



# *Getting Started* ***Skills for Life***

**ENTRY 1, 2 AND 3 • LEVELS 1 AND 2**

A Quick Reference Guide for  
Centre Exams Managers



**START**

## PREMISE

This document is intended as a quick reference guide only. Examination staff are also required to consult the more detailed instructions in the *Handbook for centres* and *Skills for Life Examination instructions* booklet for comprehensive guidance.

## DEFINITIONS

**Mode:** a skill, such as Reading or Writing or Speaking & Listening

**Level:** Entry 1, Entry 2, Entry 3, Level 1, Level 2

**Sitting:** a specific time on a specific day on which an examination takes place

**Session:** denotes a one-week period (Mon–Sun)

**Version:** an alternative of any Reading or Writing level question paper. Different versions are allocated to multiple sittings at the same centre.

# 1 EXAMINATION VENUES

Venues should be chosen with a number of important considerations in mind. They need to be easily accessible to most candidates. In addition, the rooms should be big enough to accommodate candidates according to the proper seating arrangements, as described in more detail in the *Handbook for centres*. All rooms should have adequate lighting, heating and ventilation.

The requirements for the Speaking & Listening tests also need to be considered.

Submit the Venue Details form **at least four weeks** before the examination date.

## ADVANCE PREPARATION

Advance preparation is always the best policy and the test arrangements for the Reading, Writing and Speaking & Listening modes are no exception.

Rooms should be checked well before the examination date, but another good look the day before will help ensure that it is clean, has the required number of desks and chairs, and that the clock is working.

For all modes:

- The rooms should be clearly signposted.
- A copy of the Notice to Candidates should be displayed outside the room in a prominent position.
- Remove or cover any display material in the examination room that might be helpful to candidates.

For the Reading and Writing modes, there should be a minimum of one invigilator per 30 candidates. Draw up and keep an invigilation timetable for each room.

## THE SPEAKING & LISTENING MODE

You need to make sure that the venue offers a sufficient number of rooms which can accommodate an interlocutor, an assessor and two candidates in reasonable comfort. The rooms need to be equipped

with suitably sized tables and a sufficient number of chairs. Tests must not be held simultaneously in a shared room.

- A CD player is required in every room that is being used for this mode.
- The possibility of unacceptable noise must be considered when selecting a suitable room. Listen for background noise such as air conditioning, traffic, telephones, school lesson bells, on the same day of the week and at the same time as the scheduled time for the mode, if possible.
- Ensure you have someone available on the day who can deal with any technical aspects of sound equipment and reproduction.
- Another important feature to consider is the availability of a quiet and comfortable area, some distance from the examination room, where candidates can wait for the test without coming into contact with others who have already been examined.
- Ensure the candidates are supervised and that marshals are available to escort them to their examination room.
- Oral examiners should not be asked to examine more than two three-hour sessions per day. Examiners should be allowed a 10–15 minute break during each three-hour session and at least half an hour between the 2–3 hour sessions.
- Remember to allow approximately two minutes between one sitting and another in your timetable, as candidates change over.

There is no group test format for Skills for Life, so centres should have “dummy” candidates on standby for the last test of each day/session, even if the total number of candidates is even, to allow for unexpected absences.

# 2 ENTRIES

## ELIGIBILITY

Cambridge ESOL Skills for Life examinations are designed for adults whose first language is not English. Full details are available in the Skills for Life examination area in [www.cambridgeesol.org](http://www.cambridgeesol.org).

Candidates can choose to enter any combination of the three modes at any combination of levels. The minimum entry requirement is ten candidate entries for each mode, across all the levels, for any one session. In addition, for Speaking & Listening, there must be at least four candidates at each level for which there are entries. Please refer to the *Handbook for centres* for further information.

## MAKING ENTRIES

You must first book the Speaking & Listening assessors by submitting your estimated number of candidates on the Sfl ST form **at least five weeks** before the examination date. This form is available to download from CentreNet.

Once confirmation has been received, you should submit named entries for all modes using Online Entries no later than **four weeks** before the examination date.

## Online Entries site

All entries should be submitted using the Online Entries website [www.entries.cambridgeesol.org](http://www.entries.cambridgeesol.org). Instructions on how to use the Online Entries site are available to download from CentreNet.

