



THE UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA
COLLEGE OF HUMANITIES

Center for English as a Second Language

Test Report: The CESL English Proficiency Test (CEPT) - Full Academic and UA Undergraduate Admissions

For: Nick Ferdinandt, CESL Director, and other UA stakeholders

By: Eddy White, CESL Assessment Coordinator, CEPT Developer

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The purpose of this report is to present an overview of the CESL English Proficiency Test (CEPT) - Full Academic version, and consider its possible future usage as an official English proficiency test used by UA Undergrad Admissions. As this report notes, the test is already being accepted and used by the Graduate College.

Introduction

In 2018, CESL developed the CESL English Proficiency Test (CEPT) – Full Academic, primarily in response to UA initiatives to assess potential students for UA micro-campus initiatives (e.g. in Jordan, China). Since the fall of 2018, we have successfully used the CEPT Full Academic to test potential UA students in such places as Saudi Arabia, Turkey, the UAE, as well as here in the United States. The test development (including piloting) and administration refinement period prior to beginning to use the test in 2018 gives CESL confidence to assert that the CEPT Full Academic test is a valid, reliable, secure, and practical test of English competence that can be used for the purposes of UA undergraduate admissions. It is a fully functional alternative to the other commercial tests on the market.

Below is a summary of the key features of the test, how it is administered and scored.

Components and Administration

The CEPT Full Academic is comprised of **two sub-tests**:

1. **Academic Skills** – focused on the key academic skills of **Reading and Writing**, with related components assessing vocabulary knowledge, and grammatical competence. The Academic Skills test is computer based, and takes 90 minutes to complete.

2. **Communication Skills** – focused on **Speaking**, this real-time online interview assesses the test-taker’s communicative competence, and ability to produce fluent, accurate English in a Q & A format. **Listening comprehension** is also assessed here, in considering the test-taker’s ability to understand the questions posed, and respond appropriately. The Communication Skills test takes approximately 15 minutes, and is conducted live online (via Skype, Zoom, etc.) with experienced and trained CESL faculty.

Other features include:















- A CESL webpage, explaining the test and providing a link for registering. See: <https://cesl.arizona.edu/testing/cept-full>
- Online application for this test includes students uploading a passport photo or official government ID with picture (used for confirming test taker identity in the online interview)
- The cost of the CEPT is fixed at **US\$ 120** per test. CESL has a no refund policy after test payment.
- The Academic Skills part of the test, completed on computer, is housed in the online testing platform called **ClassMarker**. As well as accessing test scores, this platform also compiles statistical analysis of tests, and test-taker performance. See: <https://www.classmarker.com/>
- For the Academic Skills test, the CEPT Full Academic makes use of an online exam proctoring service, **Examity**, to help ensure test security and score validity. Test-takers get access to the test through Examity, and are monitored (to ensure they are not using translation software, smartphones, etc.) while doing the test. (Examity fees are paid for by the university, as arranged by the Office of Digital Learning.) See more about Examity in a report section below.
- Test-takers are contacted separately about scheduling the Communication Skills part of the test (live online, via Skype).
- Test-takers are expected to complete both parts of the test within a five-day timeframe.
- CESL produces an **official score report** for each test-taker, attesting to their overall English proficiency according to the industry-standard and most widely used proficiency scale, the **CEFR Global Scale** (Common European Framework of Reference). The University of Arizona (UA) requires a **C1** (i.e. proficient user) level of proficiency for graduate-level study in UA programs. An example score report can be found at the end of this report in Appendix 1
- In the case of any plagiarism, cheating, assistance, or non-conforming with test-procedures, the test may be voided and no score report issued. The test-taker may also be prohibited from re-taking the test in the future.
- Test-taker reports are usually issued within one week of test completion, depending on test taker numbers.

CEPT and CEFR

A key and distinguishing feature of the CEPT is its connection with the **Common European Frame of Reference (CEFR)**; the most widely used and recognized international language proficiency scale. The CEFR, produced by the Council of Europe, provides validated and scientifically calibrated descriptors of its six proficiency levels.

