Pearson English

International Certificate (PTE General)

Test Specifications Overview

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I. Overview

What is the Pearson English International Certificate (Pearson Test of English General)?

The International Certificate is an assessment solution at six levels of proficiency (A1, 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5), which is designed to assess and accredit general English language ability. The six levels of the test are provided in partnership with Pearson Education Limited (Edexcel), the largest UK awarding body for academic and vocational qualifications. Pearson Education Limited is the official awarding body.

All levels are recognised globally and are accepted by universities, employers and national education authorities in many countries as evidence of a required standard of English. In England, the tests are regulated by Ofqual under the title Pearson Edexcel Certificate in ESOL International. Please see table below for additional reference:

Test Level	Edexcel title per Ofqual Registry
Pearson English International Certificate (PTE General) A1	Pearson Edexcel Entry Level Certificate in ESOL International (Entry 1) (CEF A1) (English International Certificate)
Pearson English International Certificate (PTE General) Level1 (A2)	Pearson Edexcel Entry Level Certificate in ESOL International (Entry 2) (CEF A2) (English International Certificate)
Pearson English International Certificate (PTE General) Level 2 (B1)	Pearson Edexcel Entry Level Certificate in ESOL International (Entry 3) (CEF B1) (English International Certificate)
Pearson English International Certificate (PTE General) Level 3 (B2)	Pearson Edexcel Level 1 Certificate in ESOL International (CEF B2) (English International Certificate)
Pearson English International Certificate (PTE General) Level 4 (C1)	Pearson Edexcel Level 2 Certificate in ESOL International (CEF C1) (English International Certificate)
Pearson English International Certificate PTE General Level 5 (C2)	Pearson Edexcel Level 3 Certificate in ESOL International (CEF C2) (English International Certificate)

II. Test description and rationale

The International Certificate is a general English proficiency test for teenagers and adults, which is offered at six levels.

The International Certificate assesses the four skills: speaking, listening, reading and writing. It assesses communicative ability; that is, it provides evidence of the kind of practical English language skills that are useful for international travel and communication, or for work or study in an English-speaking environment.

To achieve this, the test includes tasks that resemble the kinds of things a test taker might be called upon to do through the medium of English in real life, such as write messages, listen to talks and presentations, read newspaper reports or participate in conversations.

The International Certificate does not assume any previous work experience or special knowledge of the world. For this reason, the International Certificate is particularly suited to young adults who are beginning their careers or to teenagers who are still in secondary education and who expect to use English in their future academic or professional lives.

Themes

The International Certificate is based around topics and themes which are relevant to candidates at each level. Each test paper will focus on a number of themes across the four skills.

Authentic texts

The tasks used in the International Certificate are designed to be as realistic as possible. At level B1 and above, most of the texts used to assess reading and listening are authentic; that is, they are taken from written publications - books, newspapers, websites; or sound recordings - radio broadcasts, recorded messages, talks - that were originally produced for a native speaker audience.

History

The International Certificate comes from a thorough revision of the London Tests of English which were developed in 1982 by the University of London Schools Examinations Board (USLEB). They were acquired by Edexcel in 1996 and have been operated by Pearson since 2005.

The revision was undertaken after comprehensive consultation with test centres, teachers and test takers in several countries, and the revision process was monitored at all stages by an independent Technical Advisory Group comprising some of the world's leading language testing experts. In the course of the revision, the alignment of the test to the Common European Framework was made more robust by adherence to procedures recommended by the Council of Europe in its manual.

To sum up, International Certificate:

- Provides a measure of real, practical English language ability
- Is based around relevant topics and themes
- Is offered at six levels
- Is aligned with the levels of the Common European Framework (A1 to C2)
- Assesses all four language skills: Speaking, Listening, Reading and Writing

III. Quality assurance

- The International Certificate is produced by Pearson English Assessment, a department of Pearson, the world's learning company. With more than 22,500 employees operating in 70 countries, Pearson provides content, assessment and digital services to learners, educational institutions, employers, governments, and other partners globally.
- Pearson Education Limited (Edexcel), Pearson's awarding body, have set the standard for worldwide recognised qualifications, built on the UK educational system and accepted by universities worldwide, for more than 150 years.
- Quality audits of International Certificate are carried out regularly by Pearson Education Limited (Edexcel). The audits represent a continuous process aimed at maintaining and improving the quality of the Pearson exams. They involve scrutiny of the different stages of design, production, and administration. The process continues beyond the launch of the test and includes regular reviews of test administrations to ensure that every test taker receives a fair and valid result.

