face-to-face examination begins, the interlocutor turns to one of the candidates (Student A) and asks a few warmer questions. After the warmer Student A is asked to give his/her presentation. Then the interlocutor turns to the other candidate (Student B) and asks him/her a few warmer questions, too. Then Student B is asked to give his/her presentation. The interlocutor may ask some questions in Phase 2 of the exam.

When both candidates have finished Phase 2, the interlocutor proceeds to Phase 3 of the exam. The interlocutor gives each student a Task Sheet, which contains only some word prompts. The instructions for this task are read out by the interlocutor. The instructions can be repeated if students signal lack of comprehension. The students have about half-a-minute preparation time.

Description of Task 1 (Individual mode)

The candidate is given a written prompt (graffiti, English proverb, controversial statement, etc.), which s/he is expected to elaborate on. S/he has to present her own and/or other people's interpretation/opinion of and/or attitude towards the idea represented by the written prompt. This individual long turn provides the basis for assessing the candidate's ability

- to structure a spoken text coherently and to speak fluently (minimizing hesitations and pausing) [Criteria 1: *fluency and coherence of contribution*].

Description of Task 2 (Paired mode)

The task will require candidates to engage in

- either a decision-making, problem-solving or agreement reaching task, in which the candidates play themselves and express their own opinion,

- or a role-play, in which the candidates assume a familiar role but their contributions are prompted in order to ensure that there is an opinion gap and/or an information gap between the two participants.

The collaborative task (or paired task) provides the basis for assessing the candidate's ability

- to initiate (sensitively and without domineering) and to take turns in accordance with general rules of conversation and to use verbal and non-verbal evidence of effort to understand the partner's contributions [Criteria 2: *interactive skills*].

During Task 1 and Task 2, candidates' performance will also be judged in relation to

- range and accuracy of grammar, appropriate use of stress, rhythm and intonation [Criteria 3: *grammar*]
- range and appropriacy of vocabulary, appropriate pronunciation [Criteria 4: *vocabulary*]

Assessment

The assessment of speaking will be based on a six-point scale using the four criteria mentioned above. As in the Writing Section, out of the six levels, only four will be defined using a band descriptor while two levels, which are between two defined levels, will be left as empty bands.

The total score for the oral exam is converted into a percentage score out of 20%. The speaking test is single marked: there is a silent assessor who observes the whole exam and marks students' performances. The interlocutor and the assessor may consult before finalizing a candidate's score for the oral exam.

Common Reference Level C1: global scale¹

C1	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 organizational patterns, connectors and cohesive devices
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‘Can do’ illustrative descriptors for level C1

Listening	Can understand extended speech even when it is not clearly structured and when relationships are only implied and not signalled explicitly. Can understand television programmes and films without too much effort.
Reading	Can understand long and complex factual and literary texts, appreciating distinctions of style. Can understand specialized articles and longer technical instructions, even when they do not relate to the language user’s own field.
Spoken Interaction	Can express him/herself fluently and spontaneously without much obvious searching for expressions. Can use language flexibly and effectively for social and professional purposes. Can formulate ideas and opinions with precision and relate his/her contribution skillfully to those of other speakers.
Spoken Production	Can present clear, detailed descriptions of complex subjects integrating sub-themes, developing particular points and rounding off with an appropriate conclusion.
Writing	Can express him/herself in clear, well-structured text, expressing points of view at some length. Can write about complex subjects in a letter, an essay or a report, underlining what s/he considers to be the salient issues. Can select style appropriate to the reader in mind.

¹ Source: Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, teaching, assessment. Council of Europe, 2001. CUP