LanguageCert

Aligning an international test of English to multiple frameworks/standards:

The Case of the LanguageCert Concordancing Studies Programme

Dr. Yiannis Papargyris, Assessment Development Director, LanguageCert

LanguageCert

- Ofqual-regulated Awarding Organisation since 2017

- Focusing on the assessment of language proficiency

- Recognised by HEIs, organisations and government bodies in 90+ countries

LanguageCert English Language exams & Common European Framework for languages

CEFR	LanguageCert International ESOL SELT (Listening, Reading, Writing & Speaking)	LanguageCert International ESOL SELT (Speaking & Listening)	LanguageCert International ESOL	LanguageCert Test of English (LTE)	LanguageCert Young Learners ESOL
C2	C2		C2 Mastery		
C1	C1		C1 Expert		
B2	B2		B2 Communicator		
B1	B1	B1	B1 Achiever		
A2		A2	A2 Access	Test of English A1-B1	
A1		A1	A1 Preliminary	Test of English A1-C2	A1 (Owl)
Pre -A1					Pre-A1 (Fox)

Developing the LanguageCert Global Scale

- 'The utility of the scaled score comes from allowing for meaningful score interpretations and, at the same time, minimizing misinterpretations and inappropriate inferences.' (Kolen & Brennan, 2004).

- For the recently introduced LanguageCert Academic and General tests, results are reported on the LanguageCert Global Scale. The Global Scale score (which is provided by language skill and overall result) gives finer gradations of performance within the CEFR levels but is also a standalone measure that can be aligned with any relevant external scale.

The LanguageCert Global Scale: Design and Development

❑ Based on the *LanguageCert Item Difficulty* scale (0-200, below)

❑ Created for item-banking and test construction purposes

❑ Common across all products to ensure comparable difficulty

❑ LID scale developed using expert judgment and Classical Test Statistics

CEFR level	LID scale range
C2	151-170
C1	131-150
B2	111-130
B1	91-110
A2	71-90
A1	50-70

The LanguageCert Global Scale: Internal Validation

Calibrated through four studies (2019-2022):

1. Calibration (Rasch) of four multi-level linear (PB) tests (282 items, 3,000 cands., 2020)

2. Calibration (Rasch) of multi-level, adaptive item bank (827 items, 6,000 cands. 2021)

3. Full adaptive dataset (827 items) simulated to 50,000 cands., 2022)

4. Final calibration of dataset (827 items, 48,000 cands., 2022)

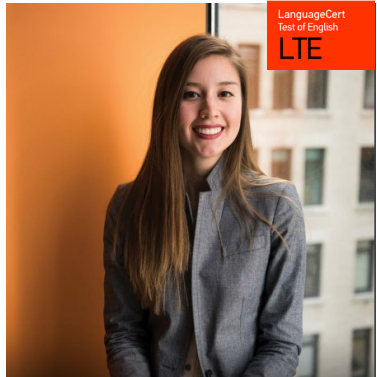# LanguageCert Global Scale & Common European Framework for languages

LanguageCert Global Scale	CEFR
90 - 100	C2
75 - 89	C1
60 - 74	B2
40 - 59	B1
20 - 39	A2
10 - 19	A1
0 - 9	Below A1

Extending the portfolio of LanguageCert English qualifications

LanguageCert Young ESOL Learners

LanguageCert Young Learners ESOL

LanguageCert Test of English LTE
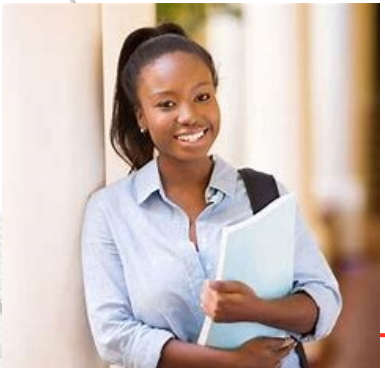
LanguageCert Test of English (LTE)

LanguageCert International ESOL

LanguageCert International ESOL

LanguageCert SELT

LanguageCert IESOL SELT

LanguageCert Academic

LanguageCert General

LanguageCert Academic | designed specifically for international higher education admissions

- Developed from the LanguageCert IESOL level-based tests

- Built on a bed of underpinning research and validation

- Multi-level English test spanning CEFR levels B1 to C2

- Academic content, context and focus for all tasks

- Ofqual regulated

- Meaningful and user-friendly results reporting

- Secure, reliable and accessible test delivery

Domain relevance: what makes the test 'academic'?

