

**School of Foreign Languages
Centre for Independent English Language Assessment**

**INDEPENDENT ENGLISH EXAM
SYLLABUS**

2022

Prerequisites

It is strongly recommended that students should take the following courses before sitting the Independent English Exam:

- English for General Communication Purposes (Foundation course, Intermediate, Upper-Intermediate, Advanced);
- English for General Academic Purposes (Upper-Intermediate, Advanced);
- English for Business Purposes (Upper-Intermediate, Advanced);
- English for Specific Purposes: Legal English, Social Studies, Public Administration, General Linguistics, Urban Studies, English for International Studies, History, History of Art, Philology, Art and Design, Chemistry, Biology, English for Logistics and SCM, English for Journalism and Media, Applied Mathematics, Electronic and Computer Engineering, Economics, English for a global manager;
- English for Specific Academic Purposes: Ancient World, Linguistics, Maths and Information Technology, Theoretical Linguistics;
- International English Examinations Practice;
- Mastering Soft Skills through English How to Think Critically and Adapt to Changes.

Abstract

The Independent English Exam is aimed at evaluating the level of English language proficiency needed for the purposes of academic communication and assessing whether the students are ready to use the English language as a medium of instruction in a variety of academic programmes. The exam is a mandatory part of the curriculum of bachelor's and specialist's degrees and is held annually in a format similar to that of an international exam. The exam consists of four parts - reading, listening, writing, and an interview. In the Reading section, students are required to do tasks based on academic texts. In the Listening section, students are to complete a series of listening comprehension tasks. In the Writing portion of the exam, students have to understand and describe visual information, and write an argumentative essay. During the Interview, students have to answer a series of questions.

Learning objectives

To evaluate the level of a student's English language proficiency encompassing the four skills (reading, listening, writing and speaking) that are essential for the purposes of academic and professional communication.

Expected outcomes

The students are expected to:

- demonstrate a confident use of a wide range of lexical repertoire and grammar structures to achieve a set of goals required for oral and written communication
- read with a large degree of independence, adapting style and speed of reading to texts on general academic and professional non field-specific topics

- listen to and understand with ease standard spoken language encountered in social, academic and professional context
- write clear, detailed texts on a variety of subjects, synthesising and evaluating information and arguments
- speak on complex subjects providing clear smooth and elaborate reasoning and description
- produce systematically developed oral and written texts, with appropriate highlighting of significant points, and relevant supporting detail

Content

Reading

The Reading section of the exam consists of three parts which are aimed at assessing students' reading skills in English for general academic and communication purposes. Within each part of the section, students are expected to read and understand a text on an academic or professional non field-specific topic and complete tasks based on it. The tasks are of different types including, but not limited to, matching, answering multiple choice questions, and identifying information (True/False/Not Given). The number of tasks and their sequence in each part may vary.

Students have 1 hour to complete the Reading Section

Writing

The Writing section of the exam consists of two tasks which are aimed at assessing students' writing skills in English for general academic and communication purposes.

In Task 1, students have to understand and describe visual information that is presented in different formats including, but not limited to, line graphs, bar charts, pie charts, and tables. Though authentic, graphs may contain altered or fictional names of organizations. This is done to facilitate task and language focus.

In Task 2, students' are to write an essay on a given topic providing valid well-structured and well-developed arguments supported by evidence. Essay topics cover a range of themes related to current societal issues.

Students have 1 hour to complete the Writing Section

Listening

The Listening section of the exam consists of three parts which are aimed at assessing students' listening skills in English for general academic and communication purposes. Students are expected to complete a series of listening comprehension tasks within each part of the section. The tasks are of different types including, but not limited to, filling out a form, answering multiple choice questions, and completing notes. The number of tasks and their sequence in each part may vary.

Students have approximately 30 minutes to complete the Listening Section

Speaking

The Speaking section of the exam is aimed at assessing students' speaking skills in English for general academic and communication purposes.

The section starts with a series of warm-up questions that are not assessed. They enable students to shift into an engaged and intentional frame of mind to better perform in the speaking tasks that follow.

In Task 1 of the Speaking section, students are to share their personal experiences and talk about the personal significance of events. Students have one minute to prepare before giving a three-minute talk on a provided topic.

Task 2 focuses on the topics that deal with current social/academic/vocational issues. Students are to answer four questions providing well-structured and well-developed arguments with relevant examples. No preparation time is given. An answer to each question should be no longer than two minutes.

Students have approximately 15 minutes to complete the Speaking Section

Assessment

The exam consists of four sections. The results of each section contribute equally to the exam grade. The grade is calculated based on a 10-point scale. The score is calculated as a percentage of all tasks fully completed according to the Conversion Scale to HSE's 10-point Grading Scale. In Smart LMS, the student sees their points gained for each section of the exam 30 days after the date of the examination.

In the Reading and Listening sections, answers containing spelling mistakes are considered incorrect.

In the Writing section, students' answers are assessed on content, thematic development, coherence and cohesion, lexical range, and grammatical accuracy.

Particular attention is paid to such aspects as

- completion of task requirements,
- development and validity of ideas,
- relevance of examples,
- use of the appropriate register,
- logical organization of ideas,
- use of cohesive devices,
- use of paragraphing,
- use of referencing,
- range of vocabulary used,
- spelling, word choice, and word formation,
- range of grammatical structures and accuracy.

Plagiarized excerpts result in in “0” on the 10-point scale.

In the Speaking section, students' answers are assessed on thematic development and coherence, lexical range, grammatical accuracy, fluency, and pronunciation.

Particular attention is paid to such aspects as

- development of ideas,
- effectiveness of descriptions,
- use of cohesive features,
- range of vocabulary,
- use of idiomatic expressions,
- awareness of style and collocation,
- range of grammatical structures and accuracy,
- range of pronunciation features,
- pronunciation accuracy.

Conversion Scale to HSE’s 10-point Grading Scale

HSE	Independent English Exam (%)
10	90 - 100
9	80 - 89
8	70 - 79
7	60 - 69
6	50 - 59
5	40 - 49
4	30 - 39
3	20 - 29
2	10 - 19
1	0 - 9

The absence on the exam without valid reason results in “0” on the 10-point scale.