



International Certificate in Financial English

Examination Report

Test of Listening

May 2008

ICFE May 2008

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Examination Report

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INTRODUCTION

This report provides a general view of how candidates performed on the examination overall and on the Test of Listening paper in the May 2008 session, and offers guidance on the preparation of candidates.

Grading

Grading took place during June 2008, approximately four weeks after the examination was taken.

The four ICFE papers total 200 marks, after weighting. Each paper (Reading, Writing, Listening, Speaking) represents 25% of the total marks available. It is important to note that candidates do not 'pass' or 'fail' in a particular paper or component, but rather in the examination as a whole. A candidate's overall ICFE grade is based on the aggregate score gained by the candidate across all four papers.

The overall grades are set using the following information:

- statistics on the candidature
- statistics on the overall candidate performance
- statistics on individual questions, for those parts of the examination for which this is appropriate (Papers 1 and 3)
- the advice of the Principal Examiner based on the performance of candidates, and on the recommendation of examiners where this is relevant (Papers 2 and 4).

ICFE has three passing grades: 'C1 Pass with Merit', 'C1 Pass' and 'B2 Pass', and two failing grades: 'Narrow Fail' and 'Fail'. The overall pass rate for the May 2008 examination was 86.88%. In total, 21.25% of candidates were awarded a grade 'C1 Pass with Merit', 22.50% were awarded a grade 'C1 Pass' and 43.18% were awarded a 'B2 Pass'.

Statements of Results contain a graphical display of a candidate's performance in each paper. These are shown against a scale of Exceptional – Good – Borderline – Weak and indicate the candidate's relative performance on each paper.

Online teaching resources for ICFE are available (visit the website: www.cambridgeesol.org/teach/icfe). Included are sample tasks, tips for teachers and students, and a range of familiarisation and practice activities.

Feedback on this report is very welcome and should be sent to the ICFE Subject Manager, Cambridge ESOL, at the address below. Please use the feedback form at the end of this report.

ICFE Subject Manager

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e-mail: ESOLhelpdesk@CambridgeESOL.org

Candidate Background

ICFE Test of Listening – Test Overview

PART	Main Skill Focus	Input	Response	Number of questions
1	Gist, detail, function, purpose, topic, attitude, feeling, opinion, inference, etc.	Three short monologues or dialogues not linked thematically	3-option multiple choice	6
2	Listening for gist, specific information, opinion, and attitude	A dialogue set in the context of an interview, a meeting, a consultation, a discussion, a conversation, etc. between two or more people	3-option multiple choice	5
3	Locating and recording specific information	A monologue set in the context of finance and accounting (training seminars, presentations, lectures, etc.)	Gap-filling requiring limited written responses (i.e. no more than 3 words)	9
4	Listening for gist. For example, function, attitude, feeling, opinion, inference, identification of speaker, topic, etc.	5 short monologues linked by theme or topic, from 5 different speakers	Multiple matching	10

The Test of Listening is designed to test a range of listening skills. The test lasts approximately 40 minutes and contains 30 questions, with one mark awarded for each correct answer. There are four parts to the test and a range of text and task types is represented. All parts of the recording are heard twice. All instructions, rubrics and pauses are recorded onto the CD, as is the five minutes' transfer time at the end of the test.

Candidates write their answers on the question paper. In Part 3 of the test, they are required to write a word or short phrase (of no more than three words) in response to the written prompt. In Parts 1, 2 and 4, they must choose the correct answer from those provided: A, B, C, etc... . At the end of the test, candidates have five minutes to transfer their answers on to the separate answer sheet.

Part 1 features three unrelated short extracts with two three-option multiple-choice questions on each text. These extracts may be self-contained monologues or

dialogues. There is an introductory sentence to each extract on the question paper which gives information to contextualise what is heard. The extracts are set in a range of finance and accounting contexts and each question focuses on a different aspect of each text. Each text is approximately one minute in length and is heard twice.

Part 2 features discussions and interviews of 3-4 minutes in length. Tasks are designed to test the understanding of gist, attitude and opinion as well as specific information from the text. There are five three-option multiple-choice questions. The questions follow the order of information presented in the text.

Part 3 features an informational text of 3-4 minutes in length. Tasks in this part are designed to test the retrieval of detailed information from the text. Candidates are required to write a word, or words, in response to a written prompt. In such tasks, candidates copy the target words only onto the answer sheet.

There are nine questions. The questions follow the order of information presented in the text, and keys focus on the actual words heard in the recording. Candidates who paraphrase the information may still get the mark, but only if their answers are fully meaningful in the context of the question prompts. Keys generally focus on concrete pieces of information or stated opinions and are designed to be short and to fit comfortably into the space on the answer sheet. Correct spelling is expected at this level, although some minor variations may be allowed. Care is taken, however, not to focus on words that cause undue spelling difficulties as keys, and both American English and British English spellings are accepted.

Part 4 features five thematically-linked short extracts, each of which has a different speaker. This part of the test involves two tasks, each consisting of five questions from which candidates choose the correct option from a list of six. The whole sequence is heard twice.

Comments on candidate performance

Part 1

This part of the test included a talk by an accountant about setting up a new business, a discussion about a forensic accounting seminar and a conversation about a proposed share buyback. Candidates coped well with this section and all the questions discriminated between stronger and weaker candidates.