### ■ AMENDMENTS

You may need to make changes to your entry, which is a straightforward process. It can be done by making changes on the Online Entries system before the final amendment date. After this date, you must request any changes in writing to [esolresults@cambridgeesol.org](mailto:esolresults@cambridgeesol.org). For changes to exam sessions or withdrawals, contact [esolentries@cambridgeesol.org](mailto:esolentries@cambridgeesol.org) first and wait for confirmation.

### ■ LATE ENTRIES

Late entries will be accepted after the closing date on payment of a late entry fee, and depending on the availability of the material. If the late entry is less than three weeks before the day of the first examination, you must write to [esolentries@cambridgeesol.org](mailto:esolentries@cambridgeesol.org).

### ■ WITHDRAWALS

A candidate withdrawing from an examination on medical or compassionate grounds could qualify for a full refund, on submission of supporting evidence by writing to the Entries and Results Unit.

### ■ TRANSFER OF ENTRY BETWEEN CENTRES

As Skills for Life examinations are “On Demand”, such transfers should be unnecessary. The candidate should withdraw his or her entry from the centre of enrolment and make a new entry in the chosen centre.

### ■ CAMBRIDGE ESOL CANDIDATE IDENTIFIER (CECI)

The CECI is a unique number generated by Cambridge ESOL on submission of the first entry for an individual candidate for a Skills for Life mode. This CECI will subsequently appear on the statement of entry, statement of result and certificate(s) for candidates achieving a “Pass”.

The CECI number is used by Cambridge ESOL to link candidates' entries across modes, enabling the production of a level certificate, when the criteria have been achieved. It is therefore essential that you record the CECI and that you pass it on to the candidate, as all further modes will need to state the same CECI on submission of the entry.

### ■ CANDIDATE ID

Candidates must provide photographic identification before the start of each mode. If a candidate does not own any identification, they must be asked to complete the Candidate identification form as soon as possible before the examination. This form can be downloaded from CentreNet and can then be used as proof of identity.

Candidates must be made aware of this requirement when they register to take the examination and must be warned that if the supervisor or invigilator is not satisfied with the candidate's identity, they are empowered to refuse entry.

## 3 SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES

If any of your candidates have special requirements, for example a specific learning, hearing or visual difficulty, you can ask Cambridge ESOL for Special Arrangements to be made at no additional charge. You must ensure that this request is made **at least six** weeks before the date of the examination.

If a candidate experiences a short term difficulty, such as a broken arm or an ear infection affecting their hearing, you can apply for Special Arrangements by contacting Cambridge ESOL Special Circumstances Unit immediately for authorisation to make emergency special arrangements.

Cambridge ESOL will give Special Consideration to candidates affected by adverse circumstances immediately before or during an examination. Cambridge ESOL will only accept such an application made by the Centre Exams Manager (using the Special Consideration form). Please refer to the *Handbook for centres* for further details.

## 4 EXAMINATION MATERIALS

- Ensure question papers, candidate answer sheets and mark sheets are locked away in a place of high security, ideally a strong safe.
- After the examination, all used and unused question papers for Reading and Writing, as well as the candidate answer sheets for Level 1 and 2 Reading, must be returned as soon as possible to Cambridge ESOL, using the address labels provided. If the materials need to be stored overnight before returning to Cambridge ESOL, they must be stored in a place of high security.
- You will receive the required number of live Speaking & Listening test packs with CDs and personalised mark sheets.
- If you need anything different from the standard allocation to meet venue requirements, please contact the ESOL Helpdesk well in advance and every effort will be made to meet your needs.
- You are responsible for handing out the materials to the appropriate interlocutors far enough in advance of the Speaking & Listening test session to allow for adequate preparation, though this must be done so as to ensure that adequate security is maintained.
- Cambridge ESOL will provide all assessors with confidential examination materials (live test packs and *Instructions to Speaking and Listening test assessors*).

After the end of the Speaking & Listening tests, all packs and accompanying CDs must be returned to secure storage in your centre for future sessions. Cambridge ESOL will send instructions relating to the destruction of Speaking & Listening test packs and CDs when replacements are due to be sent.

## ■ CHECKING OF MATERIALS

On receipt of examination materials, check that the correct materials have been supplied for all candidates.

It is essential to check that the information on the label of the question paper envelopes matches the attendance register to ensure that the correct examination material has been supplied. Check the level, version number and sitting (date, week and am, pm or evening).

In advance of the Speaking & Listening mode session the CD must be checked to ensure that it corresponds to the pack of materials received and that the quality of the CD and playback equipment is suitable. The CD can be found on the inside back cover of the examiners' Speaking & Listening materials booklet. This check must be carried out in secure conditions.

