



Cambridge ESOL Sample Test Tasks

Report on analysis of	Key English Test (KET) Writing
Target language of this test	English
Target level (CEFR) of this test	A2
Task number/name	Paper 1, Part 9, Question 56

General Information about the writing component *

3	Number of tasks in the writing paper	4
4	Integration of skills	Writing (with written input)
5	Total test time	70 minutes (including reading section)
6	Target performance level	A2
7	Channel	Handwritten
8	Purpose	General proficiency

Background to the Examination

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The Key English Test (KET) is a general English qualification which is part of the Cambridge ESOL Main-suite Examinations. Set at level A2 of the CEF, KET recognises the ability to cope with everyday written and spoken communications at a basic level. KET is designed for learners who have basic English skills, of the kind needed when travelling in a foreign country.

* The numbers in the left hand column of the tables refer to the categories in the ALTE CEFR Writing Grid

Candidature

KET is taken by more than 56,000 people each year in over 60 countries. Around 75% of KET candidates are aged 18 or under and a further 20% are in the 19-30 age group. Around 85% of candidates attend preparation classes.

Structure of the Test

KET tests the skills of Reading, Writing, Listening and Speaking – with each skill equally weighted at 25%. KET is administered in three separate papers. Paper 1 Reading and Writing, Paper 2 Listening and Paper 3 Speaking. There are four possible grades in KET: two pass grades (pass with merit and pass) and two fail grades (narrow fail and fail). Results are based on candidate's aggregate scores across the four skills.

The Key English Test Writing component

The paper has a fixed format, with Parts 1-5 testing reading skills through a variety of texts ranging from very short notices to longer continuous texts. Parts 6 to 9 test writing skills in a variety of formats.

Specific Information about the example task

In this task, candidates are given the opportunity to show that they can communicate a written message (25-35 words) of an authentic type, for example a note or a postcard to a friend. The instructions indicate the type of message required, who it is for and what kind of information should be included. In this sample, the candidate has been asked to read and respond appropriately to three elements contained within a short (36 words in this example) note from a friend. All must be addressed in order to complete the task fully.

Mark distribution

There are 5 marks for Part 9. Candidates at this level are not expected to produce faultless English, but, to achieve 5 marks, a candidate should write a cohesive message which successfully communicates all three elements of the required information, with only minor grammatical and spelling errors. A great variety of fully acceptable answers is possible.

Task Rating

The rating scale takes the form of a set of band descriptors from 0 – 5. The exam is clerically marked under the supervision of an experienced rater/moderator. Grammatical form, spelling, structural correctness is considered along with task fulfilment when rating.

Effective Level

All KET Writing tasks are written according to set guidelines by trained item writers and pass through pre-editing and editing stages prior to trialling on a pretest population which approximates to the live candidature in L1 balance, age, gender etc. Tasks are accepted as suitable for use, rejected, or modified and re-trialled if necessary. Tasks are marked according to set criteria linked to the CEFR for level A2.

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Sample task:

Read this postcard from your English pen-friend, Sam.

Here is a postcard of my town. Please send me a postcard from your town. What size is your town? What is the nicest part of your town? Where do you go in the evenings?

Sam

Write Sam a postcard. Answer the questions.

Write 25-35 words.

Write the postcard on your answer sheet.

i) Task input/prompt		
9	Rubrics and instructions are in...	English
10	Language level of rubric	A2
11	Time for this task	Not specified
12	Control/guidance	Controlled
13	Content	Content is specified
14	Discourse mode	Letter (personal)
15	Audience	Friend, acquaintance
16	Type of prompt	Textual
17	Topic	Daily life
18	Integration of skills	Reading (minimal, in rubric + prompt)

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ii) Response (description of written response elicited by the prompt(s)/input)		
19	Number of words expected	25-35
20	Rhetorical function(s)	Description (place)
21	Register	Informal
22	Domain	Personal
23	Grammar	Mainly simple structures
24	Vocabulary	Only frequent vocabulary
25	Cohesion	Extremely limited use of cohesive devices
26	Authenticity: situational	High
27	Authenticity: interactional	High
28	Cognitive processing	Low
29	Content knowledge	Common, general, non-specialised
30	Task purpose	Referential (telling)

iii) Rating of Task		
31	Known criteria	Grading criteria are not provided to the candidate on the paper, but can be viewed in the handbook: http://www.cambridgeesol.org/support/handbooks.htm
32	Task rating method	Descriptive scale (band descriptors)
33	Assessment criteria	Holistic- individual categories not considered
34	Number of raters	2

iv) Feedback to candidates		
35	Quantitative feedback	4 grades, pass, pass with merit, narrow fail, fail
36	Qualitative feedback	None at this level

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Example answer

Dear Sam,
I lived in a small town, although it was small but lovely. People lived in my town are friendly and nice, they always help each other. I think that's the nicest part of my town. I hope you can come here. By the way I'm not went out in evenings.

