



Jesuit Worldwide Learning advances English skills with Cambridge Assessment English



Jesuit Worldwide Learning (JWL) is dedicated to helping those on the margins of society. Developing English skills is central to this mission and it needed a flexible, internationally recognised test to demonstrate progress for the 2,000 students on its Global English Language (GEL) course. By using Linguaskill's adaptive, online computer-based solution, JWL is now able to easily administer tests in difficult-to-reach centres around the world, providing fast results and a globally recognised test report.

Providing English skills to those on the margins

JWL was set up in 2010, and its mission is to offer high-quality tertiary education to refugees and those on the margins of society. Operating globally, it seeks to create opportunities for students who can then have a positive impact on their communities.

English skills are vital to JWL's students – without a certain level of English they cannot access its tertiary curriculum, as Susanna Ablewhite, Global English Language Programme Manager, explains: 'English is the stepping stone to access opportunities, both through JWL's tertiary courses and in terms of greater employment prospects.'

To develop the right skills, JWL runs its GEL Programme, which provides a comprehensive, high-quality approach to learning English, based on the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR). Through a mix of classroom teaching and independent study, students progress through the CEFR levels from A1 to C1, taking three courses per year. There are currently more than 20 JWL centres offering GEL, with 2,000 students enrolled on the course.

As it's a relatively new course, it was vital for JWL that its students completed GEL with internationally recognised skills that were accepted around the world, if they were to move successfully into tertiary education or employment. Given the often inaccessible areas in which JWL's centres are located, from Afghanistan to Iraq, testing also needed to be carried out on-site, at any time, and in a cost-effective manner.



JESUIT WORLDWIDE LEARNING
HIGHER EDUCATION AT THE MARGINS

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Susanna Ablewhite,
Global English Language
Programme Manager,
Jesuit Worldwide Learning

About Jesuit Worldwide Learning (JWL)

JWL provides equitable high-quality tertiary learning to people and communities at the margins of societies – be it through poverty, location, lack of opportunity, conflict or forced displacement – so all can contribute their knowledge and voices to the global community of learners and together foster hope to create a more peaceful and humane world.

jwl.org

About Linguaskill

Linguaskill from Cambridge Assessment English is a quick and convenient online test based on the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) standard. Designed to help organisations assess groups of candidates, it enables higher education institutions and employers to easily check English levels, providing fast, accurate results and clear individual and group reports.

cambridgeenglish.org/linguaskill

About Cambridge Assessment English

Cambridge Assessment English is a not-for-profit department of the University of Cambridge. It produces the world's leading range of qualifications and tests, for learners and teachers of English, including Cambridge English Qualifications, BULATS and IELTS. Taken by over 5 million people every year, these exams are backed by the work of the largest dedicated research team of any English language test provider.

cambridgeenglish.org

Globally acknowledged, flexible testing

Given these requirements, Susanna researched potential solutions for testing. 'We had very clear needs. We wanted to test students when they began the course to assess their level of English and then test proficiency at the end of years one and two or if students left part-way through GEL. Linguaskill and the Cambridge English Placement Test (CEPT) from Cambridge Assessment English were the perfect fit – they are online, flexible and backed by the globally acknowledged academic strength of the Cambridge brand.'

CEPT is now being used to assess learners as they join the course, enabling them to be placed in a group appropriate to their level, with Linguaskill's Reading and Listening modules testing students at key points during GEL. As well as being online, Linguaskill is built on an adaptive testing model, meaning that questions are based on a candidate's previous performance. This increases the speed of testing and the delivery of results, while providing a better experience for students as they always receive appropriate questions.

Having selected Linguaskill in January 2018, JWL is first using it to test many of its 100 or so GEL teachers across the world, both to give them familiarity with the test before it is rolled out to their students, and to assess their own CEFR levels. It then plans to administer up to 1,000 student tests over the next 12 months, from April 2018. Linguaskill will be administered from JWL's Indian office, testing students in India, Sri Lanka, Myanmar, Nepal, Afghanistan, Iraq, Haiti and the Dominican Republic.

'Having a high-level foundation in passive English skills, such as reading and listening, is vital to underpin tertiary study and to enable the development of writing and speaking,' adds Susanna. 'Linguaskill is therefore vital to give our students confidence in their progress with these skills.'

A long-term global partnership

While currently early in the process, the initial rollout of both Linguaskill and CEPT has been extremely positive. Administrator feedback is that the whole process, from logging onto the Cambridge Assessment English test portal to releasing tokens for each assessment and accessing results, is extremely smooth – vital when testing is occurring in multiple, often remote centres.

'We have staff spread around the world, and internet connectivity to many of our centres can be challenging, but the whole online testing process has been straightforward and trouble-free,' says Susanna. 'Feedback from students and staff has been very encouraging. We're now working to offer people more opportunities to practise before taking the test in order to address any unfamiliarity with computer usage, but overall we are very pleased with the results.'

JWL is committed to expanding GEL, offering it in more centres and to more students. Linguaskill is underpinning this, being used as part of teacher recruitment to assess English language skills.

'The ultimate goal of JWL is to transform the world through education, and through our work we are increasing the opportunities for those on the margins to improve their lives, and their communities, co-operate with students from other cultures and religions and learn vital, transferable skills. We believe we can only achieve that by working with strong partners such as Cambridge Assessment English and look forward to a long-term global relationship.'

