

The Proficiency exam

The University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate (UCLES) **Certificate of Proficiency in English (CPE)** examination is held twice a year: in June and in December.

Paper 1 Reading – 1 hour 30 minutes

Part 1 Three short texts (total 375–500 words), each with 6 gaps. There is a choice of four possible answers for each gap.

You have to choose the best to fit in each gap in the text.

A guess **B** idea **C** thing **D** word ✓

Part 2 Four short texts on the same theme (total 600–900 words) with two multiple-choice comprehension questions per text. You have to choose the best answer.

How many texts are there in Part 2?

A one **B** two **C** three **D** four ✓

Part 3 One long text (800–1100 words) from which seven paragraphs have been removed and placed in jumbled order on the next page. You have to decide from where in the text the paragraphs have been removed. There is one paragraph which doesn't fit anywhere.

Part 4 One long text (700–850 words) with seven multiple-choice comprehension questions.

(Total: 40 questions = 40 marks)

Paper 2 Writing – 2 hours

In both parts of the Writing Paper you have to write 300–350 words. Each part carries equal marks.

Part 1 This part is compulsory. After reading the instructions, you read a short text (maybe a short letter, article or advertisement) and then write an article, essay, letter or proposal. The focus is on presenting and developing arguments, expressing and supporting opinions, and evaluating ideas.

Part 2 There are four questions from which you choose one. One of the choices includes a question on each of the set texts. The following formats are included here: an article, an essay, a letter, a report or a review. The tasks may involve any of the following functions: describing, evaluating, giving information, making recommendations, narrating, persuading, summarising.

(Examiners' marks scaled to 40 marks)

Paper 3 Use of English – 1 hour 30 minutes

Part 1 One text with 15 gaps to fill, testing grammar and vocabulary. You have to think of a suitable word to fill each gap. (15 questions, each worth 1 mark)

Part 2 One text with 10 gaps to fill. Each gap corresponds to a word. The 'stems' of the missing words are given beside the text and you have to transform them to provide the missing word. (10 questions, each worth 1 mark)

This part tests your KNOWLEDGE of word formation.

KNOW

Part 3 Six groups of three sentences, each with a word missing. You have to decide which single word fits into all three gaps. This tests collocation, phrasal verbs, idioms and meanings. (6 questions, each worth 2 marks)

Part 4 Eight key word transformations. You have to rewrite each sentence using the word so that it has a similar meaning. You mustn't change the word given and you must use between three and eight words only. (8 questions, each worth 2 marks)

This is an example of a key word transformation sentence.

kind

This is an example of the kind of sentence you may have to transform.

Part 5 Two short texts with two questions on each, and one summary task. The questions focus on the style and tone of the text, and on vocabulary. For the summary you have to select relevant information from both texts and write 50 to 70 words. (4 questions, each worth 2 marks. Summary, worth 14 marks)

(Total: 75 marks, scaled to 40)

Paper 4 Listening – about 40 minutes

Each text is heard twice. You have time to read the questions and to check your answers afterwards.

Part 1 You hear four short extracts, with two multiple-choice questions per extract. You have to choose the best of three alternative answers for each question. (8 questions)

Part 2 You hear a monologue or interview. You have to complete gaps in sentences with information from the recording. Each sentence has to be completed with a word or short phrase. One longer extract with nine sentence completion questions. (9 questions)

Part 3 You hear a discussion or interview. There are five multiple-choice questions. You have to choose the best of four alternative answers for each question. (5 questions)

Part 4 You hear a discussion between two people. You have to match each of a list of six opinions or statements to the names of the speakers, according to who said what. If they agreed about something you write both names. (6 questions)

(Total: 28 marks, scaled to 40)

Paper 5 Speaking – about 20 minutes

There are two candidates and two examiners. One is the assessor (who listens and assesses but doesn't join in) and the other is the interlocutor (who sets up the task, joins in sometimes, and also assesses). The interlocutor also has to make sure that one candidate doesn't dominate the conversations, so that you both have an equal amount of time to show how good you are at speaking English.

Part 1 The interlocutor encourages each candidate in turn to give information about themselves and to express personal opinions. This part involves general interaction and social language. (3 minutes)

Part 2 The candidates are given visual and spoken prompts, which generate a discussion between them. You'll have pictures to talk about (but not actually describe): the interlocutor will tell you what you have to do. This part involves comparing, decision making, evaluating, giving opinions and speculating. The interlocutor only joins in if one candidate is speaking too much. (4 minutes)

Part 3 Each candidate in turn is given a written question to respond to. You have to talk for two minutes on the theme of the question, uninterrupted. After each candidate has spoken, the interlocutor asks you questions to encourage a discussion on the same topic. This part involves organising a larger unit of discourse, developing topics, and expressing and justifying opinions. (12 minutes)

(Assessors' marks scaled to 40 marks)

For more information, visit the UCLES website: www.cambridge-cfl.org.uk