It is your responsibility to ensure that the playback equipment is in good working order.

If you have a faulty CD, please contact the ESOL Helpdesk immediately so we can send a replacement. We may ask you to return the CD for investigation.

- There should be at least one invigilator present for every 30 candidates. Each invigilator should have a clear view of all candidates for whom he or she is responsible.
- However, if there is only one invigilator in the room, he or she needs to be able to call for assistance without leaving the room or disturbing the candidates. Ideally, there should be a “floating” invigilator who should be able to help their colleagues when needed.
- A copy of the invigilation timetable must be available for inspection.
- A copy of the *Skills for Life Examination instructions* booklet must be available in each examination room.
- A copy of the *Handbook for centres* must be available in each venue.
- Note that invigilators are not required to be present in rooms used for the Speaking & Listening modes.

## ■ INTERLOCUTORS

- Centres are responsible for recruiting and training interlocutors for the Speaking & Listening examinations.
- Ensure each interlocutor meets the Minimum Professional Requirements, which can be downloaded from CentreNet.
- When registering to run Skills for Life tests your centre will be sent the self-access Interlocutor Training Pack.
- You are responsible for ensuring that all those selected to act as interlocutors are given these materials to work through in good time before running the Speaking & Listening tests.
- Interlocutors who have examined before, but have not done so for a period of eight weeks or more, should reacquaint themselves with the materials and correct procedures.
- After use, these materials should be kept secure in the centre for future tests.

# 5 CANDIDATES

Candidates should be advised to bring with them their statement of entry, which they will have received from you, alongside the **A4 Notice to Candidates** and **Summary regulations**, which can be downloaded from the Online Entries site. The statement of entry includes the candidate name, index number (5 character centre number followed by 4 digit candidate number), the date of the examination and the Cambridge ESOL Candidate Identifier (CECI).

# 6 SUPERVISORS AND INVIGILATORS

The purpose of supervision is to ensure that all candidates are under surveillance for the entire duration of each examination period, under the direction of the supervisor in each centre or venue. You are responsible for the supervision and invigilation arrangements and you must ensure that these tasks are carried out by suitably qualified people. Whilst you have the discretion to decide who is suitably qualified, any relative of a candidate in the examination room is specifically not eligible to act as a supervisor or invigilator.

- An examination is deemed to be in progress from the time the candidates enter the room until they leave.
- Where there is a single invigilator, this cannot be a person known personally to the candidates (e.g. the candidates' teacher).
- Invigilators must give complete attention to the proper conduct of the examination and must not perform any additional task in the examination room. They should move around the room freely but without causing a distraction to the candidates.

# 7 ON THE DAY

- Make sure the candidate numbers are clearly displayed on the desks and are in the right sequence.
- For the Writing mode, place Candidate Information Sheets (CIS) on the desk with a pencil and an eraser for each candidate.
- When the candidates are seated:
  - Check that they have all the necessary material to complete the examination, for example a personalised answer sheet for Level 1 and 2 Reading.
  - Check the candidates' statement of entry while they are filling in the CIS.
  - Complete the attendance register.

Deal with any errors in the candidates' names on the printed materials. Candidates should check:

- Statement of entry for Reading Entry 1–3
- Answer sheet for Reading Level 1 and 2

- CIS for all levels of Writing
- Mark sheet for Speaking & Listening

Candidates should put a single pencil line through the incorrect name and print the correct name in BLOCK letters underneath. The supervisor should make a list of all corrected names and pass this to the Centre Exams Manager, who should make the required changes on the Online Entries site by the final closing date.

- The question paper packet should be opened in the examination room, in the presence of candidates.
- Although computer-based tests are available to download the day before the examination, the tests cannot be initiated until the start time specified on Connect.
- Give out the question papers and ensure you give the right level and sitting to the right candidates. Draw the candidates' attention to the instructions printed on the front. They should enter their name, centre number and candidate number as required before opening it.
- Read out the instructions in the grey box that corresponds to the mode in the *Skills for Life Examination instructions* booklet.
- Announce clearly when they may open the question paper and begin the examination.
- The centre number and the starting and finishing time of the paper should be clearly written out on the whiteboard. Ideally, a clock displaying the right time should also be visible to all the candidates.
- The supervisor or the invigilator needs to complete and sign both the attendance register and a room plan which indicates the position of every candidate by candidate number and the direction in which they are facing, as well as the position of the invigilators.