Love

Ruby

Commentary

All three parts of the message are communicated, but there are frequent errors with tenses. It is acceptable that 'the people' should be the nicest part of the candidate's town.

Score allocated

Band 4 (on the five band scale)

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The CEFR Grids for Writing, developed by ALTE members

Cambridge ESOL Sample Test Tasks

Report on analysis of	Preliminary English Test (PET) Writing
Target language of this test	English
Target level (CEFR) of this test	B1
Task number/name	Paper 1, Part 3, Question 7

General Information about the writing component *

3	Number of tasks in the writing paper	3
4	Integration of skills	Writing (with written input)
5	Total test time	90 minutes (including reading section)
6	Target performance level	B1
7	Channel	Handwritten
8	Purpose	General proficiency

Background to the Examination

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Preliminary English Test (PET) is a general English qualification which is part of the Cambridge ESOL Main-suite examinations. Set at level B1 of the CEF, PET recognises the ability to cope with everyday written and spoken communications. PET is designed for learners whose English skills are adequate for many practical purposes, including work, study and social situations which require a predictable use of language.

* The numbers in the left hand column of the tables refer to the categories in the ALTE CEFR Writing Grid

Candidature

PET is taken by 112,000 per year in over 80 countries. Around 70% of PET candidates are aged 20 or under and a further 20% are in the 21-30 age group. Around 80% of candidates attend preparation classes.

Structure of the Test

PET tests the skills of Reading, Writing, Listening and Speaking – with each skill equally weighted at 25%. PET is administered in three separate papers. Paper 1 Reading and Writing, Paper 2 Listening and Paper 3 Speaking. There are four possible grades in PET: two pass grades (pass with merit and pass) and two fail grades (narrow fail and fail). Results are based on candidates' aggregate scores across the four skills.

The Preliminary English Test Writing component

The Reading and Writing paper has a fixed format, with the first five parts testing reading skills through a variety of texts ranging from very short notices to longer continuous texts. The final three parts of the paper test writing skills in a variety of formats.

Specific Information about the example task

In Part 3, candidates are given a choice of task: either a story or an informal letter may be written. Both tasks require an answer of about 100 words. For answers that are below length (fewer than 80 words), the examiner adjusts the maximum mark and the mark given proportionately. For the story (as in this sample), the candidates are given either a short title or the first sentence. The answer must be recognisably linked in content to the question and the candidates should pay particular attention to any names or pronouns given in the title or sentence. If, for example, the sentence is written in the third person, the candidate will need to construct his or her story accordingly.

Mark distribution

There are 15 marks for Paper 1, Part 3. Candidates at this level are expected to show ambition. They could gain full marks by including a range of tenses, appropriate expressions and different vocabulary, even if their answer is not flawless. Non-impeding errors, whether in spelling, grammar or punctuation, will not necessarily affect a candidate's mark, whereas errors which interfere with communication or cause a breakdown in communication will be treated more seriously.

Task Rating

The rating scale takes the form of a set of band descriptors from 0 – 5.

Band scores 1 – 5 are subdivided into a further three categories, giving a total of 15 available marks. The exam is marked by examiners under the supervision of a Principal Examiner and Team Leaders. Grammatical form, spelling, structural correctness are considered along with task fulfilment when rating.

Effective Level

All PET Writing tasks are written according to set guidelines by trained item writers and pass through pre-editing and editing stages prior to trialling on a pretest population which approximates to the live candidature in L1 balance, age, gender etc. Tasks are accepted as suitable for use, rejected, or modified and re-trialled if necessary. Tasks are marked according to set criteria linked to the CEFR for level B1.