IV. Test development process

The test was developed through an iterative design process involving:

a. stakeholder consultation
b. drafting of test specifications: including test construct, structure and length, question types, skills covered, marking approach, delivery mode, reporting, accessibility etc.
c. specifications were reviewed by internal and external language assessment experts, and modified where required
d. production of sample materials
e. test production
f. analysis and review
g. item banking.

Test design

The starting point for any test is understanding the purpose of the test, the needs of stakeholders e.g. the learners, teachers, parents, schools etc. and the benefits the test will provide to these stakeholders. Once these have been identified, they then feed into the test specifications which starts to detail features such as the test construct, structure and length, item types, skills covered, marking approach, delivery mode, reporting, accessibility etc. These specifications are reviewed by internal and external language assessment experts to ensure they match the original test construct and address the stakeholder needs identified.

The specifications for the International Certificate were derived from:

- Level and domain descriptions in the CEFR: each task in the test is related to one or more
- CEFR Can Do descriptors
- Communicative teaching practice
- Course outlines and content from Pearson teaching materials

Experienced item writers were commissioned to draft item writer guidelines for each module, based on the specifications and sample materials. These guidelines help our item writers to produce comparable, good-quality tasks to ensure consistency across different instances of the test and to ensure that tasks continue to reflect the intentions of the designers.

Item writing

Once the specifications have been finalised, item and test production can begin. A team of item writers was trained to write an initial set of test materials. Item writers are required to meet minimum qualification requirements: L1 English speaker or L1-like proficiency in English, and a bachelor's or higher degree in applied linguistics, English language and literature, education, or a closely related field. All test item writers have previous experience in item writing and in teaching ESL or EFL.

Experienced item writers are recruited from around the world and trained on the new test specifications - this includes training on CEFR. Successful applicants attend a training event run

by Pearson test developers. The training covers familiarisation with the test specification, item writer guidelines, Pearson editorial policy, authoring tools, and the CEFR.

During the item writing process there are several quality assurance reviews to ensure items meet the specifications, and items can be edited or rejected if they are not valid, are biased, or include sensitive topics. Throughout the process, all the items are stored in a secure item database, and any changes are logged.

Additional validation of items is done via seeding. New items are seeded in test forms to check their performance and determine if they should be accepted, edited, or rejected. If an item is accepted, it is placed in the live item bank, ready to be used in an operational test.

Item banking

Item bank maintenance is carried out ensuring that items are regularly reviewed and updated. Items already within the item bank are regularly reviewed in terms of usage & exposure, awarding data and relevance within today's society.

New items are commissioned, again on a regular basis, ensuring that there is an ever-evolving item bank that leads to high quality and rigorous assessments being produced.

Test production

The dedicated Pearson content team collate a set of items together to produce an overall assessment for each level of the qualification. Everyone involved in the production process will have agreed whether items are suitable to move forwards in being used within assessment material and that no further development of an item is needed. This means that the content requirements, level of demand and range of skills as described in the specification have been met for each item approved.

By the end of the item review process any issues have already been resolved and the item is then approved as 'accepted'.

Once the full assessment suite is produced, the content team checks for any typos or spelling mistakes. The team will also use professional proofreaders to support revisions. If the proofreaders raise any concerns, the senior committee will discuss corrections or any changes that are required.

Our highly experienced Principal Examiners review the initial drafts of the assessments that have been produced from the items created to confirm that the assessment has a firm grounding within the specification and is at the right level for the qualification. They need to make sure there are questions and tasks to cover the full grade range, including some that provide a challenge to even the strongest learner.

