



**ECCE 2014**

Report

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# 1. DESCRIPTION OF THE TEST

## 1.1 GENERAL DESCRIPTION

The Examination for the Certificate of Competency in English (ECCE) is a standardized high-intermediate level English as a foreign language examination designed by CaMLA. It is a test of general language proficiency in a variety of contexts. The four component skills of listening, reading, writing, and speaking are evaluated through a combination of tasks.

The ECCE is aimed at the B2 level of the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR; Council of Europe, 2001) and is valid for the lifetime of the recipient. An ECCE certificate is recognized in several countries as official documentary evidence of high-intermediate competency in English for academic and professional purposes.

CaMLA is committed to the excellence of its tests, which are developed in accordance with the highest standards in educational measurement. All parts of the examination are written following specified guidelines, and items are pretested to ensure that they function properly. CaMLA works closely with test centers to ensure that its tests are administered in a way that is fair and accessible to test takers and that the ECCE is open to all people who wish to take the exam, regardless of the school they attend or their participation in formal language study.

## 1.2 TEST FORMAT

The ECCE tests all four skill areas: listening, reading, writing, and speaking. Table 1 describes the format and content of the ECCE. Test preparation resources are available on the CaMLA website.

Table 1: Format and Content of the ECCE

Section	Time	Description	Number of Items
Speaking	15 minutes	Test takers participate in a structured, multistage task with one examiner.	4 stages
Listening	30 minutes	<b>Part 1</b> (multiple choice) A short recorded conversation is followed by a question. Answer choices are shown as pictures.	30
		<b>Part 2</b> (multiple choice) Short talks delivered by single speakers on different topics, followed by 4 to 6 questions each.	20
Grammar Vocabulary Reading	90 minutes	<b>Grammar</b> (multiple choice) An incomplete sentence is followed by a choice of words or phrases to complete it. Only one choice is grammatically correct.	35
		<b>Vocabulary</b> (multiple choice) An incomplete sentence is followed by a choice of words or phrases to complete it. Only one word has the correct meaning in that context.	35
		<b>Reading</b> (multiple choice) Part 1: A short reading passage is followed by comprehension questions. Part 2: Two sets of four short texts related to each other by topic are followed by 10 questions each.	30
Writing	30 minutes	The test taker reads a short excerpt from a newspaper article and then writes a letter or essay giving an opinion about a situation or issue.	1 task

## 2. SCORING AND REPORTING OF RESULTS

### 2.1 EXPLANATION OF SCORING

The speaking and writing sections are graded according to scales established by CaMLA (see our website for the rating scales). The speaking section is conducted and assessed by a CaMLA certified speaking examiner, and the writing section is assessed by at least two CaMLA certified raters.

The listening and grammar, vocabulary, and reading (GVR) sections of the ECCE are scored by computer at CaMLA. Each correct answer contributes proportionally to the final score for each section, and there are no points deducted for wrong answers. A scaled score is calculated using an advanced mathematical model based on Item Response Theory. This method ensures that the ability required to pass a section, or to receive a high score, remains the same from year to year.

ECCE section scores are reported in five bands. ECCE test takers who achieve an average score of 650 or higher will be awarded a certificate. Additionally, those who achieve a score of 840 or higher in all four sections will be awarded a Certificate of Competency with Honors.

### 2.2 PROCEDURES FOR REPORTING SCORES

All test takers receive an Examination Report that provides the following information:

- The result for the ECCE (Honors/Pass/Fail).
- Section results with a brief description of the test taker's performance

ECCE section scores are reported in five bands. The score report also provides a numeric score for each section.

**Table 2: ECCE Performance Range**

Score Band	Scaled Score
Honors (H)	840–1000
Pass (P)	750–835
Low Pass (LP)	650–745
Borderline Fail (BF)	610–645
Fail (F)	0–605

Test takers are given these results so that they will know the areas in which they have done well and in which they need to improve. The numeric score provides test takers with more precise information on their performance. For example, a test taker who receives a band score of Pass (P) in the listening section of the ECCE will be able to see if his or her score is at the top of the band—close to an Honors (H)—or if it is closer to a Low Pass (LP).