Contexts

- **Academic or academic-related** (interactions or discussions with tutors, students, university officials, lectures and seminars)
- **Authentic source materials** (articles, journals, reports) crafted to provide reliable and valid assessment

Tasks

- Range carefully selected to **sample features of language and skills from the target language domain**, i.e., those required to succeed in an academic setting
- **Assessment criteria** written to evaluate domain-specific language and skills
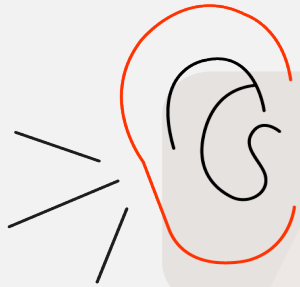
Levels

- Span the **range of CEFR levels** that are critical in supporting receiving institutions decide whether a student will be able to cope with academic language requirements at university, i.e., **CEFR B1–C2.**

Exam features

Duration
~ approx. 2 ½ hrs

Listening
4 parts - 30 **questions**
Multiple choice/note taking
~ 40 minutes (all parts heard twice)

Writing
2 tasks
Extended responses
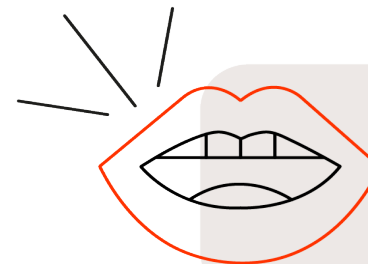50 minutes

Reading
4 parts - 30 **questions**
Multiple choice/gap filling/multiple matching
50 minutes

Speaking
4 parts
Questions/role-play/read aloud/presentation
~ 14 minutes

LanguageCert General | designed specifically for migration and employment

- Developed from the LanguageCert IESOL B2

- Built on a bed of underpinning research and validation

- Multi-level English test spanning CEFR levels A2 to C1

- Migration and work-related content and focus for all tasks

- Ofqual regulated

- Meaningful and user-friendly results reporting

- Secure, reliable and accessible test delivery

Exam features

Duration
~ approx. 2'20''
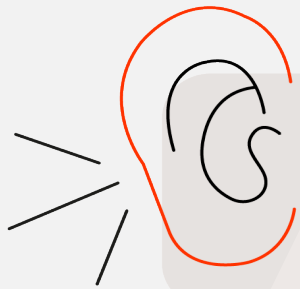
Listening
4 parts - 30 **questions**
Multiple choice/note taking
~ 35 minutes (all parts heard twice)

Writing
2 tasks
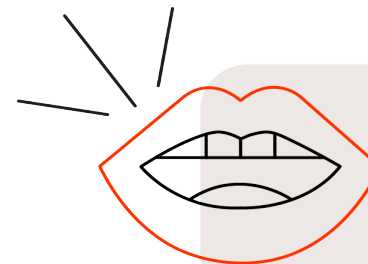**Varying word counts**
45 minutes

Reading
4 parts - 30 **questions**
Multiple choice/gap filling/multiple matching
50 minutes

Speaking
4 parts
Questions/role-play/read aloud/presentation
~ 12 minutes

LanguageCert Global Scale & Common European Framework for languages

LanguageCert Global Scale	CEFR	LanguageCert General	LanguageCert Academic
90 - 100	C2		90+
75 - 89	C1	75+	75 - 89
60 - 74	B2	60 - 74	60 - 74
40 - 59	B1	40 - 59	40 - 59
20 - 39	A2	20 - 39	
10 - 19	A1		
0 - 9	Below A1		

External Validation Activities & the LanguageCert Concordancing Studies Programme

- Ecctis – CEFR Referencing Service

- CRELLA – ongoing review and validation of test content and test performance

- The LanguageCert Concordancing Studies Programme:

  o Alignment to the Australian English Language Proficiency Levels

  o Alignment to the Canadian Language Benchmarks

Language
Cert

Ecctis Referencing LanguageCert Academic and General Tests to the CEFR

Ecctis is a gold-standard provider of solutions and services in international education, training, and skills, and in the development and recognition of globally portable qualifications. We are an internationally trusted and respected reference point for qualifications and skills standards.

CEFR referencing involves comparing and analysing the level of a language qualification against the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), which describes language proficiency on a scale from A1 (beginner) to C2 (proficient).

Language
Cert

Ecctis Referencing LanguageCert Academic and General Tests to the CEFR

"The results of Ecctis' two-staged independent review demonstrated alignment between LanguageCert's reported CEFR levels for both tests and Ecctis' findings. In addition, Ecctis' findings corroborated the cut scores per skill reported by PeopleCert for both tests on their LanguageCert Global Scale."

Test name	CEFR Level(s)	LanguageCert Global Scale Cut-Scores per skill			
		Reading	Writing	Speaking	Listening
LanguageCert Academic	B1	40	40	40	40
	B2	60	60	60	60
	C1	75	75	75	75
	C2	90	90	90	90
Test name	CEFR Level(s)	LanguageCert Global Scale Cut-Scores per skill			
		Reading	Writing	Speaking	Listening
LanguageCert General	A2	20	20	20	20
	B1	40	40	40	40
	B2	60	60	60	60
	C1	75	75	75	75

Language
Cert

LanguageCert Concordance Studies Panel

Prof. Anthony Green
Professor of Language Assessment
Centre for Research in English Language
Learning and Assessment (CRELLA)
Director, University of Bedfordshire, UK

Prof. Jason Fan
Language Testing Research
Centre Deputy Director,
University of Melbourne,
Australia

Prof. Sara Cushing
Professor of Applied Linguistics
Georgia State University, USA