After the content of the assessment has been confirmed, the content team makes arrangements to create audio recordings with sound studios and voice artists as well as the creation of any bespoke artwork needed to accompany the assessment.

To make sure that all our assessments are formatted clearly and consistently Pearson have teams of dedicated designers who convert draft documents to final, print-ready formats.

Quality is important, so even after the items and assessment material have been through a number of checks, an additional sign off is conducted by the senior committee and internal assessment team. After the final sign off is complete, the test is ready for secure printing and distribution around the world.

Test structure

Written test

<table>
<tr><th rowspan="2">Section</th><th rowspan="2">Skills</th><th rowspan="2">Item Types</th><th colspan="6">Objectives</th><th rowspan="2">Score points</th></tr>
<tr><th>Level A1</th><th>Level 1</th><th>Level 2</th><th>Level 3</th><th>Level 4</th><th>Level 5</th></tr>
<tr><td>1</td><td>Listening</td><td>3-option multiple choice
(A1 and L1 graphical options)</td><td colspan="3">To assess ability to understand the gist of short spoken utterances</td><td colspan="3">To assess ability to understand the main detail in short spoken utterances</td><td>10</td></tr>
<tr><td>2</td><td>Listening and Writing</td><td>Dictation</td><td colspan="2">To assess ability to understand a short utterance by transcribing a spoken text</td><td colspan="4">To assess ability to understand an extended utterance by transcribing a spoken text</td><td>5 listening
5 writing</td></tr>
<tr><td>3</td><td>Listening</td><td>Text, note completion</td><td colspan="2">To assess ability to extract specific information from spoken texts</td><td colspan="4">To assess ability to extract specific information from extended spoken texts</td><td>10</td></tr>
<tr><td>4</td><td>Reading</td><td>Gap fill 3-option multiple choice</td><td>To assess ability to extract specific information from spoken texts</td><td colspan="5">To assess ability to understand the purpose, structure and main idea of short written texts</td><td>5</td></tr>
<tr><td>5</td><td>Reading</td><td>3-option multiple choice
(A1 and L1 graphical options)</td><td colspan="2">To assess ability to understand the main detail in short written texts</td><td colspan="4">To assess ability to understand the main ideas in an extended written text</td><td>5</td></tr>
<tr><td>6</td><td>Reading</td><td>Open-ended question</td><td colspan="3">To assess ability to understand the main points of short written texts</td><td colspan="3">To assess ability to understand the main points of short and extended written texts</td><td>8</td></tr>
<tr><td>7</td><td>Reading</td><td>Text, note completion</td><td colspan="2">To assess ability to extract specific information from a written text</td><td colspan="4">To assess ability to extract specific information from an extended written text</td><td>7</td></tr>
<tr><td>8</td><td>Writing</td><td>Write correspondence</td><td>To assess ability to write a short piece of correspondence (30-50 words)</td><td>To assess ability to write a short piece of correspondence (50–70 words)</td><td>To assess ability to write a piece of correspondence (70–90 words)</td><td>To assess ability to write a piece of correspondence (90–120 words)</td><td>To assess ability to write a piece of correspondence (120–150 words)</td><td>To assess ability to write a piece of correspondence (150–200 words)</td><td>10</td></tr>
<tr><td>9</td><td>Writing</td><td>Write text</td><td>To assess ability to write a short text based on a picture (50-80 words)</td><td>To assess ability to write a short text based on a series of three pictures (80–100 words)</td><td>To assess ability to write a short text from own experience, knowledge or imagination (100–150 words)</td><td>To assess ability to write a short text from own experience, knowledge or imagination (150–200 words)</td><td>To assess ability to write a short text from own experience, knowledge or imagination (200–250 words)</td><td>To assess ability to write a short text from own experience, knowledge or imagination (250-300 words)</td><td>10</td></tr>
</table>

