



ESB

Assessments in Spoken English

Guidelines For Organisers

Compiled by

Examiner Training Officer

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“Oral language is the medium we use to make friends, earn a living, and become participating members of the community. It is through speech that we assimilate the thoughts, opinions, ideas, emotions, humour, wisdom, common-sense, even moral and spiritual values of those around us and it is through perceptive listening and courteous speaking that we move towards breaking down social, professional and racial barriers.”

Christabel Burniston MBE,
Founder and President of ESB

MISSION STATEMENT

The English Speaking Board pledges to provide quality assessments and service in oral communication in the UK and overseas, recognising the potential of all our candidates and promoting and sharing the benefits of clear, effective communication at all levels.

ESB GOALS

1. Board:

To ensure procedures are in place and used to develop and promote a strategic policy on a sound financial basis in the best interests of ESB's customers and personnel.

2. Office:

To offer efficient services to customers and examiners and effective training and development to its own staff.

3. Examiners:

To provide appropriate training and development programmes in the context of customer needs and examiners as intellectual assets.

4. Syllabuses:

To review and update as appropriate all syllabuses for both content and presentation, to ensure their relevance and coherence against national standards.

5. Customers:

To provide relevant, speedy and accurate information, response and services, seeking feedback from internal and external customers and promoting the value of ESB.

EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES POLICY STATEMENT

The English Speaking Board is an Educational Charity and Awarding Body, which provides graded assessments in oral communication in 4 main categories: Schools, Vocational and Professional, Oral Communication Skills and EAL (English as an Acquired Language) / ESOL.

This statement sets out ESB's commitment to strive for equality of opportunity for all. It is intended to encourage more involvement in the organisation, as administrative staff, examiners / assessors, candidates and members.

The aim of the English Speaking Board is primarily to promote and encourage spoken English and the related skills for effective oral communication.

ESB is committed, within its areas of activity, to the prevention of discrimination on the grounds of age, colour, disability, ethnic and national origin, gender, marital status, political or religious belief, race, sexual orientation or trade union activity.

Although the means of assessment is spoken English, ESB accepts that even where the mother tongue is English, there are as many brands of spoken English as there are regions where English is spoken, and holds the belief that the English language is enriched by regional accents and dialects. If, however, an accent or dialect proves to be a barrier to effective communication, then development of more standardised English may be encouraged, to enable greater understanding. ESB recognises the benefits to good communication of standard English.

BOOKING AN ASSESSMENT

ESB assessments are held at a time and place convenient to the candidates. In certain cases e.g. in adult education, it is possible to book assessments to take place in the evening or at a weekend, for which a supplement is payable.

When booking an assessment for the first time, contact ESB Head Office, who will send the relevant syllabus, guidelines and full information together with an Examination Reservation Form (ERF). The reservation, or booking, form should be completed and returned to the office. Following receipt of the reservation form, centres will be asked to complete and return a candidate registration form, stating candidate names, gender and date of birth, and confirming entry levels, along with payment, a minimum of one month prior to the assessment date. **It is important for national statistical purposes that these details are completed.**

While every effort will be made for the assessment to take place on the first choice of date selected by the centre, certain times of year, particularly December, March, May and June, are very busy and early booking is recommended. All assessments should be booked a minimum of 3 months in advance.

TIME-TABLING AN ASSESSMENT DAY

Normally an ESB assessment day begins at 9.15a.m. However, this may be altered in consultation with the office to suit local needs.

Each syllabus gives guidance on the approximate length of each individual assessment (see below for maximum candidate numbers). **However, in planning the day organisers are asked to add to this the time required for the changeover of candidates, allowing time for the setting up of audio/visual material for each candidate.**

Examiners begin the session with a short 2 - 3 minute introduction to create a positive and relaxed atmosphere. Although examiners will endeavour to keep to a timetable suggested by the centre, a break mid-morning and for lunch are essential for the needs of both candidates and examiner. (It is also appreciated if drinking water is made available).

The guide to recommended candidate numbers per day may be helpful in planning, and should be considered together with the timing of the school or college day.

N.B.

- The examiner booking cannot be confirmed until the Board has received candidate names.
- Where candidate numbers are large, centres may opt for two or more examiners working on the same day if suitable space is available, or may prefer to have one examiner for several days.
- A minimum booking fee is payable if candidate numbers are very small.