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Sample task:

- Your English Teacher has asked you to write a story.
- Your story must have the following title:

The most important day of my life

- Write your story on your answer sheet.

i) Task input/prompt		
9	Rubrics and instructions are in...	English
10	Language level of rubric	Same as level of test
11	Time for this task	Not specified
12	Control/guidance	Open
13	Content	Content is not specified
14	Discourse mode	Story
15	Audience	Teacher
16	Type of input	Textual
17	Topic	Daily life
18	Integration of skills	Reading

ii) Response (description of written response elicited by the prompt(s)/input)		
19	Number of words expected	100
20	Rhetorical function(s)	Narration
21	Register	Informal
22	Domain	Personal
23	Grammar	Mainly simple structures

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24	Vocabulary	Mainly frequent vocabulary
25	Cohesion	Limited use of cohesive devices
26	Authenticity: situational	Medium
27	Authenticity: interactional	Medium
28	Cognitive processing	Low
29	Content knowledge	Personal/daily life/basic communication needs
30	Task purpose	Referential (telling); emotive (reacting)

iii) Rating of Task

31	Known criteria	Grading criteria are not provided to the candidate on the paper, but can be viewed in the handbook: http://www.cambridgeesol.org/support/handbooks.htm
32	Task rating method	Descriptive scale (band descriptors)
33	Assessment criteria	Grammatical accuracy; cohesion and coherence; lexical control; content; orthography; development of ideas
34	Number of raters	1 or more

iv) Feedback to candidates

35	Quantitative feedback	One of 4 grades (pass, pass with merit, narrow fail, fail)
36	Qualitative feedback	None at this level

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Example answer

The most important day of my life.
During a lifetime there is so many days you could call, the most important day of your life". It could be the day you chose wich school you are going to, or what you want to work with the rest of your life. Another important day is when you get married, or you chose where to live. But most of all it must be a very important day when you give birth to a child. I think that changes everything you have been doing until then. Than you have to realice that somebody are more important than yourself.

Commentary

This is a very good attempt, requiring no effort by the reader. The writer is confident, ambitious and well-organised, for example 'Another important day is when you get married...'. There is a wide range of structures and vocabulary within the task set and errors, though present, are minor and due to ambition, for example 'it could be the day you chose wich school you are going to'.

Score allocated

Band 5 (13-15 out of a possible score of 15)

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The CEFR Grids for Writing, developed by ALTE members

Cambridge ESOL Sample Test Tasks

Report on analysis of	First Certificate in English (FCE) Writing
Target language of this test	English
Target level (CEFR) of this test	B2
Task number/name	Paper 2, Part 1

General Information about the writing component *

3	Number of tasks in the writing paper	5
4	Integration of skills	Writing (with written input)
5	Total test time	90 minutes
6	Target performance level	B2
7	Channel	Handwritten
8	Purpose	General proficiency

Background to the Examination

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First Certificate in English is a general English qualification which is one of the Cambridge ESOL Main-suite Examinations. Set at level B2 of the CEFR, FCE recognises the ability to deal confidently with a range of written and spoken communications. FCE is designed for learners whose command of English is adequate for many practical everyday purposes, including business and study.

* The numbers in the left hand column of the tables refer to the categories in the ALTE CEFR Writing Grid

Candidature

FCE is taken by more than 270,000 candidates per year in over 100 countries. Around 75% of FCE candidates are aged 25 or under with the average being about 23. In some countries, where FCE is more commonly taken by school-age candidates, the average age is lower. Around 80% of candidates attend preparation classes.

Structure of the Test

FCE is administered in five separate papers. Paper 1 Reading, Paper 2 Writing, Paper 3 Use of English, Paper 4 Listening and Paper 5 Speaking. Each of these five papers is equally weighted at 20%. There are five possible grades in FCE: three passing grades (A, B and C) and two failing grades (D and E). Results are based on the candidate's aggregate score across the four skills.

The First Certificate in English Writing component

The paper has a fixed format, with two parts. Part 1 (Question 1) consists of one compulsory transactional letter task, based on a text input. In Part 2 (Questions 2-5), candidates select one task from a choice of four. Questions 2-4 involve the construction of one of the following texts: an article, a non-transactional letter, a report, a discursive composition, a short story. Considerably less input is provided for these tasks than the task in Part 1. Question five is based on a choice of five set books, listed in the examination regulations, which are published annually.

Specific Information about the example Part 1 task

In this sample question, the candidate is required to write a transactional letter of between 120 and 180 words in length. The letter is based on an input, 131 words in this example, in the form of a request. The range of functions expected in this letter includes giving information, requesting information, questions or suggestions requiring feedback. The usual conventions of letter writing, specifically opening salutation, paragraphing and closing phrasing are required, but it is not necessary to include postal addresses.