Speaking Test

<table>
<tr><th rowspan="2">Section</th><th rowspan="2">Skills</th><th rowspan="2">Item Types</th><th colspan="6">Objectives</th><th rowspan="2">Score points</th></tr>
<tr><th>Level A1</th><th>Level 1</th><th>Level 2</th><th>Level 3</th><th>Level 4</th><th>Level 5</th></tr>
<tr><td>10</td><td>Speaking</td><td>Discussion</td><td colspan="2">Not featured at this level</td><td colspan="2">To assess ability to discuss a concrete issue (2 mins)</td><td colspan="2">To assess ability to discuss a concrete or abstract issue (2 mins)</td><td rowspan="3">25 score points in total; distributed across the marking criteria</td></tr>
<tr><td>11</td><td>Speaking</td><td>Describe picture</td><td colspan="2">To assess ability to speak about a picture (2 mins)</td><td>To assess ability to speak continuously about a picture and interpret some aspect of it (1.5 mins)</td><td colspan="3">To assess ability to speak continuously about two related pictures and interpret some aspect of them (1.5 mins)</td></tr>
<tr><td>12</td><td>Speaking</td><td>Role play</td><td colspan="2">To assess ability to perform and respond to basic language functions appropriately (1.5 mins)</td><td>To assess ability to perform and respond to language functions appropriately (1.5 mins)</td><td>To assess ability to perform and respond to language functions appropriately (2 mins)</td><td colspan="2">To assess ability to speak continuously on a topic related to two pictures (2 mins)</td></tr>
<tr><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td colspan="4"></td><td></td></tr>
</table>

**Prior to the redesign in March 2021, the spoken test also included a sustained monologue section.*

V. Alignment to CEFR

Alignment to CEFR: In the course of the revision, the descriptors within the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEF) (Council of Europe, 2001) were used to guide the writing of the specification for each item type in the tests, and to describe the required performance of test takers at each level (A1, A2, B1, B2, C1 and C2). Mapping to the CEF follows the procedures as recommended in the Council of Europe manual Relating Language Examinations to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment (CEFR), available at http://www.coe.int/T/DG4/Linguistic/Manuel1_EN.asp. The manual (Council of Europe, 2009) distinguishes a number of activities (specification, familiarization, standardization training/benchmarking, standard setting and validation), all of which are followed by the International Certificate.

Test delivery

The International Certificate is currently delivered as a paper-based test. In 2021, we will introduce computer-based testing, an equivalent form of the test, delivered in secure test locations or under secure conditions at home with a live, remote proctor.

In order to deliver the International Certificate tests, institutions have to apply to become an authorized test centre. The application process includes compliance with the following:

- Due Diligence
- Application Form
- Inspection form (Facilities have to be inspected by Pearson Staff)
- Provision of secure storage
- OFQUAL's terms and conditions
- Contract

If approved, centres will be issued a unique Test Centre Number by our International Approval's team.

For quality assurance purposes, Authorized Test Centres can be subject to both in person or remote inspections. These inspections seek to ensure that the integrity of the test is maintained throughout the entire test delivery process. Inspectors will:

1. Review for potential breaches of question papers during storage or transportation.
2. Look for any signs of malpractice in the Test/exam delivery (exam room to invigilation)
3. Support customers while identifying potential improvements to the delivery of the tests.

VI. Accessibility

Reasonable adjustments can be made for persons with disabilities that would otherwise be put at a substantial disadvantage in taking an assessment. The reasonable adjustment will depend on a number of factors including the needs of the candidate. An adjustment may not be considered reasonable if it involves unreasonable costs, time frames, or affects the security or integrity of the assessment.

Centres should refer to, and be familiar with, the JCQ Access Arrangements, Reasonable Adjustments and Special Consideration regulations and guidance. Centres must have appropriate arrangements in place to ensure that test takers' needs are appropriately assessed at the beginning of the course of study and arrangements are put in place. All access arrangements and reasonable adjustments must be supported with evidence of need and appropriate documentation retained.

Appropriate supporting or medical evidence identifying physical or mental impairment must be provided with access arrangement requests. These documents should be no more than two years old. Pearson reserves the right to deny adjustments to the exam if it interferes with assessment objectives.

