

2010

CIELT-A1 Handbook©



College of Excellence
Certificate in English
Language Test – A1
CIELT-A1

Preface

College of Excellence's Certificate in English Language Test (CIELT) is a test of English proficiency and is designed specifically for migrants who are applying to work in the UK (England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland) as highly skilled workers (Tier 1) or in a skilled occupation which is on the shortage occupation list (Tier 2). CIELT has been assessed and approved by the UK Border Agency (UKBA) as meeting their requirements for Tier 1 and Tier 2 visa applicants and is on their approved list of English language tests.

Your CIELT result certificate will clearly show, your name, the qualification obtained and the date of the award - this certificate is a key requirement in support of your visa application. Test results may be verified online using our CIELT Verification facility: http://www.coex.org.uk/cielt_ver.php

During the CIELT development process, question content and difficulty levels were constantly considered and evaluated. Test materials were built using English that is typically used in everyday life in the UK. The goal was to assess the four fundamental English skills (listening, reading, writing and speaking) in a timely and efficient manner, and with a practical and real perspective.

College of Excellence's CIELT certificate in English complies with the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages, and assesses language skills in everyday contexts and with relevance to the expected needs of the language user.

CIELT is wholly produced by College of Excellence in collaboration with language and assessment professionals, and is administered and assessed by College of Excellence examiners and moderators.

There are two versions of CIELT, one for Tier 1 visa applicants and one for Tier 2 visa applicants. CIELT-General is designed for Tier 1 visa applicants who are required to demonstrate a higher command of English. CIELT-A1 is less stringent and is specifically tailored for Tier 2 visa applicants.

This handbook is for candidates preparing for CIELT-A1 and more specifically for those involved in preparing candidates for CIELT-A1.

The following pages give an overview of the standardisation and elements of CIELT-A1. This is followed by a focus on each element and includes information on content, assessment and related procedures, assessment criteria, advice on preparation and sample examination material.

Certificate in English Language Test – A1 (CIELT-A1)

The Certificate in English Language Test – A1 (CIELT-A1) is designed to measure proficiency in English language learning. CIELT-A1 is suitable for adults, young and old, who wish to work or study in the UK. CIELT (*A1 and General*) is designed in line with the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) for testing language proficiency.

The **Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment**, abbreviated CEFR, is a guideline used to describe achievements of learners of foreign languages. It was compiled by the Council of Europe as the main part of the project "Language Learning for European Citizenship" between 1989 and 1996. Its main aim is to provide a Europe-wide framework for the teaching and assessing of languages including English.

In November 2001 a European Union Council Resolution recommended using the CEFR to set up systems of validation of language ability. With regards English, the six reference levels are widely accepted as the European standard for grading an individual's language proficiency and enables language learners, teachers, and potential employers to compare and relate language qualifications by level.

College of Excellence's Certificate in English Language Test – A1 (CIELT-A1) has four elements in total, and these can broadly be divided into three paper-based parts and an oral part. The three paper-based parts or tests are: the Listening test, the Reading test and the Writing test. Each of these respective tests assesses various related skills. The oral element or Speaking test is a one-to-one interview between the candidate and a CIELT examiner and assesses the candidates speaking skills. The Speaking test is recorded.

The Listening test, Reading test and Writing test will normally be conducted successively, over a period of less than two hours and without any rest breaks, in the morning. The Speaking test will normally take place that afternoon or as soon as possible.

CIETL-A1, Content and Focus

Part/timing	Content	Focus
1 LISTENING 10 - 15 minutes (approx)	The Listening test consists of three sections. Before each section candidates have some time to briefly look at the Question Paper instructions and questions. The recordings are typical of everyday life: short extracts of conversations (e.g. making a booking or checking into a hotel), public announcements (e.g. as in a train station), and individuals giving routine details (e.g. age, interests, etc. or giving directions). The question types are multiple choice, True/False and gap-fills. Candidates hear each section twice and at the end of the recordings are given some extra time to transfer their answers from the Question Paper to the Listening Answer Sheet.	Candidates are expected to be able to understand a variety of listening texts, showing of comprehension of gist and understanding of detail. They must also be able to appreciate and interpret the context. Texts are generally short involving everyday interactions and situations.