Mark distribution

All tasks carry the same maximum mark. Two mark schemes are used in conjunction to grade responses: a general impression mark scheme, and a task-specific mark scheme which focuses on criteria specific to each particular task. Criteria covered by these two mark schemes are: content; accuracy; range; organisation and cohesion; appropriacy of register and format; target reader.

Task Rating

A panel of experts is divided into small teams, each with a very experienced examiner as team leader. A Principal Examiner guides and monitors the marking process. Examiners are trained in the use of the task-specific and general mark schemes prior to each marking period and refer to them constantly while they are marking.

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During marking, each examiner is appointed scripts chosen at random from the whole entry in order to ensure that there is no concentration of good or weak scripts or of one large centre of one country in the allocation of any one examiner. A rigorous process of co-ordination, checking and monitoring is carried out throughout the marking process.

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Effective Level

All FCE Writing tasks are written according to set guidelines by trained item writers and pass through pre-editing and editing stages prior to trialling on a pretest population which approximates to the live candidature in L1 balance, age, gender etc. Tasks are accepted as suitable for use, rejected, or modified and re-trialled if necessary. Tasks are marked according to set criteria linked to the CEFR for level B2.

Sample task:

You recently entered a competition and have just received this letter from the organiser. Read the letter, on which you have made some notes. Then, using all the information in your notes, write a suitable reply.

Congratulations! You have won first prize in our competition - two weeks at Camp California in the U.S.A. All accommodation and travel costs are paid for, including transport to and from the airport. We now need some further information from you:

- When would you like to travel?
- Accommodation at Camp California is in tents or log cabins. Which would you prefer?
- You will have the chance to do two activities while you are at the Camp. Please choose two from the list below and tell us how good you are at each one.

Basketball / Swimming / Golf / Painting / Climbing
Singing / Sailing / Tennis / Photography / Surfing

Is there anything you would like to ask us?

Yours sincerely

Helen Ryan
Competition Organiser

only July because...

say which and why

tell them!

clothes, money...?

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Write a **letter** of between **120** and **180** words in an appropriate style on the opposite page. Do not write any postal addresses.

i) Task input/prompt		
9	Rubrics and instructions are in...	English
10	Language level of rubric	B2
11	Time for this task	Not specified (estimate: 45 minutes)
12	Control/guidance	Controlled
13	Content	Content is specified
14	Discourse mode	Letter
15	Audience	Business
16	Type of input	Textual
17	Topic	Free time, entertainment
18	Integration of skills	Reading

ii) Response (description of written response elicited by the prompt(s)/input)		
19	Number of words expected	120-180
20	Rhetorical function(s)	Expressing preferences; eliciting information
21	Register	Unmarked to formal
22	Domain	Personal
23	Grammar	Limited range of complex structures
24	Vocabulary	Mainly frequent vocabulary
25	Cohesion	Limited use of cohesive devices
26	Authenticity: situational	High
27	Authenticity: interactional	High
28	Cognitive processing	Reproduction of known ideas
29	Content knowledge	Common, general, non-specialised
30	Task purpose	Referential (telling)

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iii) Rating of Task		
31	Known criteria	Grading criteria are not provided to the candidate on the paper, but can be viewed in past paper packs issued after the exam session and in the handbook: http://www.cambridgeesol.org/support/handbooks.htm
32	Task rating method	Descriptive scale (band descriptors)
33	Assessment criteria	Content; accuracy; range; organisation and cohesion; appropriacy of register and format; target reader
34	Number of raters	1

iv) Feedback to candidates		
35	Quantitative feedback	Exam specific grade
36	Qualitative feedback	Graphical display of performance on the paper

Example answer

Competition Organiser
Helen Ryan

Thank you very much for the letter that telling me I won first prize in the competition. I am so glad and I am going to write some information that you need from me. First of all, I would like to travel only July because It is due to my job. And about accommodation I would prefer log cabins to tents. I have never stayed log cabins so it would be good chance to me. In your letter, you mentioned that I have the chance to do two activities. I would choose Sailing and Photography. However, I am absolutely beginner at both activities. I am really exciting to try new activities at the Camp. It would be greatful, therefore, if you could advise me what sort of clothes should I take or about money and there are anything that I need for the Camp. I am looking forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely

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Commentary

- **Content**
All points covered.
- **Accuracy**
There are some basic errors, but they do not impede communication, e.g. 'I am really exciting', 'There are anything'.
- **Range**
Limited. Sometimes relies on lifting material from the input and does not always achieve accuracy in the lifting.
- **Organisation and Cohesion**
Clearly paragraphed. Some attempt at linking
- **Appropriacy of Register and Format**
Generally appropriate.
- **Target Reader**
Would be informed.