CANDIDATE NUMBERS PER EXAMINER DAY

Junior Series - School syllabuses

(Graded Examinations in Speech: Spoken Presentation Skills):

Grade	Syllabus timings per person	Candidates	
		per hour	per day
Junior Intro / Grade 1	8-10 minutes each	6	25-26
Junior Grade 2	10-11 minutes each	5	22-24
Junior Grade 3	11-12 minutes each	5	20-22
Junior Grade 4	12-13 minutes each	4	18-20

(Based on approximately 3 hours a.m. and 1 hour 30 minutes p.m. assessment time with lunch and coffee break, and opening and closing remarks)

Senior / Advanced Series - School syllabuses

(Graded Examinations in Speech: Spoken Presentation Skills):

Grade	Syllabus timings per person	Candidates	
		per hour	per day
Senior Intro / Grade 1	11-13 minutes each	4	18-20
Senior Grade 2	13-15 minutes each	4	16-18
Senior Grade 3	16-18 minutes each	3	15-16
Senior Proficiency	18-20 minutes each	2½	13-14
ACLA / ACSE	25 minutes each	2	10-12

(Based on approximately 3 hours to 3 hours 30 minutes a.m. and 2 hours p.m. assessment time with lunch and coffee break, and opening and closing remarks)

Vocational & Professional Syllabuses

Vocational, Hair and Beauty, LTT, ECS, Social Care, OSIB etc

Grade	Syllabus timings per person	Candidates	
		per hour	per day
Grade 1	12 minutes each	4	20
Grade 2 + OSIB	15 minutes each	3+	16
Grade 3 + OSIB	20 minutes each	2½	13-14
Level 4	35-40 minutes each	1½	7-8
Level 5	45-50 minutes each	1+	6-7

(Based on 9.15 - 4.00 p.m. day with lunch/coffee break plus opening and closing remarks)

EAL/ESOL

(Based on 9.15 - 4.00 p.m. day with lunch/coffee break plus opening and closing remarks)

Grade	Syllabus timings per person	Candidates	
		per hour	per day
Pre-F.1/2	--	12	28-30
Pre-Entry 3 F.1	6-7 minutes each	8	28-30
Entry 1 F.2	8-11 minutes each	5	18-20
Entry 2 F.3	11-12 minutes each	5	18-20
Entry 3 I.1	12-14 minutes each	4	16-18
Level 1 I.2 (Step 1)	13-16 minutes each	3-4	16-18
Level 1 I.3 (Step 2)	15-18 minutes each	3	15-16
Level 2 Adv.1 (Step 1)	28-30 minutes each	2	10-12
Level 2 Adv.2 (Step 2)	36-40 minutes each	1½	7-8

Oral Communication Skills (COA) Syllabus

These candidates usually require longer than others, but there can be great variation in ability / speed and length of day - usually a maximum of 14 per day.

ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURES BEFORE THE ASSESSMENT DAY

Once all booking procedures are complete, the following will be sent to the Organiser in advance of the assessment:

1. Examination Confirmation Form

2. Results List (with candidates' unique reference number for tracking)

3. Blank report forms

- All candidates should have a copy of the appropriate syllabus page(s) and should understand the requirements of the syllabus.
- The organiser or tutor should contact the examiner in advance of the assessment to confirm start time, syllabus and grades and to finalise details such as directions, parking, etc. This is an opportunity for the organiser to clarify any questions that may have arisen about the assessment and to inform the examiner of any candidates with particular requirements.

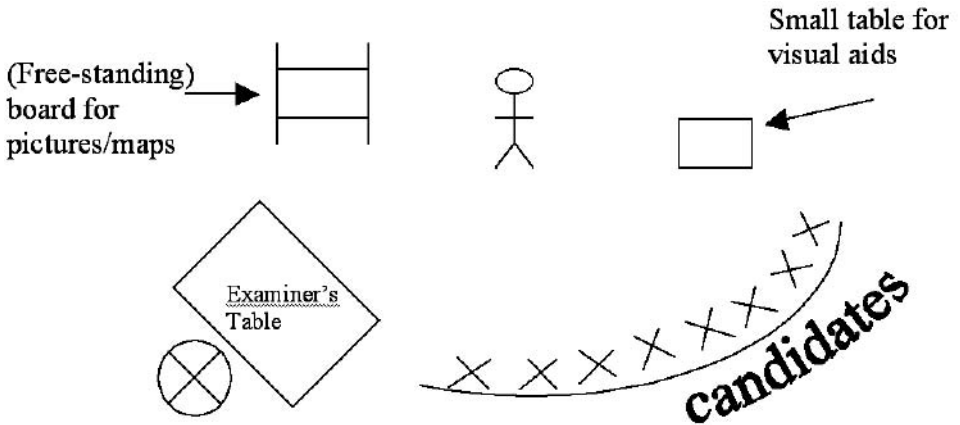
PRACTICAL ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE ASSESSMENT DAY

The layout of the room

It is implicit in all ESB assessments that the listening group, the candidate and the examiner are of equal importance. Each is dependent on the other for effective communication to occur, and each has a responsibility to the other.

As far as possible, the seating should be in a horseshoe or semi-circle, with the examiner's table towards the side where he/she can see the candidate and the listening group. Candidates should NOT be seated behind desks. This type of arrangement, where all can see each other gives a more relaxed atmosphere and helps to promote an easy exchange of ideas between candidate, examiner and listeners.