Access arrangements that do not require Pearson approval

Some access arrangements can be offered to candidates without prior consultation with Pearson (evidence of need in the normal working arrangements of the candidate should be taken into account), including the following list:

- 25% extra time or less.
- Supervised rest breaks may be considered as an alternative or an addition to extra time. The supervised rest break is not included in any extra time allowance.
- Centres may permit a candidate to take the test under separate invigilation if there is a pressing need to do so. For example, if the candidate is sensitive to noise or light.
- For alternative accommodation at other sites, applications must be made to Pearson.
- Centres may permit certain devices which are normally used by the candidate and that do not have any bearing on the test. This might include coloured overlays or low vision aids. This does not include reading pens, which read to the candidate and define the word, electronic translators, any other computer software or other electronic devices (such as mp3 players) for which permission has not been granted.
- Centres must consult Pearson if they are unsure about a candidates' requested use of technology during the test.

Transcripts

Transcripts may be used where a candidate's handwriting is illegible or so difficult to read that it would be beneficial for an examiner to be able to refer to a transcript of the candidate's work for clarification.

- The transcript may be handwritten or typed.

- Transcripts must be produced by a member of the centre's staff who is familiar with the candidate's handwriting.
- A copy of the "Transcript Cover Sheet" must be completed and securely attached to the front of the candidate's test paper. No other documentation should be attached.

Prompters

- A prompter may be permitted if the candidate has little or no sense of time or is affected by an obsessive-compulsive disorder which may lead him/her to keep revising a question rather than moving on to other questions.
- A prompter must not speak to the candidate, give factual help or offer suggestions, or communicate in any other way other than to remind the candidate to move on to the next question by tapping on the desk or his/her arm.
- The candidates' subject teachers must not act as prompters. On no account may a relative, friend, or peer of the candidate be used as a prompter.

Access arrangements to be approved by Pearson

The access arrangements listed below must be approved by Pearson before they can be implemented at the centre. Pearson may not automatically agree to all access arrangements requested, particularly if they are in conflict with test criteria. In such cases Pearson will suggest alternative arrangements if appropriate. Further information on how the centre can apply for the following arrangements will be provided by Pearson. Centres may request:

Enlarged papers

Question papers enlarged to A3 size can be produced when applications are made by the deadline. These papers are not produced automatically.

Readers

Please note: The same person may act as reader, scribe, and practical assistant as long as permission has been given for all three arrangements. The head of centre/examinations officer should ensure that readers, scribes and practical assistants are responsible adults, familiar with the subject matter being tested, and have worked with the candidate before the test. A relative, friend, or peer of the candidate may not act as a reader, scribe, or practical assistant.

- A reader is a responsible adult who reads the instructions of the question paper and the questions to the candidate. This may involve reading the whole paper to the candidate or the candidate may request only some words to be read.
- A reader is not permitted during the reading sections of the paper. A test taker that would normally be eligible for a reader may apply for extra time allowance for the reading section.

Scribes

- A scribe is a responsible adult who writes or types a "dictated" answers to the questions. If a test taker dictates answers and they are recorded, the centre must produce a transcript of the recording.
- A copy of the "Scribe Cover Sheet" must be completed and securely attached to the front of the candidates test paper. No other documentation should be attached.
- A scribe is not permitted during the written sections of the paper. A candidate who would normally be eligible for a scribe may apply for extra time allowance for the writing section.

Practical assistants

- A practical assistant is a responsible adult who carries out practical tasks, such as turning a page in the answer booklet or holding a ruler, at the request of a candidate with a physical disability or poor motor coordination.
- A copy of the "Practical Assistant Cover Sheet" must be completed and securely attached to the front of the candidates test paper. No other documentation should be attached.

Word processors

- Word processors may be used by candidates whose disability or learning difficulty either impairs their hand-written communication or renders their handwriting illegible, as evidenced by a diagnostic or medical report.