Not only is the CEPT 'aligned' with this framework, as other tests claim to be, **it is directly linked to it. This anchoring of the CEPT to CEFR occurs in three ways:**

1. By directly using updated 2018 CEFR scales for scoring both the Writing and Speaking components of the test. See Appendix 2 for the CEFR rubric used for scoring the Communication Skills sub-test.
2. The official score report for the CEPT includes the CEFR Global Scale, the international yardstick for describing proficiency. Test-takers receive their score, and can interpret what it means on the CEFR scale included. See Appendix 1 for a sample score report.
3. Test items are categorized and used to build multiple test versions based on their A1-C2 level of difficulty. The screenshot below from our test bank shows this fact (with number of test item per CEFR level indicated)

Actions ▼	Questions	New Category +
 A1 Grammar	18	Edit
 A1 Reading Comp	23	Edit
 A1 Vocabulary	15	Edit
 A2 Grammar	20	Edit
 A2 Reading Comp	25	Edit
 A2 Vocabulary	18	Edit
 B1 Grammar	10	Edit
 B1 Reading Comp.	30	Edit
 B1 Vocabulary	20	Edit
 B2 Grammar	21	Edit
 B2 Reading Comp.	25	Edit
 B2 Vocabulary	30	Edit
 C1 Reading Comp.	28	Edit
 C2 Reading Comp.	23	Edit

All of the other main commercial English language tests provide CEFR equivalency scores, attesting to the importance and universality of this framework. Unlike other tests, the CEPT goes beyond claims for equivalency by directly using CEFR scoring rubrics, the CEFR Global Scale, and test items aligned with particular CEFR levels.

The structure and definition provided by the CEFR makes the CEPT test more valid and reliable, and allows CESL to make very strong claims about the CEFR proficiency of CEPT test-takers.

Examity and CEPT

In June of 2019, we started using the online proctoring company contracted by UA, Examity, to proctor our CEPT testing. Prior to using Examity, we had a proctoring system in place for in-house group testing (e.g. at micro-campuses in Jordan, China), or a solo proctoring agreement for individual test-takers. In terms of test security, neither of these options was ideal, so we are very pleased to now have CEPT supported by the university's official online test proctoring company (as arranged by the Office of Digital Learning).

After registering for CEPT, Examity becomes the first point of contact for test-takers. They receive a message from Examity informing them of the need to create a profile, and then they can schedule when they wish to do the 90-minute Academic Skills sub-test. While they are doing the test, an Examity proctor is monitoring them live.

Below is a link to a brief (i.e. 2 minute) Examity intro video available on the CEPT webpage

Examity: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=98OStU7117A>

The screenshot below also shows how we are able to monitor and ensure test security on our Examity dashboard.

Dashboard Exam Status Courses/Exams Students Reports Logout Live Chat | Email Support | Phone Support: 855-EXAMITY

Exam Status

Exam Flag: All flags selected Search

ID	Student First Name	Student Last Name	Course Name	Exam Name	Schedule Time	FairExam® Level	Status	Blue	Green	Yellow	Auth Red	Exam Red	View
89606715	Pavel	Sapiecha	English Proficiency Test	CEPT Academic	06/11/2019 12:00 PM	Level 1	Scheduled	0	0	0	0	0	View
89606191	Abdullah	Almutairi	English Proficiency Test	CEPT Full Academic	06/08/2019 10:00 PM	Level 3	Approved by Auditor	0	2	0	0	0	View
89603687	Abdullah	Almutairi	English Proficiency Test	CEPT Full Academic	06/08/2019 10:00 AM	Level 3	Incomplete	1	0	0	0	0	View
89604889	Furim	Fer	English Proficiency Test	CEPT Full Academic	06/06/2019 5:00 AM	Level 3	Approved by Auditor	0	2	0	0	0	View

Legend:
 Blue Alert
 Green No Violation
 Yellow Possible Violation
 Red Violation

This partnership of the CEPT with Examity is extremely important in terms of test security, and ensuring the validity and reliability of CEPT scores awarded.

CEPT for Grad Admissions

In the fall of 2018, the Grad College agreed to accept CEPT Full Academic test scores for admission to UA graduate programs. Below is a screenshot from the Grad College webpage re. English proficiency requirements for International Applicants.

Acceptable English Proficiency credentials:

- **Test of English as a Foreign Language** (TOEFL) - minimum score of 79 iBT or 60 on the revised PBT with no section score lower than 15 (550 on PBT taken before 2017)
- **International English Language Testing System** (IELTS) - minimum composite score of 7, with no subject area below a 6
- **Pearson PTE Academic** - minimum score of 60
- **Common European Framework of Reference for Languages** (CEFR) - minimum score level C1
- Graduate **English Language Endorsement** from the Center for English as a Second Language (CESL)
- **CEPT Full Academic test** - minimum score level C1 (equivalent to 135 or higher), offered by our Center for English as a Second Language (CESL)

At the time of this writing, we have had a handful of CEPT test-takers submit their official score reports to the Grad College for admission.