Score allocated

Band 3 (on the five band scale)

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The CEFR Grids for Writing, developed by ALTE members

Cambridge ESOL Sample Test Tasks

Report on analysis of	Certificate in Advanced English (CAE) Writing
Target language of this test	English
Target level (CEFR) of this test	C1
Task number/name	Paper 2, Part 2, Question 4

General Information about the writing component *

3	Number of tasks in the writing paper	5
4	Integration of skills	Writing (with written input)
5	Total test time	120 minutes
6	Target performance level	C1
7	Channel	Handwritten
8	Purpose	General proficiency

Background to the Examination

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The Certificate in Advanced English (CAE) is a general English qualification which is one of the Cambridge ESOL Main-suite Examinations. Set at level C1 of the CEF, CAE recognises the ability to communicate with confidence in English and deal with most aspects of daily life. CAE is designed for learners who are reaching a standard of English that is adequate for most purposes, including business and study in higher education.

* The numbers in the left hand column of the tables refer to the categories in the ALTE CEFR Writing Grid

Candidature

CAE is taken by more than 60,000 candidates per year in over 60 countries. Around 80% of CAE candidates are aged 25 or under with the average being about 23. In some countries, where CAE is more commonly taken by candidates in their late teens, the average age is lower. Around 70% of candidates attend preparation classes.

Structure of the Test

CAE is administered in five separate papers. Paper 1 Reading, Paper 2 Writing, Paper 3 English in Use, Paper 4 Listening and Paper 5 Speaking. Each of these five papers is equally weighted at 20%. There are five possible grades in CAE: three passing grades (A, B and C) and two failing grades (D and E). Results are based on the candidate's aggregate scores across the four skills.

The Certificate in Advanced English Writing component

The Paper has a fixed format with two parts. Part 1 (Question 1) consists of one compulsory task and requires candidates to process up to 400 words of input material and to use the information appropriately to perform the task required. Input material may consist of varied combinations of text and notes, sometimes supported by illustrations or diagrams. In Part 2 (Questions 2-5) candidates select one task from a choice of four. This part includes a work-orientated task as the last of the four questions. Part 2, question 4, is used in this sample. Tasks in both Parts 1 and 2 involve the construction of texts from among the following types: newspaper and magazine articles, contributions to leaflets and brochures, notices, announcements, personal notes and messages, formal and informal letters, reports, proposals, reviews, instructions, directions, competition entries, information sheets, memos.

Specific Information about the example Part 2 task

In this example question, candidates are given a short (47 words) extract from a letter and asked to write a report of about 250 words based on the candidate's knowledge of their own country. Different interpretations of what is an acceptable style for a report are acceptable. The answer should be clearly organised, contain the language of description, opinion and possibly comparison and contrast. There should be a range of tenses and vocabulary relating to relationships. The register of the answer should be neutral to formal and must be consistent throughout.

Mark distribution

All tasks carry the same maximum mark. Two mark schemes are used in conjunction to grade responses: a general impression mark scheme, and a task-specific mark scheme which focuses on criteria specific to each particular task. Criteria covered by these two mark schemes are: content; organisation and cohesion; range; register; target reader; accuracy.

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Task Rating

A panel of experts is divided into small teams, each with a very experienced examiner as team leader. A Principal Examiner guides and monitors the marking process. Examiners are trained in the use of the task-specific and general mark schemes prior to each marking period and refer to them regularly while they are working.

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During marking, each examiner is appointed scripts chosen at random from the whole entry in order to ensure that there is no concentration of good or weak scripts or of

one large centre of one country in the allocation of any one examiner. Each script is marked twice by different examiners, and where there is significant disagreement in the marks allocated, the script is marked a third time by a team leader whose rating decision is final.

Effective Level

All CAE Writing tasks are written according to set guidelines by trained item writers and pass through pre-editing and editing stages prior to trialling on a pretest population which approximates to the live candidature in L1 balance, age, gender etc. Tasks are accepted as suitable for use, rejected, or modified and re-trialled if necessary. Tasks are marked according to set criteria linked to the CEFR for level C1.

Sample task:

Choose **one** of the following writing tasks. Your answer should follow exactly the instructions given. Write approximately 250 words.

- 4 This is an extract from a letter which you receive from the World Opinion Organisation.