In Extract One, weaker candidates thought the answer to question 2 was option B rather than A (the correct answer). It is important that candidates listen very carefully to the full extract before choosing their answer. In this case, they needed to listen for the speaker saying which 'is the most important factor'. All three options were mentioned as being important but only A was stated as the 'most important' – 'it's essential to hire someone you'll be comfortable asking for advice. This relationship is never going to work otherwise, however well qualified or experienced they are.'

In Extract Two, candidates found question 4 particularly challenging. The answer is A – David says '... I think there are *some* accountants who would be far more conscientious if they knew their efforts could make a difference to their fees' – thus linking commitment to fees and implying that if accountants were more conscientious in their approach, they would earn more in fees.

Candidates coped well with questions 5 and 6 in Extract Three. In question 5, they correctly linked the answer C with the phrase in the recording, '... if shareholders gain all the benefits, the press and the public will claim our profits are too high and that'll be bad for our image.' The answer to question 6 was B and the whole gist of Jenny's turn is that the company should keep hold of its cash for use in a future takeover bid.

Part 2

This part focused on a conversation between two colleagues, one asking for advice about finding a bankruptcy lawyer for a client, and was generally well answered. Stronger candidates had few problems with the questions but 9 and 11 proved challenging for weaker candidates. The answer to 9 is option C, but weaker candidates thought the answer was A. The speaker, Rebecca, says that debtor and creditor committees are made up of lawyers 'in general practice' thus making A wrong.

In question 11, the answer is B but weaker candidates thought the answer was C. The clues given by the speaker for the answer B are 'it'll be worth it to smooth your client's process through the courts', and 'to minimise the stress your client will face'. There is no direct mention of Mark's professional development.

Part 3

Part 3 was a talk about how companies can enter new foreign markets. It was generally well answered, although some questions proved more challenging than others. Some weaker candidates did not get the mark for an item because they failed to read the information provided on the question paper carefully enough. For example, in question 12 the answer was 'sales' or 'selling'. Candidates who wrote 'sales not permitted' did not get the mark as the 'not permitted' part of the answer is already given on the paper - 'may not be allowed'. It is vital that candidates read the information they are given on the paper. For example for question 15, the answer is 'distribution channels'. However, weaker candidates did not read the sentence above question 15 and gave 'local knowledge' as the answer.

In question 13, weaker candidates who gave the answer as 'costs', did not receive a mark as the correct answer is 'set-up costs' or 'start-up costs'. There was a similar problem with weaker candidates just putting 'registration' or 'capital' as the answer for question 20, when 'registration capital' was the correct answer.

Spelling did not appear to be a significant problem for candidates on this part of the test.

Part 4

This part of the test, in which five people talk about their companies' annual results proved quite challenging, although there was good discrimination between weak and strong candidates. Task One was generally well answered, although candidates had some difficulty with question 24. The answer to question 24 is F, but weaker candidates thought the answer was C. The speaker says that 'the company's rapid expansion was bound to run into problems'. It is not stated exactly what type of expansion that was and there is no mention of 'new stores'.

Candidates need to understand the gist of what each person is saying in order to answer the questions in both tasks rather than matching a specific word in the recording with one on the question paper. For example, Speaker 5 is talking about a new share issue and the answer to question 30 is D, 'to raise finance for investment'. Weaker candidates heard the word 'products' at the end of Speaker 5's speech and put F as the answer ('to focus on selling expensive products').

Candidate Recommendations

DOs AND DON'Ts FOR ICFE LISTENING

DO	listen to, and read, the instructions to understand what you have to do.
DO	think about the topic, the speaker(s) and the context as you read the questions.
DO	use any pauses to read the questions and try to predict the answer.
DO	remember that the information/questions on the page follow(s) the order of information in the recording in Parts 2 and 3.
DO	try to use the actual words you hear on the tape in Part 3.
DO	use the pause between the first and second listening to check your answers.
DO	check that your answer makes sense in the gap in Part 3. Check the wording both before and after the gap when checking your answer.
DO	check that your answer is correctly spelled in Part 3.
DO	copy only the missing words onto the answer sheet in Part 3.
DO	read through both tasks in Part 4 in the pause before you hear the recording for the first time.
DO	remember that there are two questions for each speaker in Part 4 and that you may hear the answer to Task Two before that of Task One.
DO	copy your answers carefully onto the answer sheet and check that you have followed the numbering correctly.
DON'T	try to write more than three words in Part 3.
DON'T	repeat information which is already in the sentences in Part 3.
DON'T	panic in Part 3. There is plenty of time to write your answers as you listen.
DON'T	worry if you miss a question. Continue with the next question then listen again for the missing information when you hear the recording for the second time.
DON'T	leave a blank space on the answer sheet. If you're not sure, guess.

FEEDBACK FORM

ICFE Examination Report – May 2008

We are interested in hearing your views on how useful this report has been.

We would be most grateful if you could briefly answer the following questions and return a photocopy of this page to the following address:

ICFE Subject Manager

Cambridge ESOL, 1 Hills Road,
Cambridge, CB1 2EU

e-mail: ESOLhelpdesk@CambridgeESOL.org

1. Please describe your situation (e.g. EFL/ESOL teacher, Director of Studies, Examinations Officer, Local Secretary).

2. Have you prepared candidates for ICFE? YES/NO

3. Do you plan to prepare candidates for ICFE in the future? YES/NO

4. How have you used this report (e.g. for examination practice, etc.)?

5. Which parts of this report did you find most useful?

6. Which parts are not so useful?

7. What extra information would you like to see included in this report?

8. Your name (Optional)
- Centre/School

Thank you.