



# MICHIGAN LANGUAGE ASSESSMENT

# ECCE

## ECCE 2019 Test Report

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**MICHIGAN  
LANGUAGE  
ASSESSMENT**



Cambridge Assessment  
English



UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

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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 Michigan Language Assessment. 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 internationally as official documentary evidence of high-intermediate competency in English.

Michigan Language Assessment 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. Michigan Language Assessment works closely with test centers to ensure that its tests are administered following set procedures, 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. Test preparation resources are available on the Michigan Language Assessment website.

## 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.

**Table 1: Format and Content of the ECCE**

Section	Time	Description	Number of Items
Listening	30 minutes	<b>Part 1:</b> Short conversations are each followed by a question. The three answer choices are shown as pictures.	30 questions
		<b>Part 2:</b> Single speakers deliver short talks on different topics, followed by 4 to 6 questions each.	20 questions
Grammar Vocabulary Reading (GVR)	90 minutes	<b>Grammar:</b> An incomplete sentence is followed by a choice of four words or phrases to complete it.	35 questions
		<b>Vocabulary:</b> An incomplete sentence is followed by a choice of four words or phrases to complete it.	35 questions
		<b>Reading Part 1:</b> Two reading passages are each followed by five comprehension questions.	10 questions
		<b>Reading Part 2:</b> Two sets of four thematically related passages are each followed by ten questions.	20 questions
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
Speaking	15 minutes	The test taker participates in a structured, multistage task with one examiner.	4 stages

## 2. Scoring and Reporting of Results

### 2.1 Explanation of Scoring

The listening and grammar, vocabulary, and reading (GVR) sections of the ECCE are scored by computer at Michigan Language Assessment. Each correct answer contributes to the final score for each section, and there are no points deducted for wrong answers. A scaled score, ranging from 0 to 1000, is calculated using Item Response Theory. This method ensures that scores are comparable across different administrations, and that the ability required to pass a section or to receive a high score remains the same from year to year.

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

ECCE test takers who achieve an average score of 650 or higher are awarded a Certificate of Competency. Additionally, those who achieve a score of 840 or higher in all four sections are awarded a Certificate of Competency with Honors.

### 2.2 Procedures for Reporting Scores

All test takers receive an Examination Report that provides the overall result for the ECCE (Honors/Pass/Fail) and 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 those areas 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 variety of subjects and explain a viewpoint on a topical issue giving the advantages and disadvantages of various options.

(Council of Europe, 2001, p. 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 a test taker’s true proficiency by approximating the kinds of tasks that they may encounter in real life. Also, temporary factors unrelated to a test taker’s proficiency, such as fatigue, anxiety, or illness, may affect exam results.

When using test scores for decision-making, it may be worth checking 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 content knowledge and business skills.

#### 4. Test-Taking Population

This section presents an overview of the test takers who took the ECCE in 2019, 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 20 different first language backgrounds, but it should be noted that the test population primarily consisted of test takers whose first language was Albanian, Arabic, Greek, Portuguese, or Spanish.

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 (81.77%). 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 takers who took the ECCE were female. These distributions are similar to previous administrations of the exam.

**Table 3: List of First Language Backgrounds**

Afrikaans	French	Polish
Albanian	Georgian	Portuguese
Arabic	German	Romanian
Benga	Greek	Russian
Cambodian	Italian	Spanish
Efik	Korean	Ukrainian
English	Nepali	

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

Age	% of Test Population
≤12	5.62
13 - 16	81.77
17 - 19	4.82
20 - 22	2.30
23 - 25	1.75
26 - 29	1.34
30 - 39	1.33
≥40	0.90
Missing Data	0.18

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

Gender	% of Test Population
Male	47.09
Female	52.87
Prefer Not to Say	0.01
Prefer to Self-Describe	0.00
Missing Data	0.03

## 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 Honors, Pass, or Fail for the ECCE. It shows that the pass rate for the 2019 ECCE was 84.82%.

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

Honors	Pass	Fail
0.22	84.60	15.18

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

Section	Honors	Pass	Low Pass	Borderline Fail	Fail
Listening	16.41	27.36	38.83	8.54	8.85
GVR	14.01	24.66	39.53	10.57	11.22
Writing	0.80	16.41	58.93	13.20	10.66
Speaking	20.02	34.90	32.10	11.75	1.24

### 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 speaking section and that the writing section is more challenging.

### 5.3 Reliability Figures for Listening and Reading

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. In addition to monitoring reliability, the estimated variability in test taker performance is also monitored through the standard error of measurement (SEM) estimate.

Reliability and SEM estimates are obtained for each administration of the ECCE. The reliability estimates are calculated in Winsteps using the KR-20 (Kuder-Richardson Formula 20) method. The SEM estimates are calculated using the reliability estimates and the scaled scores. In

this report, the reliability and SEM estimates are summarized as averages across the different 2019 ECCE administrations. For the listening section, the average reliability estimate was 0.84, and the average SEM estimate was 42.44. For the GVR section, the average reliability estimate was 0.91, and the average SEM estimate was 30.13. These values demonstrate that the reliability figures for both exam sections are above the minimally acceptable value of 0.80. Additionally, the SEM estimates as a proportion of the 1000-point scale are very small. These values suggest good consistency of measurement for the ECCE listening and GVR sections.

#### **5.4 Rater Agreement Figures for Writing**

The raters for the writing section are highly proficient speakers of English who are trained and certified according to standards set by Michigan Language Assessment. Each essay is rated separately by two accredited raters using an analytic rating scale, and an essay is evaluated by a third rater if the original two raters have non-adjacent scores for any of the analytic scoring categories.

For quality control purposes, Michigan Language Assessment also monitors overall rater performance by looking at the percentage of within tolerance agreement and pass/fail agreement between the two original raters. Within tolerance agreement is defined here as being within  $\pm 2$  score points of each other, and pass/fail agreement is defined as agreement on whether an essay should be awarded a passing grade or a failing grade. In this report, these two rater agreement figures are summarized across the different 2019 ECCE administrations. The overall within tolerance agreement percentage was 66.38%, and the overall pass/fail agreement percentage was 69.79%. Both of these values are reasonably high, which suggests good agreement among raters.

#### **5.5 Speaking Examiner Performance**

The examiners for the speaking test are highly proficient speakers of English who are trained and certified according to standards set by Michigan Language Assessment. The

examiner who conducts the speaking test assesses and rates the test taker's performance using the ECCE Speaking Test Rating Scale. Recordings of speaking tests are sent to Michigan Language Assessment for review.

## **6. References**

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