## 3. INTERPRETING ECCE RESULTS

The ECCE is aimed at the B2 level of the CEFR (Council of Europe, 2001). Language users at this proficiency level:

Can understand the main ideas of complex text on both concrete and abstract topics, including technical discussions in his/her field of specialization. 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.

(Council of Europe, 2001: 24)

Therefore, ECCE certificate holders are expected to understand spoken English on a variety of topics, both conversational and more planned speech. They are able to sustain a face-to-face oral interaction quite intelligibly and grasp information delivered to them at a normal pace. They are able to communicate their ideas and show involvement in a topic or situation and discuss ideas or opinions without communication breakdowns. They have sufficient control of grammar and vocabulary to express themselves quite comprehensibly both orally and in writing. In written English, they can organize and explicitly connect their ideas. They can give their opinion and develop their argument with supporting details. Variability in linguistic control in their speaking or writing does not significantly interfere with communication. They read and understand prose and nonprose texts from a variety of popular and public sources using a range of effective reading strategies and skills though they can be expected to need resources for understanding texts with low frequency vocabulary, highly specialized terms, or low frequency idioms.

When interpreting an ECCE score report, it is important to remember that the ECCE estimates the test takers' true proficiency by approximating the kinds of tasks that they may encounter in real life. Also, temporary factors unrelated to a test takers' proficiency, such as fatigue, anxiety, or illness, may affect exam results.

When using test scores for decision-making, check the date the test was taken. While the certificate is valid for the holder's lifetime, language ability changes over time. This ability can improve with active use and further study of the language, or it may diminish if the holder does not continue to study or use English on a regular basis. It is also important to remember that test performance is only one aspect to be considered. Communicative language ability consists of both

knowledge of language and knowledge of the world. Therefore, one would need to consider how factors other than language affect how well someone can communicate. For example, in the general context of using English in business, the ability to function effectively involves not only knowledge of English, but also other knowledge and skills such as intellectual knowledge and business skills.

#### 4. TEST-TAKING POPULATION

This section presents an overview of the test takers who took the ECCE in 2014, providing demographic information for the test population. Every test taker completed a registration form which asked for their gender, date of birth, and first language. Cases where information was not given or was not correctly given were treated as missing data.

Table 3 lists the first language backgrounds of the test takers. The test takers represented 36 different first language backgrounds, but it should be noted that the test population primarily consisted of test takers whose first language was Albanian, Greek, Portuguese, or Spanish.

**Table 3: List of Test Takers by First Language Background**

Afrikaans	Georgian	Polish
Albanian	German	Portuguese
Arabic	Greek	Punjabi
Armenian	Gujarati	Romanian
Bengali	Hebrew	Russian
Bulgarian	Hungarian	Sinhalese
Cambodian	Ibo (Igbo)	Spanish
Catalan	Indonesian	Swedish
Chinese	Kannada	Tagalog/Filipino
(Cantonese/Mandarin)	Kikuyu	Turkish
Croatian	Lithuanian	Ukrainian
English	Malayalam	Vietnamese
Farsi/Persian		

Tables 4 and 5 present the distribution of test takers by age and gender. Table 4 shows that the majority of the ECCE test takers were 13–16 years old (83.65%). This suggests that test takers tend to take the ECCE in the first years of secondary school. Additionally, Table 5 shows that majority of the test taker who took the ECCE were female. This distribution is similar to previous administrations of the exam.

**Table 4: Distribution (in %) of ECCE Test Takers by Age**

Age	% of Test Population
≤ 12	3.18
13–16	80.47
17–19	5.40
20–22	3.37
23–25	2.75
26–29	1.88
30–39	1.63
≥ 40	1.17
Missing Data	0.14

**Table 5: Distribution (in %) of ECCE Test Takers by Gender**

Gender	% of Test Population
Male	46.00
Female	53.88
Missing Data	0.12

## 5. TEST STATISTICS

### 5.1 DISTRIBUTION OF RESULTS FOR THE EXAM AS A WHOLE

Table 6 shows the percentage of test takers who received an overall Honors, Pass, or Fail for the ECCE. It shows that the pass rate for the 2014 ECCE was over 83%.