Lay-out of Room



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Report Forms

- Before the assessment begins the organiser should have the completed report forms ready on the table for the examiner. Blank report forms should be completed with ERF and Candidate Number, candidate's name, project title and titles of own choice items where appropriate. These details should be written on the dotted line, allowing room for the examiner's comments on each section to be written in the spaces. (Details on completing the forms are to be found on the back of the form or on a separate sheet sent with the forms as appropriate).

Fill in:

- student's name and centre details;
- exam reservation number (ERF) and the individual candidate number;
- syllabus title and level /grade;
- titles for each section as appropriate.

Audio/Visual material

Arrangements should be made for the effective display/use of any audio/visual material, and for any equipment required, such as OHP, video, CD or cassette recorders, to be ready and in working order to help ensure the smooth running of the day.

NB In Vocational syllabuses involving a telephone exercise, the centre must provide appropriate handsets.

Order of candidates and material

The order of candidates is at the discretion of the tutor and need not be alphabetical. Candidates may present their programme in any order (success is often gained by starting with the item with which the candidate feels most confident and at ease). Under normal circumstances, each candidate should present the complete prepared programme, although in certain exceptional circumstances (e.g. if equipment being used has to be block-booked), some groups may need to offer all the talks, or telephone calls, then all the remaining sections as a set.

Timing

Examiners will keep as closely as possible to the time allowance per candidate indicated in the relevant syllabus, without unsettling the candidate. Candidates who run seriously over time (e.g. in Section 1) may be reminded of time and asked to conclude that section.

Observers

The organiser / tutor and other interested members of staff are encouraged to observe the assessment as a member of the listening group, at the discretion of the centre and of ESB. The assessment process is, of course, independent. Where numbers and room layout permit, the examiner will involve the whole group in the questioning and encourage participation of all present; this helps to ensure genuine enquiry and communication. This would always be done in accordance with the demands of the specific syllabus.

Marks and remarks

During the assessment the examiner will complete reports and/or make notes as appropriate, and mark in accordance with ESB criteria. A mark will be given for each section (weighted as required by the syllabus) and the overall grade awarded in line with the final total.

Results

The examiner sends the results to the organiser/tutor within five working days after the assessment.

The examiner should NEVER be asked to give or announce results to the candidates.

The final result for each candidate is decided by the examiner and is NOT made in consultation with the tutor. After the assessment, however, the examiner is encouraged to discuss with the tutor the work presented and to offer guidance for future assessments. It must be remembered that the tutor CANNOT influence the final result for each candidate.

To allow for sampling and standardisation procedures, results should not be regarded as final until confirmed by Certification. Results may go down as well as up.

Comparability

ESB examiners are trained to assess strictly in accordance with the syllabus requirements and to be thoroughly conversant with all appropriate ESB guidelines and criteria. Each syllabus must be assessed on its own merits and it is not possible either to upgrade or to downgrade. ESB does not subscribe to the notion that each school or centre must have a quota of Distinctions, Passes etc. The result list should, therefore, reflect the standard and achievement of each group of candidates in accordance with ESB criteria.

Unsuccessful

All ESB examiners are concerned to guide, strengthen and encourage candidates. If, however, the required criteria for a syllabus are not met in two or more sections the candidate will be graded as unsuccessful and clear, constructive guidance given as to possible areas for improvement.

Recognition of Endeavour

In cases where the criteria have not been met, but where there is evidence of real endeavour, a Certificate of Endeavour may be awarded. NB This is not a national certificate or level but ESB's acknowledgement of genuine effort.

Moderating

If there is more than one examiner at a centre, it is essential that moderation should take place before results are finalised to ensure consistency of standards is maintained. It is helpful if an opportunity for examiners to talk together can be given, e.g. during the lunch or coffee break or after the assessment. In cases where this is impossible moderation may take place by phone after the assessment but before results are finalised.

FOLLOWING THE ASSESSMENT

Each candidate will receive a full written report on each aspect of the assessment, sent via the organiser. In addition, all successful candidates will receive a certificate from the Board showing the particular level of attainment, within 4-6 weeks.

The examiner will give an Assessment Evaluation Form to the organiser or tutor at the end of the assessment. We ask that all organisers or tutors complete this form as fully and frankly as possible. Together with annual training, moderation and appraisal meetings the information from these forms help us to maintain standards, to ensure consistency of marking, to continue our efforts to run our assessments justly and to ensure...

EVERY STUDENT BENEFITS

CANDIDATES WITH PARTICULAR REQUIREMENTS

ESB is committed to meeting the needs of all those with particular assessment requirements.

Some general principles are outlined below, but all tutors who have such candidates are asked to contact the Board in advance of assessment. Individual needs are met on an individual basis. (See Oral Communication Skills Literature for specific detail relating to that particular syllabus range).