Applications must be submitted to Pearson for all access arrangements and reasonable adjustments. Approval for access arrangements can be requested via Pearson Access Arrangements Online (PAAO), which can be accessed via Edexcel Online (EOL). Click here to see the published deadlines for each testing session by which the application must be submitted. If the application is received after the deadline, the requested adjustments may not be accommodated.

Please contact Pearson customer service with questions: +44 (0) 120 477 0696.

VII. Test marking and scoring

The written component of the International Certificate is scored out of a maximum of 75 points and the spoken component out of a maximum of 25.

The table below shows the sections, skills tested and the maximum number of score points that can be obtained in the written component of the test at all levels.

Sections	Skills	Score points
1	Listening	10
2	Listening and writing	10 (5 listening, 5 writing)
3	Listening	10
4	Reading	5
5	Reading	5
6	Reading	8
7	Reading	7
8	Writing	10
9	Writing	10
Total		**75**

The table below shows the sections, skills tested and the maximum number of score points that can be obtained in the spoken component of the test at levels A1 and 1, and levels 2–5.

Sections	Skills	Score points
10	Speaking (only featured at levels 2-5, NOT levels A1 and 1)	**25 score points** in total; distributed across the marking criteria
11	Speaking	
12	Speaking	
Total		**25**

Prior to the redesign in March 2021, the spoken test also included a sustained monologue section.

Each of the four skills (listening, reading, writing, and speaking) contributes 25 points (25%) towards the overall score of 100 score points. This is shown within the "Candidate Performance Report" below.

The awarding process

Once marking is complete, the grade boundaries are determined in what we term the 'awarding' process. The boundaries are set to maintain the standard of learner skills, knowledge and understanding, shown at each grade each series. During the awarding process, subject experts balance a range of evidence to determine where the pass and distinctions threshold boundaries should be set. This evidence includes:

- Various pieces of statistical information on how learners have performed overall, by paper and by skill to previous series
- Comparison of cohort makeup and learner demographics to multiple previous series
- A report from the Principal Examiner, the author of each paper
- Script inspection by subject experts, which includes first looking at archive materials to ensure comparability of standards

The process is repeated for Pass and Distinction grade boundaries for all levels. The Merit boundary sits half-way between the Pass and Distinction boundaries and is calculated arithmetically. The full process is then reported and reviewed again by a number of technical specialist teams to ensure outcomes are fair to current and previous cohorts and maintain the value of the grades.

