

Cambridge English



Security, integrity and fraud protection

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Cambridge English: First, Advanced and Proficiency are designed for use by further and higher education institutions for a variety of purposes, including for admissions purposes. Exam quality, integrity and security are critical to educational institutions when processing admissions from international students.

Our robust and comprehensive approach covers all areas – from test development, test delivery and results processing, through to post-examination review and evaluation.

All the development and production processes of the exam, as well as the post-test marking and administration, are managed and controlled centrally in Cambridge. This means you can trust the results as a valid and accurate reflection of a candidate's ability.

Our systems and processes for designing, developing and delivering our exams and services are certified as meeting the ISO 9001:2008 standard for quality management. For more on our rigorous approach to quality management, you can download the publication *Principles of Good Practice: Quality management and validation in language assessment* from www.cambridgeenglish.org/principles

1. Security of test material

All our security measures are designed to ensure that candidates cannot receive prior knowledge of the content of test materials.

Test paper production

Tasks and items are selected from a secure electronic item bank and unique papers are constructed for each test sitting. The item bank is refreshed continuously with new material.



Test questions for the item bank are commissioned from our teams of expert test item writers. The item writers have extensive experience in the field of English language teaching and are experienced in the production of tests. All of them work in accordance with strict guidelines governing the type of content that is suitable for a global audience of test takers and conforms to the required quality standards.

Once the initial test questions have been written the vetting and editing takes place – test questions are reviewed for suitability for inclusion in tests and amendments are made.

The test questions are then trialled (for Speaking and Writing questions) or pretested (for Reading, Use of English and Listening questions) with real candidates. We perform statistical analysis of the candidates' results and look at expert feedback to make sure that our exams are accurate and fair, with each individual question pitched at the right level. It is also a way of making sure that test content is appropriate and that people from different countries and cultures do not widely differ in the way they perform on a test, or that neither male nor female candidates are disadvantaged.

After pretesting and trialling, the materials that are found to be satisfactory are put into our item bank. This is a secure database of questions which are stored along with detailed information about their content and level of difficulty. This means that when we construct the tests, we can be sure that each version of the exam is created to the same standard.

If test questions do not behave as they should do, they are either sent back to the beginning of the cycle for further editing (before being pretested or trialled again) or they are rejected and not used.

Secure storage and despatch of materials

All confidential test materials are printed and stored within our own high-security premises and test materials are despatched securely to authorised exam centres by courier.

Secure storage of test material by the centre

Centres must adhere to strict requirements for the storage and transport of material.

Security of test material on the test day

There are strict guidelines for the handling of test material on the test day to prevent unauthorised access.

Specific security measures for computer-based tests

Our test delivery system delivers heavily encrypted assessments via the internet directly to test centres, with test materials only decrypted at the start of the test. Test material can be accessed only during a specified time window, after which it cannot be viewed.

2. Security in test administration

The following procedures are designed to ensure absolute security during each test session. Candidates can only take Cambridge English exams at one of our authorised exam centres.

Candidate ID checks

Our authorised exam centres check each candidate's photographic ID on the day of the test. If a supervisor or invigilator is not satisfied with the identity of the candidate, they will refuse them entry.

Test day photographs

Photographs of candidates are taken on the day of their test and these can be viewed by recognising organisations through our online Results Verification Service. We use a leading biometric supplier, Aware, that also provides services for immigration bodies and for the FBI.

Standardised testing procedures

We provide step-by-step instructions and scripts for supervisors and invigilators to ensure that test administration is standardised, secure and fair throughout all our centres. For example, packets of test papers must be opened in front of the exam candidates and completed test papers must be sealed in an envelope directly after the test finishes.

Invigilation

Supervisors and invigilators undergo character checks and receive full training in all areas of test procedure, including how to detect attempts to cheat.

3. Security of our exam centres

All our authorised exam centres follow a detailed code of practice which ensures the highest standards of security throughout the testing process, from registration to the recording of results. Prior to approval centres are

inspected to make sure they can provide suitable facilities, and they are regularly inspected.

Centres follow strict procedures in administering Cambridge English exams in a fair, secure and unbiased manner. As part of our commitment to security, we carry out:

- pre-approval checks and inspection
- routine inspections and checks, including unannounced inspections
- monitoring of anomalies in performance.

4. Security in marking and issuing of results

Our post-test processes are designed to ensure absolute security in marking and rigorous checks of test results before they are released.

Centralised marking

No marking is done by the exam centre. Speaking is marked locally by fully trained and certificated Speaking Examiners at the test venue. Candidates' scripts are packed and returned immediately to Cambridge. Candidates' responses in the computer-based test are encrypted and returned directly to Cambridge.

Preventing conflicts of interest between examiners and candidates

There are systems in place to ensure that the integrity of test results is not endangered through any conflict of interest between test markers or examiners and test candidates. Writing scripts are anonymised and allocated to examiners at random to avoid conflicts of interest.

Monitoring anomalies in performance

We carry out automatic statistical analysis after every test session prior to release of results to identify unusual patterns of scores or responses for individual candidates, or groups of candidates.

5. Security of test results

Cambridge English provides a free and secure online Results Verification Service that allows organisations to verify a candidate's results:

www.cambridgeenglish.org/verifiers

Organisations can view the candidate's test day photo and their Statement of Results. Individual results are accessed using the unique Candidate ID number and Secret Number provided by the candidate. These are issued on their Confirmation of Entry for the test.

Want to find out more?

For more about test security or to discuss how your institution can use Cambridge English exams, contact us at:

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Cambridge English Language Assessment is part of the University of Cambridge. We develop and produce the most valuable range of qualifications for learners and teachers of English in the world. Over 5 million people in 130 countries take our exams every year. Around the world over 20,000 universities, employers, government ministries and other organisations rely on our exams and qualifications as proof of English language ability. Cambridge English exams are backed by the work of the largest dedicated research team of any English language test provider.

Cambridge English Language Assessment – a not-for-profit organisation.

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