It will be noted from the list of acceptable English proficiency credentials above, that the Grad College requires a **C1 (i.e. proficient)** level of English competence for entering graduate programs.

If the Graduate College accepts CEPT test scores for admission purposes, as well as for testing TA and GTA applicants, it seems reasonable that the Admissions office would also consider using the CEPT Full Academic for Undergraduate admissions.

English Proficiency and Undergrad Admissions

UA Admissions accepts a number of different national and international tests as proof of English proficiency. Below is a partial screenshot of the most reputable commercial English proficiency tests (excepting Duolingo) accepted for UA Admissions.

FULFILLMENT OF ENGLISH PROFICIENCY	MINIMUM FOR MOST MAJORS	MINIMUM FOR ENGINEERING, BUSINESS, NURSING, AND SBS LAW ONLY
TOEFL iBT (Institution Code: 4832)	70	79
IELTS	6.0	6.5
Duolingo English Test	TBA	TBA
SAT Evidence-Based Reading and Writing (Institution Code: 4832)	580 or higher	580 or higher
ACT English (Institution Code: 0096)	21	21
Pearson Test of English (PTE) Academic	53	53

Generally speaking, the Admissions office requires a B2 (i.e. Very Independent) level of English proficiency for international applicants, with the main English tests listed here (TOEFL, IELTS, Pearson) requiring that B2 equivalency in the minimally required scores UA sets for each.

The CEPT Full Academic is scored out of **150 points**, with 50 points available for each section (Reading/ Writing, Speaking). The table below shows the different test scores for the three main English proficiency tests align with the CEFR, as well as how CEPT scoring aligns with a B2 (Very Independent) English proficiency level, and above.

CEPT Score Comparison Chart

CEPT Full Academic	CEFR Proficiency Levels	TOEFL iBT	IELTS	Pearson PTE Academic
145-150	C2	96-120	8.0-9.0	85-90
135-144	C1	80-95	6.6-7.9	76-84
105-134	B2	70-79	6.0-6.5	65-75

Noting the strong and direct anchoring of the CEPT to the CEFR, at CESL we can clearly and confidently assert that anybody scoring in that 105-134 range is at a B2 level of English proficiency, good enough to deal with the English proficiency demands of UA classes, and be successful in them. This B2 test range on the CEPT is also comparable to minimum score requirements set by the Admissions office for the other main commercial English proficiency tests.

As noted above, the Graduate College requires a CEPT score of 135 (i.e. C1) for admission to graduate courses at UA.

Test Price Comparison

For test-takers, the significant cost of English proficiency tests affects their testing decisions. For TOEFL and IELTS, test prices are dependent on local and national markets depending on country of residence.

Here are the prices listed at the UA Testing Center:

- TOEFL - \$190
- IELTS - \$ 250 (\$310 in Phoenix)

The \$120 CEPT fee compares favorably with these other main commercial tests.

As well as cost, an important related consideration is **availability**. CEPT testing and score reporting is typically completed within a week or two of registering for the test. Other commercial tests can involve weeks or months of waiting to test. According to a recent CEPT test-taker in Belgium, there was a 3-month wait period for scheduling a TOEFL test in that country.

Scoring Tests and Issuing Score Reports

The Academic Skills portion of the CEPT test is scored automatically, except for the Writing section which is scored manually. In addition, the Communication Skills sub-test is conducted and scored by the interviewer.

According to the CEPT test webpage, “Test scheduling is typically done, informing the test taker of test date and time, within one week of application. Test-taker reports are usually issued within one week of test completion, depending on test taker numbers.”

If CEPT testing scales up in volume, more interviewers and raters (of Writing sub-tests) would be brought on board to deal with that increase (e.g. 100 test-takers a month). CESL has a pool of experienced test administrators and raters that can be called on to deal with an increased test volume. It is expected that this current turn-around time of scheduling tests and issuing score reports within a 1-2 week period can be maintained.

Conclusion

CESL developed the CEPT Full Academic test in the fall of 2018 and has successfully administered it to dozens of test-takers since that time, particularly with UA micro-campus partners. It has also been successfully used by the Graduate College to screen international applicants entering graduate programs on campus.

As this report shows, the test is a robust, valid, reliable and fully functional alternative to other commercial English proficiency tests on the market. CESL has the testing instruments, policies, procedures, staffing and expertise to expand CEPT test usage and make it available as an important addition to the list of accepted English proficiency tests by UA Admissions.