We are carrying out an international survey on families around the world and the importance of family relationships. Please write us a report for our survey outlining the typical family situation in your own country and suggesting how you think the situation might change in the future.

Write your **report**.

i) Task input/prompt		
9	Rubrics and instructions are in...	English
10	Language level of rubric.	C1
11	Time for this task	Not specified (estimate: 60 minutes)
12	Control / guidance	Open
13	Content	Content is specified

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14	Discourse mode	Report
15	Audience	Committee, board
16	Type of input	Textual
17	Topic	Daily life; relations with other people
18	Integration of skills	Reading

ii) Response (description of written response elicited by the prompt(s)/input)

19	Number of words expected	250
20	Rhetorical function(s)	Description (events); explanation; exposition; suggestion; argumentation; persuasion; comparison and contrast
21	Register	Formal
22	Domain	Public
23	Grammar	Range of complex grammatical structures
24	Vocabulary	Range of low frequency vocabulary
25	Cohesion	Appropriate use of cohesive devices
26	Authenticity: situational	High
27	Authenticity: interactional	Medium
28	Cognitive processing	Knowledge transformation
29	Content knowledge	Wide range of knowledge areas
30	Task purpose	Referential (telling); conative

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iii) Rating of Task		
31	Known criteria	Grading criteria are not provided to the candidate on the paper, but can be viewed in past paper packs issued after the exam session and in the handbook: http://www.cambridgeesol.org/support/handbooks.htm
32	Task rating method	Descriptive scale (band descriptors)
33	Assessment criteria	Content; organisation and cohesion; range; register; target reader; accuracy
34	Number of raters	2

iv) Feedback to candidates		
35	Quantitative feedback	Exam specific grade
36	Qualitative feedback	Graphical display of performance on the paper

Example answer

The family in France

Nowadays, in France, the average number of children is two per family, whereas elderly people used to have five or six sisters and brothers or even more when they were young, at least in my region: Brittany, where children were useful in farms as they were growing up.

More and more people divorce, and afterwards remain single, live with someone, or get married another time. If they have children, these generally live with their mother but it occurs more and more that they live with their father. That is probably due to this trend that there are less and less weddings. Young people prefer living with a mate without marrying him or her, or if they marry, they do it later than their parents who used to do it around the age of 20. That is why they usually have their first child later than their parents.

Grand-parents are still important in French families, but when they get older, they do not usually come and live in their children's place as before. They are healthy enough to live alone or they go to residences

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for old people. Children sometimes live in towns further from their parents' place than before, but their place is still the one where we like to stay at the week-ends or the holidays.

Unfortunately, I think that this trend of living further from their parents than before will get worse in the years to come, because of the unemployment rate. Indeed even if young people tend to live longer in their parents' house, they have to search a job not only in their town but sometimes in the whole country, and when they find one, they leave, even abroad sometimes, because it is so hard to get something!

I think that the average number of children will remain the same or will decrease, as people have their children older and perhaps do not want to give birth to future unemployed people.

Finally, I think that the number of divorces, and people who live together but unmarried, will increase.

Commentary

- **Content**

The task has been fully completed. It is informative, and deals well with both the current family situation, and how it might change in future.

- **Organisation and Cohesion**

There is an absence of report features, such as headings, but the writing is appropriately paragraphed, with an introduction and conclusion. It is also well-organised and on the whole coherent, though at times the sentences are long and a little difficult to follow e.g. Indeed, even if young people...because it is so hard to get something!

- **Range**

There is evidence of range. The language of comparison is good, e.g. 'whereas; more and more people. A range of relevant topic vocabulary has also been used, e.g. 'the average number of children'; 'due to this trend'.

- **Register**

Consistently and appropriately neutral.

- **Target Reader**

Would be well informed.

- **Accuracy**

Occasionally awkward, e.g. 'That is probably due to this trend that there are less and less weddings'. A few non-impeding errors, e.g. 'search a job'.

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Score allocated

Band 4 (on the five band scale)

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Cambridge ESOL Sample Test Tasks

Report on analysis of	Certificate of Proficiency in English (CPE) Writing
Target language of this test	English
Target level (CEFR) of this test	C2
Task number/name	Paper 2, Part 1

General Information about the writing component *

3	Number of tasks in the writing paper	5
4	Integration of skills	Writing (with written input)
5	Total test time	120 minutes
6	Target performance level	C2
7	Channel	Handwritten
8	Purpose	General proficiency

Background to the Examination

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The Certificate of Proficiency in English (CPE) is a general English qualification which is one of the Cambridge ESOL Main-suite Examinations. Set at level C2 of the CEFR, CPE recognises the ability to function effectively in almost any English-speaking context. CPE is designed for learners who have achieved a high level of language skills and are approaching a standard of English similar to that of an educated native speaker. The exam also requires an appropriate level of educational and personal maturity.