#### ■ LATE ARRIVALS

If a candidate arrives late, they may be admitted at the supervisor's discretion if no other candidate has left the room permanently. The candidate must be given the full time to complete the paper. The supervisor will need to fill in a Late Arrival form to report the incident and Special Consideration form when the candidate or any other is adversely affected by the described circumstances.

Please see the *Handbook for centres* for information about candidates who miss their scheduled sessions.

#### ■ TEMPORARILY LEAVING THE ROOM

A candidate may temporarily leave and return to the examination room at any time under appropriate supervision. The candidate's question paper must be closed and left on his or her desk and the supervisor must ensure that the papers remain untouched until the candidate returns and resumes work.

#### ■ MISCONDUCT

- No smoking, eating or drinking is allowed during the examination, except for plain water from an unbreakable container with a secure lid.
- The use of mobile phones, pagers and cassette recorders is not permitted in the examination room.

- English-English dictionaries are only permitted for Entry 1–3 Reading modes. The supervisor should remind the candidates of these rules and explain that candidates who do not comply may be disqualified.
- Everyone in the examination room (including supervisors and invigilators) should be asked to switch off their mobile phones and to disable the alarms on any electronic devices. The supervisor should allocate an area where personal belongings and unauthorised objects can be kept safely while the examination is in progress.
- Cheating or inappropriate behaviour should be noted and reported on the Malpractice form, which can be downloaded from CentreNet. The candidate should be warned, but allowed to continue with the paper. The decision to disqualify a candidate will be made at Cambridge ESOL after careful consideration based on the report.

#### ■ EMERGENCIES

If there is an emergency, such as a fire alarm or bomb alert, follow the instructions given in the *Skills for Life Examination instructions* booklet.

## 8 POST-EXAMINATION ARRANGEMENTS

At the end of the paper, candidates should remain seated until the scripts, rough paper and answer sheets have been collected. Computer-based candidate answers can be uploaded either at the end of each test or at the end of the day (recommended).

However, candidates who wish to do so can leave the examination room at the supervisor's discretion after the times given in the *Skills for Life Examination instructions* booklet. No one is allowed to leave the room in the last ten minutes of the paper and candidates should be given both a ten minute and five minute warning. They should also be reminded to transfer their answers to the answer sheet for Reading Levels 1 and 2.

All used and unused question papers should be sent back to Cambridge ESOL. Please refer to the Post Examination Materials Despatch Checklist in the *Skills for Life Examination instructions* booklet to help you with the organisation of the post-examination arrangements.

#### ■ ATTENDANCE REGISTERS

Ensure that the attendance registers are completed, included in each envelope of candidate answers and returned to Cambridge ESOL along with the seating plans.

Where an error in the spelling of a candidate's name has been identified, you should make these changes on the Online Entries site by the final closing date. If a candidate is not shown on the attendance register, his or her name and candidate number must be added. The test number of the Reading and Writing modes that any additional or late entered candidate has taken must also be entered onto the attendance register if it does not match the intended session test number. The test number is printed on the front page of each question paper.



## ■ PACKING AND DESPATCH

Scripts and answer sheets should be packed in accordance with the instructions headed “Bar Coded Script Packet Labels” and despatched to Cambridge by the fastest means available, preferably in a manner which is recorded for tracking. If despatch cannot take place within the same day, the materials must be kept under lock and key overnight and sent the next morning.

Candidates’ answers and scripts should be arranged in ascending candidate number order in the labelled envelopes provided. Parcels

and envelopes should be made as secure as possible with string or self-adhesive tape (not staples).

Please refer to the exam-specific instructions given in the *Skills for Life Examination instructions* booklet.

## ■ RESULTS AND CERTIFICATES

Statements of results are issued 2–3 weeks after the receipt of completed mode materials. Certificates are issued four weeks after results.

### ■ CONTACT DETAILS:

For general information:

#### **ESOL Helpdesk**

01223 553997

[esolhelpdesk@cambridgeesol.org](mailto:esolhelpdesk@cambridgeesol.org)

For training:

#### **Centre Support Unit**

01223 553997

[esolcentresupport@cambridgeesol.org](mailto:esolcentresupport@cambridgeesol.org)

For technical Connect queries:

#### **Application Support team**

[esolitqa@cambridgeesol.org](mailto:esolitqa@cambridgeesol.org)

