# QUALIFICATION

# SPECIFICATION

LRN Entry Level Certificate in ESOL International (Entry 3) (BELT CEF B1)
Qualification Number: 603/0171/5

LRN Level 1 Certificate in ESOL International (BELT CEF B2 )
Qualification Number: 603/0177/6

LRN Level 2 Certificate lein ESOL International (BELT CEF C1)
Qualification Number: 603/0178/8

LRN Level 3 Certificate in ESOL International (BELT CEF C2)
Qualification Number: 603/0179/X

# Contents

# BACKGROUND TO LRN

Learning Resource Network (LRN) is an Awarding organisation which creates qualifications for educational institutions, independent learning providers and employers.

LRN is recognised for its portfolio of international English qualifications for those who want to provide evidence of their English Language skills for their professional or personal development. These qualifications are internationally recognised as providing proof of the skills and abilities required by educational institutes, professional bodies and governments.

LRN also creates qualification in business, enterprise, management, Islamic banking as well as qualifications in education and training.  LRN offers its customers qualifications that are easy to deliver, cost effective and user friendly.

In producing its qualifications the project team drew upon the experience and expertise of academics, professionals working in the pertinent industries and colleagues with a wealth of practice and knowledge of validation, verification, delivery and assessment.

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# ESOL INTERNATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS

ESOL International qualifications are designed for candidates who are not native speakers of English and who wish to achieve a high quality, internationally recognised qualification in English that is both available and recognised worldwide and covers the whole range up to the highest level (NQF level 3 / CEF C2). They are suitable for candidates who are preparing for entry to higher education or professional employment in the UK or elsewhere. ESOL International qualifications are designed to reference the descriptions of language proficiency in the Common European Framework Reference for Languages (CEF). The levels in the CEF have been mapped to the levels in the National Qualifications Framework for England, Wales and Northern Ireland (see Pathways to Proficiency: the alignment of language proficiency scales for assessing competence in English Language).

## BRANDING

Whilst the submitted title of this qualification is the LRN Entry Level Certificate in ESOL International (Entry 3) (BELT CEF B1),LRN Level 1 Certificate in ESOL International (BELT CEF B2),LRN Level 2 Certificate in ESOL International (BELT CEF C1) and LRN Level 3 Certificate in ESOL International (BELT CEF C2), the brand name of this qualification will be BELT (Business English Language Test).  LRN will ensure it provides accurate and correct information regarding the title of this qualification to centres, candidates and other users of this qualification.

## INTRODUCTION

This specification document provides an overview and orientation to BELT for candidates, centres, administrators, teachers and examiners and outlines the key features and administrative procedures required for this test.

## OBJECTIVE

BELT is designed for all non-native English speakers who wish to improve their English language skills at CEFR level B1, B2, C1 or C2. Candidates taking BELT will need to demonstrate that they can produce clear, well-structured and detailed output on more basic and complex subjects, showing controlled use of organisational patterns, connectors and cohesive devices appropriate to the level at which they are operating. Candidate responses will be at a level of language that would be expected on the Common European Framework of References for Languages (CEFR) at B1, B2, C1 or C2.

## CANDIDATE CATEGORY

Candidates interested in taking BELT may include those:

1. needing a starting point in order to work towards a qualification in English.
2. Working or seeking work in an English speaking environment.
3. Living and working in a country where the native and official language is English.
Candidates who take BELT are made up of a range of different national and cultural backgrounds.

# ENTRY REQUIREMENTS

There are no entry requirements for candidates upon taking this qualification, including prior knowledge, levels of understanding and areas of familiarity.  It is also not necessary for candidates to have achieved a qualification in English prior to registering. However, LRN would recommend that candidates are well-prepared before taking this test. Downloadable sample materials are accessible through the qualifications section of the LRN website whereby candidates can access sample assessment material. LRN approved centres ensure that candidates are fully prepared to sit BELT through using fully trained teachers and appropriate resources as laid out in the centre agreement with LRN.

## PROGRESSION

BELT has been designed to reflect the wide variation in candidates' origins, levels of education and career aims. Progression opportunities may, therefore, take a variety of paths. Depending on the level of qualification achieved, it may be appropriate for the candidate to progress to:

• A higher level of any ESOL International qualification
• A key skills or functional skills qualification
• Vocational qualifications
• Access to Higher Education

# RECOGNITION OF PRIOR LEARNING

Please refer to LRN Recognition of Prior Learning Policy which is available on LRN website.

# LANGUAGE OF ASSESSMENT

LRN aims to use English that is plain, clear, free from bias and appropriate to all candidates. LRN will ensure the assessment materials, stimuli and the assessment itself is carried out in English.