* The numbers in the left hand column of the tables refer to the categories in the ALTE CEFR Writing Grid

Candidature

CPE is taken by 45,000 candidates per year in 80 countries. Around 75% of CPE candidates are aged 25 or under. In some countries, where CPE is more commonly taken by candidates in their late teens, the average is lower. Around 85% of candidates attend preparation classes.

Structure of the Test

CPE is administered in five separate papers. Paper 1 Reading, Paper 2 Writing, Paper 3 Use of English, Paper 4 Listening and Paper 5 Speaking. Each of these five papers is equally weighted at 20%. There are five possible grades in CPE: three passing grades (A, B and C) and two failing grades (D and E). Results are based on the candidate's aggregate score across the four skills.

The Certificate of Proficiency in English (CPE) Writing component

The paper has a fixed format, with two parts. Part 1 (Question 1) is compulsory and comprises one question in which candidates are expected to write an article, an essay, letter or a proposal in response to instructions and a short text or texts, the instructions and short text(s) totalling approximately 100 words. The text(s) may come from a variety of sources, for example, extracts from newspapers, magazines, books, letters or advertisements, or could be quotations from speakers in a discussion. All questions in this part have a discursive focus. For example, candidates may be required to defend or attack a particular argument or opinion, compare or contrast aspects of an argument, explain a problem and suggest a solution or make recommendations having evaluated an idea. There is always more than one point to address in a task and candidates should have practice in identifying these points and ensuring they have covered the points in their answer. Part 2 consists of four tasks (Questions 2-5), of which the candidate is required to answer one. The final question (Question 5) is based on a choice of three set books; these are listed in the examination regulations which are published every year.

Specific Information about the example Part 1 task

In the sample question, candidates are asked to base their responses on a newspaper article of 75 words. The response should be between 300 and 350 words in length and should address the points made in the article and address the question posed. Candidates may expand on the topic, attack the argument in the article or defend it, as they wish. Language for expressing and supporting opinions and for making recommendations should be used. The register of the letter should be formal, bearing in mind the writer's role as the reader of a newspaper writing in to give his or her opinion. The response should be written using a formal letter format, with clear organisation of points and adequate paragraphing.

Mark distribution

All tasks carry the same maximum mark. Two mark schemes are used in conjunction to grade responses: a general impression mark scheme and a task-specific mark scheme, which focuses on criteria specific to each particular task. Criteria covered by these two mark schemes are: content; range; accuracy; appropriacy of register and format; organisation and cohesion; target reader.

Task Rating

A panel of experts is divided into small teams, each with a very experienced examiner

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as team leader. A Principal Examiner guides and monitors the marking process. Examiners are trained in the use of the task-specific and general mark schemes and refer to them constantly while they are marking.

During marking, each examiner is appointed scripts chosen at random from the whole entry in order to ensure that there is no concentration of good or weak scripts or of one large centre of one country in the allocation of any one examiner. A rigorous process of co-ordination, checking and monitoring is carried out throughout the marking process.

Effective Level

All CPE Writing tasks are written according to set guidelines by trained item writers and pass through pre-editing and editing stages prior to trialling on a pretest population which approximates the live candidature in L1 balance, age, gender etc. Tasks are accepted as suitable for use, rejected, or modified and re-trialled if necessary. Tasks are marked according to set criteria linked to the CEFR for level C2.

Sample task:

You **must** answer this question. Write your answer in **300-350** words in an appropriate style on pages **3** and **4**.

- 1** You have read the extract below as part of a newspaper article on the loss of national and cultural identity. Readers were asked to send in their opinions. You decide to write a letter responding to the points raised and expressing your own views.

'We are losing our national and cultural identity. Because of recent advances in technology and the easy availability and speed of air travel, different countries are communicating more often and are therefore becoming more and more alike. The same shopping malls and fast food outlets can be found almost everywhere. So can the same types of office blocks, motorways, TV programmes and even lifestyles. How can we maintain the traditions that make each nation unique?'

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Write your **letter**. Do not write any postal addresses.