- During the initial contact between tutor and examiner any specific problems should be made known to the examiner and general arrangements discussed prior to the assessment.

- As in all assessments, examiners should be understanding, sensitive and supportive to all candidates (and particularly where there are any special requirements) without compromising the assessment standards.
- Where candidates have particular requirements, examiners may encourage tutors to take an interactive role in interpreting needs, assisting with any specialist equipment that may be required, and in generally using their knowledge of the candidate to help ensure optimum conditions for success.
- Specialist equipment may be used as required, and specialist staff (e.g. speech therapists) may be involved in consultation with the Board.

Dyslexia

In grades where the examiner would normally select the extract to be read from a longer prepared passage, a candidate with dyslexia may be allowed to select his or her own passage which may be practised prior to the assessment. Additional time may be allowed for the reading - normally 50% and a shorter passage may be accepted.

Impaired Hearing

Where candidates have the ability, they are encouraged to follow a mainstream syllabus. If hearing is seriously impaired, additional time may be given (normally 50% for each task). When the hearing impairment would hinder ready understanding, e.g. by a potential employer, the certificate should be endorsed 'Hearing Impaired' while allowing the candidate to achieve the intellectual level and grade of which he/she is capable.

Impaired Sight

If a candidate reads Braille, additional time - 50% - will be allowed for reading. The candidate may choose his or her own passage for prior practice in any syllabus where normally the examiner would choose the extract for sight-reading.

Where a candidate does not read Braille, a pre-recorded tape is acceptable, built up by the candidate from listening to other readers (preferably a variety) and developing his or her own interpretation. If extended reading would cause particular problems, the selected passage may be limited to 100 - 150 words if this is shorter than the length or time specified in the particular syllabus. (Braille versions of each ESB syllabus are available by special arrangement with the Board. Please contact the office for further information).

General Learning Difficulties - Oral Communication Skills

All Oral Communication Skills syllabuses are specifically designed to take account of learning difficulties. Oral Communication Skills Examiners are required to attend additional specialist training sessions led by the Co-ordinator for Oral Communication Skills assessments, as well as mainstream examiner training sessions.

The following guidelines outline the key provision:

- The examiner takes a conductive role to guide the candidate to success
- Time is allowed before the assessment (usually approximately quarter of an hour) for the examiner to meet candidates informally to help establish a friendly, positive atmosphere
- The time allowance is more generous than that for mainstream candidates at introductory level, allowing for varying timing within each section according to the need for guidance and averaging 20 minutes per candidate overall
- Breaks can be arranged to suit the group where powers of sitting, listening and concentration are limited
- The examiner's lead-in tactics and physical arrangements between presentations may take longer than in usual ESB assessments
- Auxiliary staff or specialists (e.g. a speech therapist) may give specialist support without supplanting the requirement that it is the individual candidate who must meet the criteria.

COMPLAINTS AND APPEALS PROCEDURES

It is the policy of The Board to make every effort to resolve any complaint or appeal quickly, efficiently and fairly.

Procedures

Basis for appeal

- An appeal may arise from a factual error, such as a mismatch between section grades awarded and the aggregate final grade, or from some aspect of the conduct of an assessment that, in the professional judgement of the centre organiser or appropriate tutor, is deemed to be prejudicial to the outcome. Organisers must endorse complaints from candidates. Organisers and candidates should be aware that results may be adjusted either up or down as a result of appeal
- Appeals must be made in writing to ESB Head Office within 14 days of the assessment
- Appeals must be made through the ESB organiser, stating clearly the nature of the complaint, and should include the examiner's report(s) for the candidate(s) concerned
- Acknowledgement of receipt of the complaint is sent to the organiser by the Quality Assurance Manager within 3 days

- The Quality Assurance Manager forwards all relevant information from the centre, together with a copy of the examiner's evaluation form, to the Examiner Training Officer
- The Examiner Training Officer contacts the examiner to confirm the information given and to seek further information where necessary
- The Examiner Training Officer contacts the organiser/tutor to clarify detail or for further information and usually to agree any required course of action
- If agreement is not reached at this time, the Examiner Training Officer makes a decision within 14 days of the appeal arriving at ESB Head Office
- In either event, the Examiner Training Officer sends written confirmation of any decision to the organiser. The response will aim to summarise the basis of the appeal and clarify any misunderstandings

Other possible outcomes include:

- rejection of the grounds of appeal with clearly stated reasons
- an offer of re-assessment.

In the event of any further action being required the detail will be sent to the Academic Board, whose decision will be final.

Full details of complaints and appeals procedures are available from ESB Head Office.

FURTHER INFORMATION

For further information regarding any aspect of English Speaking Board assessments, or to arrange a visit from an Information Officer, contact:

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