# QUALIFICATION OVERVIEW

BELT is based on the CEFR in that it reflects the level(s) of language ability which are as defined by the CEFR. BELT is a single unit qualification. Candidates are assessed in all four components of reading, listening, writing and speaking. The total qualification time for a candidate aiming to achieve certification is 273 hours for this qualification. The breakdown of total qualification time is detailed below:

| | |
|---|---|
| **Guided learning hours (GLH)** | 250 |
| **Self study (SS)** | 52 |
| **Total Assessment Time (TAT)** | 2 hours |
| **Total Qualification Time (TQT)** | **304 Hours (GLH+SS+TAT)** |

## QUALIFICATION FEATURES

BELT is a four language skills qualification which assesses four sub skills of the English language: reading, listening, speaking, and writing. References to the CEFR are made in the BELT Mark Scheme in order to demonstrate linkage between the qualification construct and CEFR. The information below is a breakdown of BELT qualification features.

## Speaking:

Duration: 12 minutes

| Section | Tasks and Functions |
|---|---|
| Section 1 | Introduction based on familiar topics - 3 minutes |
| Section 2 | Role Play and response to Examiner's follow-up questions- 3 minutes |
| Section 3 | Discussion and response to Examiner's follow-up questions- 6 minutes |

## Reading & Writing

Duration: 120 minutes

| Section | Tasks and Functions |
|---|---|
| Section 1 | 5 source texts, each requiring the candidate to answer 5 multiple choice questions. 25 questions in total. |
| Section 2 | Respond to a business letter and meet the criteria given in the instructions (150-200 words). |
| Section 3 | Write a report based on business data provided in the stimulus material and meet the communicative objectives given in the instructions (200-250 words). |

# Listening

Duration: 40 minutes | Number of Questions: 25

| Section | Tasks and Functions |
| --- | --- |
| Task 1 | 5 recording tracks (5 multiple choice questions) |
| Task 2 | 1 recording track (extract and note down 5 pieces of key information) |
| Task 3 | 1 recording track (5 cloze tasks to complete a summary of what has been said) |
| Task 4 | 1 extended recording track (5 cloze tasks to complete a summary of what has been said) |
| Task 5 | 1 extended recording track (5 True/False/Can't tell statements based on what has been said, incl. implied and inferred meaning, the speaker's attitude and intention etc.) |

# CEFR Global Scale

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Proficient User** | **C2** | Can understand with ease virtually everything heard or read. Can summarise information from different spoken and written sources, reconstructing arguments and accounts in a coherent presentation. Can express him/herself spontaneously, very fluently and precisely, differentiating finer shades of meaning even in more complex situations. |
| | **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 organisational patterns, connectors and cohesive devices. |
| **Independent User** | **B2** | Can understand the main ideas of complex text on both concrete and abstract topics, including technical discussions in his/her field of specialisation. Can interact with a degree of fluency and spontaneity that makes regular interaction with native speakers quite possible without strain for either party. Can produce clear, detailed text on a wide range of subjects and explain a viewpoint on a topical issue giving the advantages and disadvantages of various options. |
| | **B1** | Can understand the main points of clear standard input on familiar matters regularly encountered in work, school, leisure, etc. Can deal with most situations likely to arise whilst travelling in an area where t he language is spoken.  Can produce simple connected text on topics, which are familiar, or of personal interest. Can describe experiences and events, dreams, hopes & ambitions and briefly give reasons and explanations for opinions and plans. |
| **Basic User** | **A2** | Can understand sentences and frequently used expressions related to areas of most immediate relevance (e.g. very basic personal and family information, shopping, local geography, employment). Can communicate in simple and routine tasks requiring a simple and direct exchange of information on familiar and routine matters.  Can describe in simple terms aspects of his/her background, immediate environment and matters in areas of immediate need. |
| | **A1** | Can understand and use familiar everyday expressions and very basic phrases aimed at the satisfaction of needs of a concrete type. Can introduce him/herself and others and can ask and answer questions about personal details such as where he/she lives, people he/she knows and things he/she has. Can interact in a simple way provided the other person talks slowly and clearly and is prepared to help. |

# CAN DO SUMMARY

The ALTE 'Can Do' Project

The CAN do Project has been developed by Association of Language Testers in Europe (ALTE) which offers a framework that covers six levels of language competency that is aligned to the Council of Europe Common European Framework (CEFR).

## Summary of overall ability

### C2

**Speaking & Listening**

CAN advise on or talk about complex or sensitive issues, understanding colloquial references and dealing confidently with hostile questions

**Reading**

CAN understand documents, correspondence and reports, including the finer points of complex texts.

**Writing**

CAN write letters on any subject and full notes of meetings or seminars with good expression and accuracy.

### C1

**Speaking & Listening**

CAN contribute effectively to meetings and seminars within own area of work.

CAN keep up a casual conversation with a good degree of fluency, coping with abstract expressions

**Reading**

CAN read quickly to cope with an academic course, read different types of media for information or to understand non-standard correspondence.

**Writing**

Can prepare / draft professional correspondence

CAN take notes, of reasonable accuracy, in meetings.

CAN write an essay which shows the ability to communicate.

### B2

**Speaking & Listening**

CAN follow or give a talk on a familiar topic.

CAN keep up a conversation on a fairly wide range of topics.