<p>2 READING</p> <p>30 – 40 minutes (approx)</p>	<p>The Reading test consists of three passages or sections. The question types are multiple choice, True/False and short answers to specific questions. The reading passages are broadly representative of living in the UK and paper-based media coverage. The extracts are non-expert such as describing a hobby or lifestyle and a synopsis of a famous person or event. Candidates must transfer their answers from the Question Paper to the Reading Answer Sheet within the allotted time.</p>	<p>Candidates are expected to be able to apply their understanding of English to find general information and specific details. Candidates should fundamentally be able to effectively read plain text and locate the relevant information to complete the given tasks, and to do so with some degree of time efficiency (utilising rudimentary skimming and scanning as appropriate, and appreciating the context and understanding important points in context).</p>
<p>3 WRITING</p> <p>1 hour (approx)</p>	<p>Task 1 Completing a form or providing other brief but specific details (using full sentences).</p> <p>Task 2 Writing a short letter or email, in response to specific stated requirements and a stated purpose.</p>	<p>Candidates are expected to be able to complete forms and applications and to be able to compose typical everyday correspondence and effectively communicate simple information with appropriate vocabulary.</p>
<p>4 SPEAKING</p> <p>Up to 10 minutes</p>	<p>Part 1 The candidates are asked questions about themselves and family, their work or studies, their hometowns and hobbies, etc.</p> <p>Part 2 Candidate are given visual prompts (photographs) and asked to describe what they see, and possibly express some related opinions and feelings.</p>	<p>Candidates are expected to be able to communicate effectively about themselves and areas that relate to them directly, and to talk about their immediate environment. In part two they are asked to speak impromptu for about two minutes within the context of a specific prompt. Candidates are expected to demonstrate fundamental skills of appropriate vocabulary use, grammatical correctness and clarity.</p>

College of Excellence (COEX) is committed to consistency, standardisation and security in developing, administering and marking CIELT.

1. Test Content

- only qualified and experienced language professionals write for CIELT
- test writers are trained in the assessment aims, format and content of the tests
- tests are edited and proofread by dedicated COEX staff
- all test materials are diligently and carefully prepared and checked
- a regular review of the tests is undertaken by pertinent stakeholders

2. Marking Procedures

- keys and marking schemes to every test are prepared prior to test sessions
- markers review marking criteria/detailed descriptors at the beginning of each marking session
- detailed assessment criteria are supplied on all writing tasks
- papers are marked in a controlled environment
- moderators ensure consistency throughout the marking process
- reasonable allowances and considerations may be made with respect to the keys and marking schemes at the marking stage
- a random selection of candidate submissions are moderated following the marking session to ensure consistency and standardisation
- marks are checked and recorded systematically to ensure accuracy
- a report is prepared by the moderators at the end of the marking session

3. Awarding Procedures

- when all results are available, any borderline cases and any other issues arising, such as apparently identical papers and other anomalies are reviewed and adjudicated
- individual papers are re-marked and re-checked
- final scores are awarded
- Recommendations and any necessary improvements to the test or assessment procedures are documented

Security at all stages is paramount

- total confidentiality of live papers is maintained throughout
- all papers are handled using secure methods at all stages and times
- candidate certificates are produced in-house from secure and confidential records

Administrative Efficiency and Flexibility

- agents and candidates should be realistic and clear with deadlines and in declarations of entries and are responsible for any subsequent absences and in the case of overseas tests agents are responsible for final tallies
- results are processed within seven working days of delivery to the COEX examination team
- COEX is welcoming to all candidates and representatives/agents and will do its utmost to accommodate all reasonable and appropriate requests which help them to perform to their best

CIELT-A1 is specifically designed to assess Tier 2 applicants such as chefs, jockeys and sports professionals, who are applying to work in the UK for the first time or who wish to renew or extend their visas or change their visa status.

CIELT-A1 assesses that candidates can function in English at a basic or 'breakthrough' level. Remember that CIELT-A1 is a 4-skills test which assesses candidates listening, reading, writing and speaking. Candidates should be able to ask and answer simple questions in English and be able to carry out routine everyday tasks effectively, including work-related interactions. The test length is typically one hour and a half for the paper-based parts (Listening, Reading and Writing) and up to ten minutes for the Speaking part. To successfully achieve a CIELT-A1 certificate, candidates must achieve an overall average score of 50% or more.

- CIELT-A1 candidates can interact in a simple way (and allowing that the other person talks slowly and clearly and is prepared to help).
- CIELT-A1 candidates can introduce themselves, and others, using simple English sentences and frequently used expressions.
- CIELT-A1 candidates can ask and answer questions about themselves and their families, where they live, people they know and things they own such as a computer or pet, or things they do such as their pastimes, hobbies and work.
- CIELT-A1 candidates can understand and use familiar everyday English expressions and very basic phrases to meet concrete needs.
- CIELT-A1 candidates can communicate in simple and routine tasks requiring a simple and direct exchange of information on familiar and day-to-day matters.
- CIELT-A1 candidates can describe, in simple terms, aspects of their background, immediate environment and matters of regular need.
- CIELT-A1 candidates can understand basic instructions and take part in a basic factual conversation on a simple topic.
- CIELT-A1 candidates can express simple opinions in a familiar or common context.
- CIELT-A1 candidates can understand simple notices, instructions or information.
- CIELT-A1 candidates can understand straightforward information within a known area, such as on products and signs and simple texts on familiar matters.
- CIELT-A1 candidates can complete basic forms, and write notes including times, dates and places.
- CIELT-A1 candidates can complete forms and write postcards and simple letters related to personal or given information.