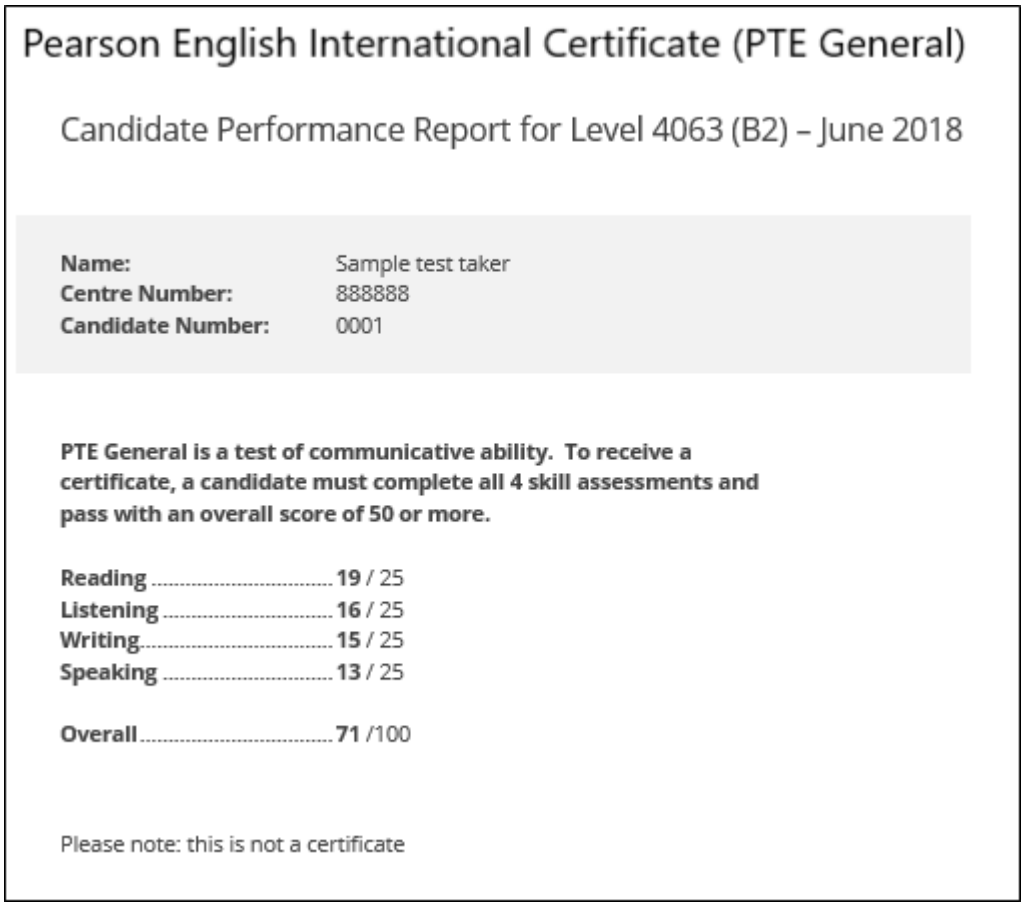
VIII. Results reporting

Candidate results can be accessed via the Edexcel Online (EOL) system. Please check the exam timetable for the date these results will be available. Candidates' "Statements of Provisional Results" will be sent out via courier on the date listed in the test timetable. The statement of results is divided into two, length-ways, with a perforated seam down the middle. Separate the copies and issue one to the candidate and keep the other for your records. Although results are dispatched on fixed dates, Pearson is unable to guarantee the dates on which they will be received; delays may occur in transit.

Please note: Statements of results are provisional and in certain circumstances may not reflect the grade awarded on candidates' certificates.

Candidate performance reports

Candidates' "Performance Reports" will be distributed to centres via email following the dispatch of the results documents. They should be printed in A4 format and distributed to the candidates by the centres.



Pearson English International Certificate (PTE General)

Candidate Performance Report for Level 4063 (B2) – June 2018

Name: Sample test taker
Centre Number: 888888
Candidate Number: 0001

PTE General is a test of communicative ability. To receive a certificate, a candidate must complete all 4 skill assessments and pass with an overall score of 50 or more.