**Reading**

CAN scan texts for relevant information and understand detailed instructions or advice.

**Writing**

CAN make notes while someone is talking.

CAN write a letter including non-standard requests.

## Speaking & Listening

**B2**

CAN express opinions or abstract/cultural matters in a limited way.

CAN offer advice within a known area

CAN understand instructions or public announcements

## Reading

CAN understand routine nformation and articles.

## Writing

CAN write letters or make notes on familiar or predictable matters.

# RESULTS

LRN trained examiners are allowed to mark the writing and speaking components of the BELT. Marks are allocated for each candidate in accordance with the BELT mark scheme for writing and speaking. The timescales in which LRN will issue its results is between 4 to 6 weeks (upon receiving the candidate results from the test centre).

# READING AND LISTENING

The marking of Reading and Listening components of BELT is completed by clerical markers using answer keys for each question paper. To ensure standardisation of each exam, the Reading and Listening clerical markers have completed induction training followed by standardisation exercises prior to each paper (where required).

Results are moderated by the moderation team in accordance with LRN's moderation policy. Moderated results are then forwarded to the Lead Moderator for final approval.

# SPEAKING AND WRITING

The Speaking examination is conducted by one examiner, trained by LRN, and is recorded on a digital recording device. Marks are allocated for speaking and writing skills to each candidate in accordance with the BELT mark scheme. BELT is 100% externally assessed by an LRN examiner.

Speaking sub-skills are assessed one to one.

Results are moderated by the moderation team in accordance with LRN's moderation policy. Moderated results are then forwarded to the Lead Moderator for final approval.

# MARKING AND GRADING

- Each Reading question carries 1 marks (25 questions)
- Each Listening question carries 1 mark (25 questions)
- Writing is based on 2 tasks and carries a maximum of 25 marks
- Speaking is a three part exam and carries a maximum of 25 marks

For each sub-component candidates will be graded as follows:

- o  0 - 6.9      =   below B1
- o  7 – 11.9     =   B1
- o  12 – 16.9    =   B2
- o  17 – 21.9    =   C1

Each sub-component skill is marked out of 25.

The total maximum for this qualification is 100.

| | |
|---|---|
| 0 - 27.9 | pre-B1 |
| 28 - 47.7 | B1 |
| 48 - 67.9 | B2 |
| 68 - 87.9 | C1 |
| 88 - 100 | C2 |

# RELIABILITY AND VALIDITY

BELT has been designed in line with the Common European Framework for Reference for Languages (CEFR) and follows the principles of reliability and validity through the following steps:

## Validity

1. Producing quality items to the required standard that measure performance with Links to the CEFR.

2. Validating performance through piloting and feeding back into the test development cycle to ensure consistency of items.

The validity of LRN tests is evaluated in terms of the uses and interpretations of scores. The two main concerns in validation studies are:

1. The uses and their meaning to which scores are put in terms of the latent trait(s) they engage and measure. Several validation frameworks, such as Messick (1989) and Kane (2012), emerge from this. Supporting evidence of validity arguments potentially vary from test to test as every test produced has a unique validity argument.

The following inferences are included, following Kane's framework (2012):

a. Evaluation - clear and sufficient domain definition and operationalisation.

b. Generalisation - how confidently performance can be extrapolated on the test to a universe of the tasks.

c. Explanation - analogous to conventional construct validity.

d. Accuracy of scores - representing the amount of the latent trait under assessment.
e. Extrapolation - analogous to conventional criterion validity.

f. Accuracy of candidate performance on the test - prediction of performance on similar devices as well as the target language domain.

Tests developed by LRN are subjected to rigorous data analysis methods in order to ascertain the validity of the uses and interpretations of scores. Consultation is received by a team of experts who assist in undergoing latent trait model analysis on data sets in order to determine the quality of the test.

Evidence yielded from these analyses is used to judge the validity argument of the test.

## Reliability

1. Delivering examiner training against BELT mark scheme with links to the CEFR.

2. Conducting standardisation and monitoring to ensure consistent interlocutor performance and accurate grading.
3. Carrying out moderation to ensure consistent, accurate and reliable results.

4. The LRN validation team work with a variety of models relevant to language testing and psycholinguistics. Validation studies for each qualification are produced for every 800 - 1000 responses/grades generated.

   *Please visit the LRN website for further updates on validation and reliability under our Re search section.

# ADMINISTRATION AND ASSESSMENT DELIVERY

The duration of the BELT assessment is 2 hours and 52 minutes with the main test sitting (reading, listening and writing) lasting 2 hours and 40 minutes in one continuous assessment session on the same day (with a short break in between the listening and the reading/writing components).  Speaking tests are scheduled between one and three days before or after the main test sitting.

One invigilator is assigned to every 15 candidates for the reading, listening and writing components with an additional invigilator to accompany candidates in instances where they have to leave the assessment room for any reason. Invigilators are also responsible for checking candidate identification and are always present for the duration of the assessment. Invigilators are also responsible for ensuring candidates have no unauthorised materials in the examination room.

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