CIELT-A1, 4-Skills Descriptor Summaries

CIELT-A1, 4-Skills Descriptor Summaries	
Listening	<p>Can recognise familiar English words and basic phrases concerning self, family and immediate concrete surroundings and topics (e.g. basic personal and family details and employment information as well as shopping, local area, etc.) when people speak slowly and clearly.</p> <p>Can catch the main point in short, clear, simple English messages, announcements and short discourses.</p>
Reading	<p>Can understand familiar English names, words and simple sentences, for example on notices and posters or in catalogues.</p> <p>Can comprehend very short, simple English texts.</p> <p>Can find specific, predictable information in simple everyday material such as advertisements, prospectuses, menus and timetables, and can understand short, simple personal letters.</p>
Writing	<p>Can write a short, simple postcard in English - for example sending holiday greetings. Can fill in forms with personal details - for example entering name, nationality and address on a hotel registration form or similar.</p> <p>Can write short, simple notes and messages relating to matters in areas of immediate need. Can write a very simple personal letter in English - for example thanking someone for something and making simple suggestions.</p>
Speaking	<p>Can interact effectively provided the other person is prepared to repeat or rephrase things at a slower rate of speech than normal and help candidate formulate what he/she is trying to say.</p> <p>Can use simple English phrases and sentences to describe where he/she lives and people he/she knows.</p> <p>Can handle simple questions and exchanges in areas of immediate need or on familiar topics and activities.</p> <p>Can use a series of English phrases and sentences to describe in simple terms own family and other people, living conditions, own educational background and own present or most recent job/studies.</p> <p>Can talk descriptively for a short while on a given pictorial prompt.</p>

CIELT-A1 Skills Assessment Overview

LISTENING

The Listening skills assessment is based on the following variety of skills and tasks:

1. Listening for specific information.
2. Locating information.
3. Multiple-choice questions.
4. True/False questions.
5. Gap-fill questions

There are up to 30 questions and candidates are awarded one point for each correct answer.

READING

The Reading skills assessment is based on the following variety of skill and tasks:

1. Reading for specific information.
2. Locating information.
3. Multiple-choice questions.
4. True/False questions.
5. Short answers to specific questions.

There are up to 30 questions and candidates are awarded one point for each correct answer.

WRITING

The Writing section consists of two tasks which together assess a wide range of writing skills.

Task 1 is a form (perhaps a registration form or an application for a club, etc.). The form items are designed to allow and encourage candidates to answer using full sentences (rather than just words). Task 2 is an email or letter, perhaps to a friend or colleague, with specific stated requirements and a specific purpose. In Task 2 candidates are required to write in full sentences and to organise their points at least clearly and coherently.

Task 1 and Task 2 have slightly different assessment criteria which reflect the different natures and scopes of the tasks. Task 1 is shorter, more constrained and formulaic whereas Task 2 gives the candidate much more freedom of expression. Accordingly, candidates are advised to spend a shorter time on Task 1 and the bulk of their time on Task 2. Candidates may obtain a maximum of twelve (12) points for each task.

Assessment criteria for Task 1

- Grammar/punctuation (0-2)
- Content (0-2)
- Vocabulary (0-2)
- Clarity (0-2)
- Task Completion (0-2)
- Appearance (0-2)

Assessment criteria for Task 2

- Grammar/punctuation (0-2)
- Content (0-2)
- Vocabulary (0-2)
- Clarity (0-2)
- Task Completion (0-2)
- Layout (0-2)

Expanded Criteria for Task 1 and Task 2:

Grammar	<p>The text can be understood. Tenses and basic word order and forms are generally correct. There are a range of correct sentence structures.</p> <p>There are various errors in grammatical relationships which cause some difficulty to the reader. There is some incorrect and inconsistent tense use (relying perhaps mainly on present tense form). Some sentences are rudimentary or partial and limited and some are poor and awkward.</p>
Punctuation	<p>Punctuation has been applied and especially full stops and commas, and capital letters at the beginning of sentences.</p> <p>Some punctuation is spurious and inconsistent.</p>
Content	<p>Content for the most part is appropriate to the requirement.</p> <p>At times some content is not relevant.</p>
Vocabulary	<p>The vocabulary is sufficient to basically fulfil the task and express ideas effectively.</p> <p>Some vocabulary is imprecise and inappropriate and may be due to transplanting words from first language.</p>
Clarity	<p>The meaning is essentially clear and organised.</p> <p>At times the meaning may be vague or incomplete and lacking good organisation.</p>
Task Completion	<p>Completes the task in a basic and adequate manner.</p> <p>Some responses could have been more focussed and rounded.</p>
Appearance (Task 1)	<p>The writing appears neat and deliberate, is inviting and accessible, and evidences some courtesy to the reader.</p> <p>There are some occasions of carelessness.</p>
Layout (Task 2)	<p>The writing is neatly organised and sentences/points are reasonably grouped and arranged logically using paragraphs.</p> <p>Some disjointed content and some not fully formulated points appear misplaced or too wordy.</p>