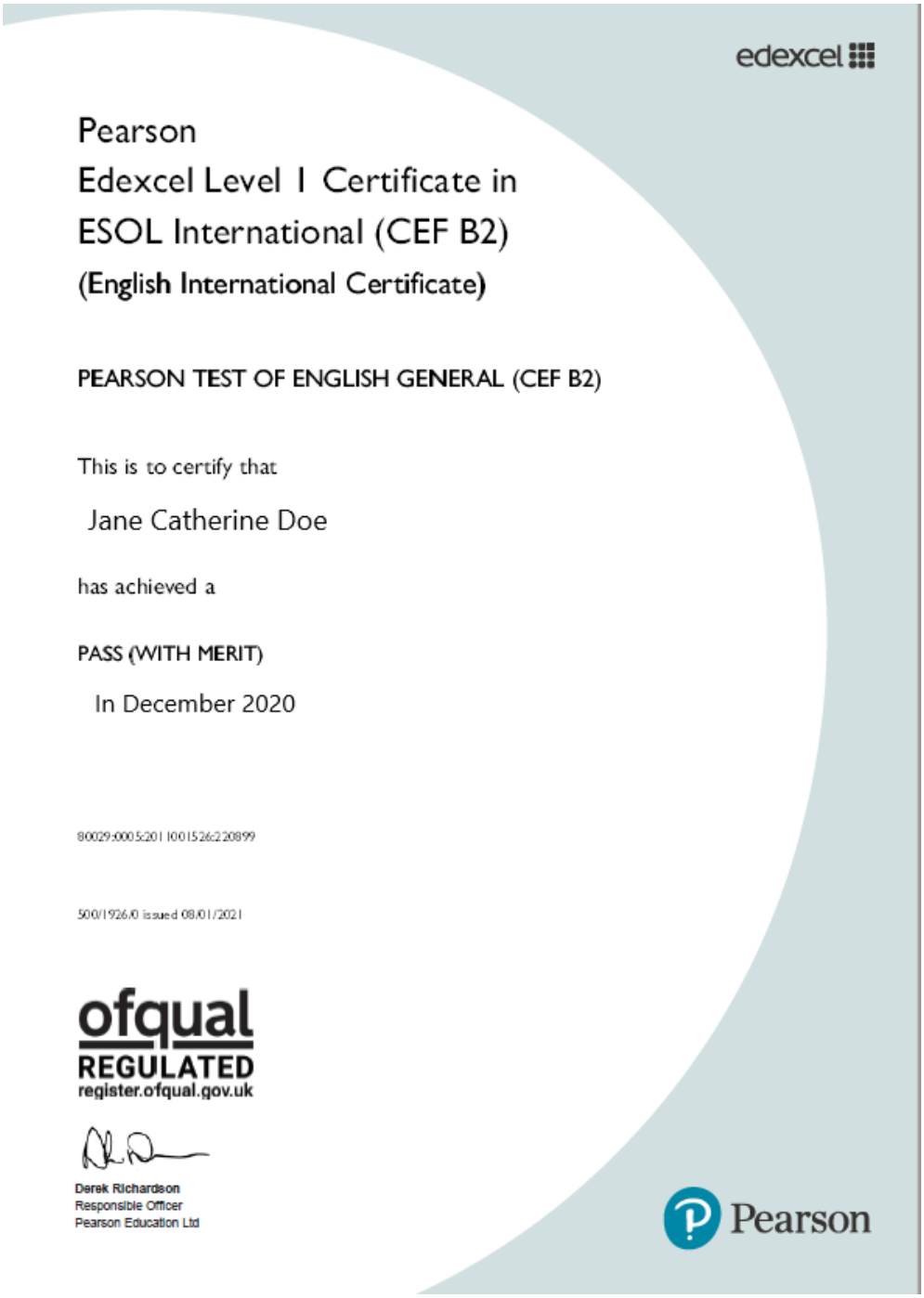
Reading ..... **19** / 25
Listening ..... **16** / 25
Writing ..... **15** / 25
Speaking ..... **13** / 25

Overall ..... **71** /100

Please note: this is not a certificate

Certificates

Two to three weeks after receipt of provisional results, test certificates are issued and sent via courier to the test centre on the date listed in the test timetable.



edexcel

Pearson
Edexcel Level 1 Certificate in
ESOL International (CEF B2)
(English International Certificate)

PEARSON TEST OF ENGLISH GENERAL (CEF B2)

This is to certify that

Jane Catherine Doe

has achieved a

PASS (WITH MERIT)

In December 2020

800295000520110015262208 99

500/1926/0 issued 08/01/2021

ofqual
REGULATED
register.ofqual.gov.uk

Derek Richardson
Responsible Officer
Pearson Education Ltd

Pearson

Pearson English International Certificate (PTE General) Certificate

IX. Results reviews and appeals

At times, a candidate may want reassurance about a grade. In these circumstances, they may refer to our post results services.

For International Certificate, there are two services available:

- Review of Marking* - A review of marking is a check that our examiners have marked externally assessed components correctly. It can be requested via Edexcel Online (EOL), it costs £39.50 per paper and the outcome will be available within 20 days of the date the application was submitted. This is referred to on EOL as EAR2.
- Appeal - An appeal is a check that our awarding body has followed procedures accurately, fairly, and consistently to regulatory requirements. The maximum amount that we will charge is £120 per examination component for the initial appeal investigation, and £150 for any subsequent appeal hearing.

To learn more about post-result services, please visit our website. For any queries, please contact our customer service team.

For more information about the Pearson English International Certificate, contact your local Pearson representative or email us at pqs.internationaleo@pearson.com.