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i) Task input/prompt		
9	Rubrics and instructions are in...	English
10	Language level of rubric	C2
11	Time for this task	Not specified (estimate: 60 minutes)
12	Control/guidance	Open
13	Content	Content is specified
14	Discourse mode	Letter
15	Audience	General public (as for newspaper article)
16	Type of prompt	Textual
17	Topic	Cultural affairs
18	Integration of skills	Reading

ii) Response (description of written response elicited by the prompt(s)/input)		
19	Number of words expected	300-400
20	Rhetorical function(s)	Description (events); explanation; giving opinions; exposition; suggestion; argumentation; persuasion; comparison and contrast; other; evaluation
21	Register	Unmarked to formal
22	Domain	Public
23	Grammar	Wide range of complex grammatical structures
24	Vocabulary	Wide range of low frequency vocabulary
25	Cohesion	Wide range of cohesive devices
26	Authenticity: situational	High
27	Authenticity: interactional	Medium

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28	Cognitive processing	Knowledge transformation
29	Content knowledge	Very wide range of knowledge areas
30	Task purpose Referential (telling);	emotive (reacting); conative

iii) Rating of Task

31	Known criteria	Grading criteria are not provided to the candidate on the paper, but can be viewed in past paper packs issued after the exam session and in the handbook: http://www.cambridgeesol.org/support/handbooks.htm
32	Task rating method	Descriptive scale (band descriptors)
33	Assessment criteria	Content; range; accuracy; appropriacy of register and format; organisation and cohesion; target reader
34	Number of raters	1

iv) Feedback to candidates

35	Quantitative feedback	Exam specific grade
36	Qualitative feedback	Graphical display of performance on the paper

Example answer

Dear Sirs

I am writing with reference to the article on the loss of national and cultural identity, published in one of your latest issues. I would like to express my disagreement regarding your opinion. I hope you will not take amiss what I am going to say.

To begin with, you claimed that because of the modern amenities people all over the world become more and more alike. In other words, advances in technology and the opportunity of travelling easily and faster are responsible for the loss of national and cultural identities. I think it is dangerous to claim that it

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would be better if not everybody has the same facilities in order to maintain each nation unique. That would mean a vast majority of the population has to be deprived of progress to maintain its integer traditions.

Furthermore, I think that the cultural exchange and the fact that communication gets more and more easy have a positive effect on the maintenance of tradition. Because the reason why people are travelling so much is the fact that they want to learn about the different countries and their cultures. Therefore, each country is interested in maintaining its traditions, or even better, they are pushing their population to saveguard national identity. To sum up, thanks to advances in technology the countries get more worried about maintaining national traditions.

Moreover, you deplore shopping malls, TV programmes and lifestyles can be found everywhere. According to that statement, certain countries should be deprived of these amenities so that they will not be influenced by another country's tradition. Don't you think that this course of action would lead to the isolation that some 55 years ago our ancestors tried to abolish? In my opinion, the fact of depriving somebody of something he wants will not help to maintain the country's tradition, but will inevitably lead to a dissatisfaction that could become very dangerous.

On the whole, I think that it is impossible to lead the market towards an ideal world where everything works as we wish, namely in a co-existence of many different traditions. It is dangerous to deprive men of things they know they could have; therefore, mankind should be given the opportunity to develop itself, no matter what or without different traditions.

I am looking forward to seeing my letter published in one of the next issues of your newspaper.

Yours faithfully

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Commentary

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- **Content**

The candidate has developed a fairly convincing argument in disagreement with the text of the prompt. S/he has produced a good introduction and conclusion and makes three well-expressed and valid points in the argument. This is a good realisation of the task.

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- **Range**
The language is fluent and natural, a range of structures is used competently and the vocabulary is varied and generally appropriate. There are two or three lexical errors only, e.g., ‘saveguard’.
- **Accuracy**
There are minor errors, but these are unobtrusive. There are some awkward expressions, e.g., ‘take amiss what I am going to say’ and ‘integer tradition’.
- **Appropriacy of Register and Format**
The register is appropriate – neutral in tone but expressing the writer’s views clearly.
- **Organisation and Cohesion**
The letter holds together well, with good use of cohesive devices. The introduction and conclusion are clearly defined and well-expressed. The article is well organised with competent use of paragraphing.
- **Appropriacy of Register and Format**
The register is appropriate – neutral in tone but expressing the writer’s views clearly.
- **Target Reader**
This piece of writing has a positive effect on the reader.

Score allocated

Band 3 (on the five band scale)

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