It should also be noted that having a valid, reliable and effective English proficiency test developed, maintained, and promoted at the University of Arizona would be advantageous in a number of ways (administratively, financially, etc.). Having such a UA-based test would also help ensure that willing and qualified International applicants could be admitted into the university without the substantially higher costs and longer wait times incurred with other major commercial English proficiency tests.

Appendix 1. CEPT Official Score Report



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**CESL English Proficiency Test (CEPT)
 CEPT Full Academic - Official Score Report**

Test-taker name		Test Dates	
Nationality			
Date of Birth		CEFR Proficiency Level	

The CEPT contains three sections, Vocabulary/Reading, Writing, and Speaking. Below are your scores on the three parts of the test, and your overall test score.

Reading Test Score	Writing Test Score	Speaking Test Score	TOTAL SCORE
/50	/50	/50	/150

CESL uses the **Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR)**, the worldwide industry-standard language framework, to describe language proficiency. Based on your overall performance on the CEPT Full Academic, the score below describes your CEFR level of English proficiency.

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 the 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.

1100 East James E. Rogers Way Tucson, AZ 85721 USA Phone (520) 621-3637

Appendix 2. CEFR Rubric for Communication Skills test

CEPT Speaking Proficiency Rubric (from CEFR Spoken Language Scale 2018)

POINTS 48-50	C2 – Very Proficient
	<p>Fluency: Can express him/herself at length with a natural, effortless, unhesitating flow. Accuracy: Maintains consistent grammatical control of complex language, does not make any errors. Range: Shows great flexibility reformulating ideas in differing linguistic forms to convey finer shades of meaning precisely. Phonology: Can employ the full range of phonological features (i.e. stress, rhythm, intonation) with a high level of control. Intelligibility is not affected in any way by features of accent that may be retained from other language(s).</p>
42-47	C1 - Proficient
	<p>Fluency: Can express him/herself fluently and spontaneously, almost effortlessly. Accuracy: Consistently maintains a high degree of grammatical accuracy; errors are rare, difficult to spot and generally corrected when they do occur. Range: Has a good command of a broad range of language allowing clear expression in an appropriate style on a wide range of general, academic, professional or leisure topics. Phonology: Can employ the full range of phonological features with sufficient control to ensure intelligibility; some features of accent retained from other language(s) may be noticeable, but they do not affect intelligibility at all.</p>
34-41	B2 – Very Independent
	<p>Fluency: Can communicate spontaneously and produce language with a fairly even tempo, although he/she can be hesitant as he/she searches for patterns and expressions; there are few noticeably long pauses. Accuracy: Shows a relatively high degree of grammatical control; does not make errors which cause misunderstanding, and can correct most of his/her mistakes. Range: Has a sufficient range of language to be able to give clear descriptions and express viewpoints. Phonology: Can generally use appropriate intonation, place stress correctly and articulate individual sounds clearly; accent tends to be influenced by other language(s) he/she speaks, but has little or no effect on intelligibility.</p>
25-33	B1 - Independent
	<p>Fluency: Can express him/herself with relative ease; can keep going comprehensibly, even though pausing for grammatical and lexical planning and repair is very evident. Accuracy: Uses reasonably accurately a repertoire of frequently used grammatical structures and patterns. Range: Has enough language to get by, with sufficient vocabulary to express him/herself with some hesitation and wordiness. Phonology: Pronunciation is generally intelligible; can approximate intonation and stress at both utterance and word levels, but accent is usually influenced by other language(s) he/she speaks.</p>
15-24	A2 – Basic
	<p>Fluency: Can make him/herself understood in short contributions, even though pauses, false starts and reformulation are very evident. Accuracy: Uses some simple structures correctly, but still systematically makes basic mistakes. Range: Uses basic sentence patterns with memorized phrases, groups of a few words in order to communicate limited information. Phonology: Pronunciation is generally clear enough to be understood; a strong influence from other language(s) he/she speaks on stress, rhythm and intonation may affect intelligibility.</p>
0-14	A1 – Very Basic
	<p>Fluency: Can manage very short, isolated, mainly pre-packaged utterances, with much pausing to search for expressions, to articulate less familiar words, and to repair communication. Accuracy: Shows only limited control of a few simple grammatical structures and sentence patterns. Range: Has a very basic repertoire of words and simple phrases. Phonology: Pronunciation of a very limited repertoire of learnt words and phrases can be understood with some effort; can reproduce correctly a limited range of sounds as well as the stress on simple, familiar words and phrases.</p>