SPEAKING

The CIELT-A1 Speaking test has two parts back-to-back. Part 1 and Part 2 are scored separately albeit with the same criteria. For each part a candidate can score a maximum of 10 points. All together, a candidate may score 20 points.

Stages of the Speaking test:

- Part 1: Introductions and personal related/immediate environment questions
- Part 2: Mini presentation based on photo prompts

Assessment Criteria

1. Grammatical correctness (0-2)
2. Fluency of speech (0-2)
3. Pronunciation (0-2)
4. Comprehension and coherence(0-2)
5. Vocabulary use and variety(0-2)

Expanded Criteria for Speaking:

Comprehension & Coherence	<p>Participates effectively in a relatively simple conversation. Understands direct questions about him/herself and responds appropriately, consistently and logically.</p> <p>Has some difficulty with comprehension so must speak slowly and use repetition.</p>
Fluency of speech	<p>Produces continuous speech in simple sentence form.</p> <p>Speech can be hesitant/halting and at times fragmentary.</p>
Vocabulary use and variety	<p>Vocabulary is adequate to converse about self, and immediate topics like family and work. Can also manage a limited conversation on less familiar topics.</p> <p>Some misuse of words and lack of vocabulary for precise expression.</p>
Pronunciation	<p>Pronunciation is largely clear and intelligible.</p> <p>May speak in a monotone or without inflection and intonation which slightly impedes understanding.</p>
Grammatical correctness	<p>Speaks in grammatically correct simple sentences.</p> <p>Errors in grammar and word order occasionally make comprehension difficult.</p>

NOTE

In the tables above: items written in blue are desirable and should be encouraged



items written in red should be avoided as much as possible

PREPARING FOR CIELT

CERTIFICATE IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEST – A1

CIELT-A1

CIELT-A1 consists of four parts:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Listening ▪ Reading ▪ Writing 		<p>Paper-based (approx. 1 hour 30 minutes)</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Speaking 		<p>Up to ten minutes</p>

Listening, reading and writing constitute the paper-based elements of CIELT-A1 and typically take 1 hour 30 minutes. The speaking takes up to 10 minutes (per candidate) and is conducted following the paper-based elements and a short break. Candidates enter the speaking part individually, usually in alphabetical order.

For each of the paper-based elements (Listening, Reading and Writing) you are given a QUESTION PAPER and an ANSWER SHEET. The Question Papers give you the questions and you may write on them and make notes on them at will. All of your answers however must be written onto the Answer Sheets – these are what the examiners will assess and examiners will not look at the Question Papers.

For the Listening test you will be given opportunity to preview the questions for each section or segment before you hear the recording. Section by section, you will be told which group of questions to look at and you should focus on those questions and read them carefully and try to anticipate the answers – doing this will help you to listen for the answers more effectively. As the recording is playing, continue to focus on the questions as you listen carefully, and quickly mark or scribble your answers on the Question Paper (remember you will hear each segment twice so do not panic if you miss an answer – stay focussed and listen). At the end of the listening you will be allowed ten minutes to transfer your final answers to the Listening Answer Sheet (this is what the examiner will mark).

The Reading test is similar to the Listening except that you read the given passages to find the answers. It is a good idea to first skim the passages and preview the questions – this will prepare you and subsequently you can search purposefully and find the answers more effectively. In your own time – section by section, or after you have answered all of the questions - you must transfer your final answers to the Reading Answer Sheet (this is what the examiner will mark).

At the beginning of the Writing test take some time to consider the tasks and organise your answers – feel free to plan and prepare by highlighting key words, sketching some ideas and making notes (or whatever else helps you) on the Writing Question Paper. Then write your final answers to Task 1 and Task 2 on the respective Writing Answer Sheets (these are what the examiner will mark).

The Speaking test is short and sweet, but nonetheless you must be prepared to speak and you must make every effort to speak. The test is designed to give you the opportunity to show how well you can speak English and you will be assessed on the spoken language you produce. It is important therefore that you not merely answer the questions but that you speak as much and as confidently as you possibly can, using full sentences and with a determination to communicate effectively.