

Euroexam Level C1 General English

UK NARIC Independent Evaluation: Executive Summary

Submitted to Euroexam International by UK NARIC

The National Recognition Information Centre for the United Kingdom

The national agency responsible for providing information and expert opinion on
qualifications and skills worldwide

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Context and Scope

Euroexam International is based in Budapest, Hungary, and was established in 2000 under the International House World Organisation. Since 2004 it has been an independent examination board, conducting test administration, development and teacher training. The examination centre is supported by its base in London, UK, responsible for marketing and educational support. It has 85 local testing centres, primarily located throughout Europe. Euroexam International retains a professional partnership with International House and holds national accreditation in Hungary¹.

Euroexam International offers language proficiency testing in English and German. This includes five general levels: *Breakthrough* (available in English only), *Waystage*, *Threshold*, *Vantage* and *Operational Proficiency*; and three levels of Business English exams named *EuroPro*. Examinations are informed by the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment (CEFR). Examinations follow a communicative methodology, and aim to assess candidates across four skill areas: reading, writing, listening and speaking. 20,000 candidates took a Euroexam language test with 2500 taking the Euroexam Level C1 General English.²

UK NARIC has been commissioned by Euroexam International to undertake an independent evaluation of their Euroexam Level C1 English. The purpose of the study is to facilitate wider understanding of the exam for the purposes of admission to further study. In this context, the study seeks to compare the Euroexam Level C1 English tests offered in reading, listening, writing and speaking to CEFR descriptors as outlined by key Council of Europe documentation, and to review the quality assurance processes for test administration, development and review.

Methodology

For the purposes of conducting this study, UK NARIC undertook a desk-based document analysis, using Euroexam International internal documentation, including test specifications, item writer guides, marker standards, test delivery information, handbooks and codes of practice as well as the assessment materials from both four recent examination sittings and specimen materials for the speaking test to be delivered from September 2018.

This desk-based document review was complemented by a site visit which was conducted over two days in May 2018. The visit included meetings with key personnel from the Test Production and Training Team, and the Test Delivery Team and observation of one examination sitting for the Euroexam Level C1 General English reading, writing, listening and speaking papers.

A review of the documentation and the site visit informed two main levels of analysis: quality assurance, and assessment materials.

¹ Through the Educational Authority Accreditation Centre for Foreign Language Examinations in Hungary (NYAK), which falls under the Ministry of National Resources.

² 2016: <http://www.euroexam.com/about/at-a-glance>

Firstly, the analysis of quality assurance looked at the documentation, procedures and policies in place regarding awarding body recognition and status, centre registration, monitoring and inspection, test development processes and practice, test administration, marking and moderation, and grading and certification. The quality assurance made particular reference to internal documentation on test production, exam delivery, test centre approval and certification, as well as being informed by the processes observed during delivery of the live tests and the meetings held during the site visit.

Secondly, the assessment materials review focused on a comparative analysis of the four recent past papers in reading, writing, speaking, and listening in relation to the CEFR C1 level descriptors, specimen speaking papers for first use in September 2018, and on the application of marking and live examination observations during the site visit. Specifically, the process evaluated the tasks in each test in the context of text domain, content and context, rubric and instructions, question demand and overall linguistic complexity with particular reference to CEFR C1 descriptors and examination linking, as outlined in key Council of Europe documents³.

Key Findings

Euroexam International has established a robust and fit-for-purpose system of quality assurance and control to ensure consistent standards in the development, administering, marking and certification of language tests. In particular, the study has found that:

- There is a well-established system for registering and monitoring centres administering the English language tests
- The development of the tests is underpinned by a clear set of processes and guidelines to facilitate validity and the consistency with which the skills are assessed from one exam series to the next
- Test administration practices are effective in maintaining the security of exam papers, the smooth conduct of exams in line with exam delivery guidelines and safeguarding against malpractice and misconduct
- The marking, grading and certification processes are generally found to be secure.

The assessment of reading, writing, listening and speaking in the Euroexam Level C1 General English provide a valid and reliable assessment of those skills at CEFR C1 level, noting particular alignment with CEFR C1 in terms of:

- Choice of text topics, genres, and domains including a range of complex, abstract or technical topics
- A high level of linguistic complexity, particularly in terms of exposure to authentic language, complex grammatical and lexical structures, and idiomatic or colloquial expressions

³ *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment* (2001); *Relating Language Examinations to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment, a manual* (2009); and *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment: Companion Volume with New Descriptors* (2018).

- Question demand which encourages candidate use of CEFR C1 level subskills including inferencing, writing appropriately to genre and audience within a range of textual functions, recognising detail, and focusing on subtleties of language
- Marking practices which accurately identify below and at-level candidates.

In the case of reading and listening, a pass in these tests would reflect a level of receptive competence comparable to C1.

In the case of speaking and writing, where candidates are assessed on their spoken production and interaction and written production skills respectively, a score of 60% and above would, in UK NARIC's view, best reflect the level of English language competence associated with CEFR C1 and above.

In conclusion, the Euroexam C1 Exam is well designed to test English language skills across the four skill areas at CEFR C1 level, and can be considered appropriate to meet the English language requirements for admission to English-medium higher education studies, at institutional discretion.

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