**Table 6: Percentage of Test Takers Who Received an Overall Honors, Pass, or Fail for the ECCE**

Honors	Pass	Fail
0.49	83.34	16.17

### 5.2 DISTRIBUTION OF RESULTS BY SECTION

Table 7 shows the percentage of test takers in each band for every section of the ECCE. The data indicates that a typical ECCE test taker will perform better on the writing and speaking sections and that the listening and GVR sections are more challenging.

**Table 7: Percentage of Test Takers in Each Band for the Four Sections of the ECCE**

Section	Honors	Pass	Low Pass	Borderline Fail	Fail
Writing	1.77	17.61	55.61	19.77	5.24
Listening	19.98	28.01	31.49	8.43	12.09
GCVR	8.69	23.98	40.75	12.21	14.37
Speaking	14.32	39.87	36.87	7.28	1.66

### 5.3 RELIABILITY FIGURES FOR LISTENING AND GVR

Test scores are a numerical measure of a test taker's ability. *Reliability* refers to the consistency of the measurement. In theory, a test taker's test score should be the same each time the test is taken or across different forms of the same test. In practice, even when the test conditions are carefully controlled, an individual's performance on a set of test items will vary from one administration to another due to variation in the items across different forms of the same test or due to variability in individual performance. Among the reasons for this are temporary factors unrelated to a test taker's proficiency, such as fatigue, anxiety, or illness. As a result, test scores always contain a small amount of measurement error. The aim, however, is to keep this error to a minimum. For high-stakes exams such as the ECCE, a reliability figure of 0.80 and above is expected and acceptable. The reliability estimates are calculated in Winsteps using the KR-20 (Kuder-Richardson Formula 20) method. In addition to monitoring reliability, the estimated variability in test taker performance is also monitored through the standard error of measurement (SEM) estimate. The SEM estimates are calculated using the reliability estimates and the scaled scores.

Reliability and SEM estimates are obtained for each administration of the ECCE. In this report, the reliability and SEM estimates are summarized as averages across the 2014 ECCE administrations. For the listening section, the average reliability estimate was 0.89 (with values ranging from 0.86 to 0.91), and the average SEM estimate was 38.39 (with values ranging from 31.26 to 44.28). For the GVR section, the average reliability estimate was 0.94 (with values ranging from 0.94 to 0.95), and the average SEM estimate was 28.17 (with values ranging from 23.90 to 32.24). These values demonstrate that the reliability figures for both exam sections are not only above the minimally acceptable value of 0.80 but are consistently near 0.90. Additionally, the SEM estimates as a proportion of the 1000-point scale are very small. These values suggest excellent consistency of measurement for the ECCE listening and GVR sections.

### 5.4 RATER AGREEMENT FIGURES FOR WRITING

The raters for the writing section are native speakers of English, all trained and certified according to standards set by CaMLA. Each essay is rated separately by two accredited raters using an analytic rating scale. An essay is evaluated by a third rater if the original two raters have nonadjacent scores for any of the analytic scoring categories.

CaMLA monitors rater agreement for training purposes. It monitors within tolerance agreement ( $\pm 2$  score points) between the first and second raters. The pass/fail agreement is also monitored; that is, the extent to which raters agree on whether an essay should be awarded a passing grade or a failing grade. In this report, these two rater agreement figures are summarized as averages across the different 2014 ECCE administrations. The average percentage of within tolerance agreement was 73.88%, and the average pass/fail agreement percentage was 81.81%. Both of these values are high, which suggests excellent agreement among raters. It should be noted that CaMLA also reviews a percentage of essays each year as part of its ongoing quality control processes.

### 5.5 SPEAKING RATER PERFORMANCE

The examiners for the speaking test are native or highly proficient nonnative speakers of English who are trained and certified according to standards set by CaMLA. The examiner who conducts the speaking test assesses and rates the test taker's performance using the ECCE Speaking Rating Scale. Performance of speaking test examiners is monitored locally by senior experienced rater training examiners and recordings of speaking tests are sent to CaMLA for review.

## 6. REFERENCES

Council of Europe (2001) *The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages : learning, teaching, assessment*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.