Prof. Jim Tognolini
Centre for Educational Measurement
and Assessment Director, University of
Sydney, Australia

Prof. Liying Cheng
Emeritus Professor of
Language Education and
Assessment, Assessment
and Evaluation Group (AEG)
Director, Queen's
University, Canada

Dr Johnathan Jones
Lecturer of Language Learning &
Assessment
CRELLA, UK

Dr Yiannis Papargyris
Assessment Development
Director
LanguageCert

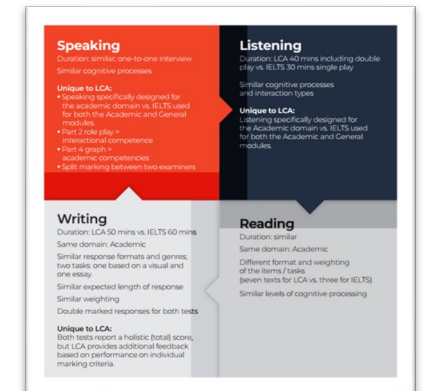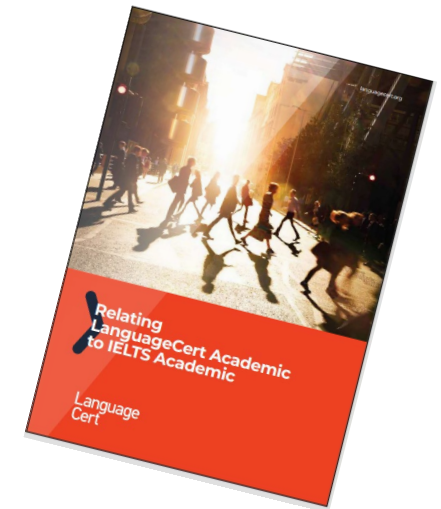Leda Lampropoulou
Head of Assessment
LanguageCert

Language
Cert

Concordance Study Overview

LanguageCert Academic / IELTS Academic

- Content comparison

- Score performance data

Language
Cert

Concordance Study Overview

- Content comparison
  - task and item types
  - scoring rubrics
  - marking methods

Test	LanguageCert Academic	IELTS Academic
Purpose	Task 1: • To demonstrate the ability to understand and synthesise visual or textual inputs • To show the ability to write a report, argument or article using a written, graphic or visual input with the intended reader specified expressing stance, opinion, justification, argumentation. Task 2: • To write a formal piece of writing for a specified reader which may compare and contrast, persuade, argue, hypothesise, evaluate, analyse, or present solutions.	Task 1: • To transfer information from multiple inputs • To collate different pieces of information in order to describe, summarise or explain the information. Task 2: • To write a persuasive essay • To defend or attack a particular argument or opinion, compare or contrast aspects of an argument, and give reasons for the argument.
Timing	50 minutes. No explicit instruction is provided to divide time, but an expected word count is indicated for Task 1 (150-200 words) and Task 2 (250 words).	60 minutes. Students should spend 20 minutes on Task 1, and 40 minutes on Task 2. Students need to manage their own time.
Text length of expected response	Task 1: 150-200 words Task 2: 250 words	Task 1: at least 150 words Task 2: at least 250 words
Weighting	Task 1: 40% Task 2: 60%	Task 1: 33.3% Task 2: 66.6%
Skills assessed	In both tasks, test takers are assessed on their ability to write a response which is appropriate in terms of content, the organisation of ideas, and the accuracy and range of vocabulary	In both tasks, test takers are assessed on their ability to write a response which is appropriate in terms of content, the organisation of ideas, and the accuracy and range of vocabulary

Language Cert

External Validation bids: Content Comparison with IELTS (Academic & General)

LanguageCert is seeking formal acceptance of these high-stakes English language proficiency exams in strategically identified, international markets. With this end in view, LanguageCert has developed a systematic plan to demonstrate that the tests are valid (i.e., fit-for-purpose), reliable, and secure.

Content Comparison findings:

– Targeted proficiency levels are the first distinguishing feature of the tests as they impact test design;

– Though IELTS offers more diversity in option types, both of the tests appear to engage similar levels of processing, including word recognition, lexical access, syntactic parsing, establishing propositional meaning, inferencing, building a mental model, creating a text level representation of discourse structure, and creating an intertextual representation across texts;

– The study has confirmed that the LanguageCert and IELTS tests cover similar content, using similar task types to represent the language needs of students (Academic) or those shared by many other groups of migrants (General/ General Training).

Language
Cert

Concordance Study Overview

- Score performance data
    - Two phases
    - Sample size >1000
    - Counterbalanced testing order

Correlations					
	Overall *r*	Reading *r*	Writing *r*	Listening *r*	Speaking *r*
Academic (n = 1008)	.87	.76	.71	.72	.71
Note: r = correlation. All correlations were statistically significant at the p < .001 level					

A strong, positive correlation between tests (i.e. above .7) suggests that performing well on one test would translate to performing well on the other, while performing poorly on one test generally corresponds with performing poorly on the other.

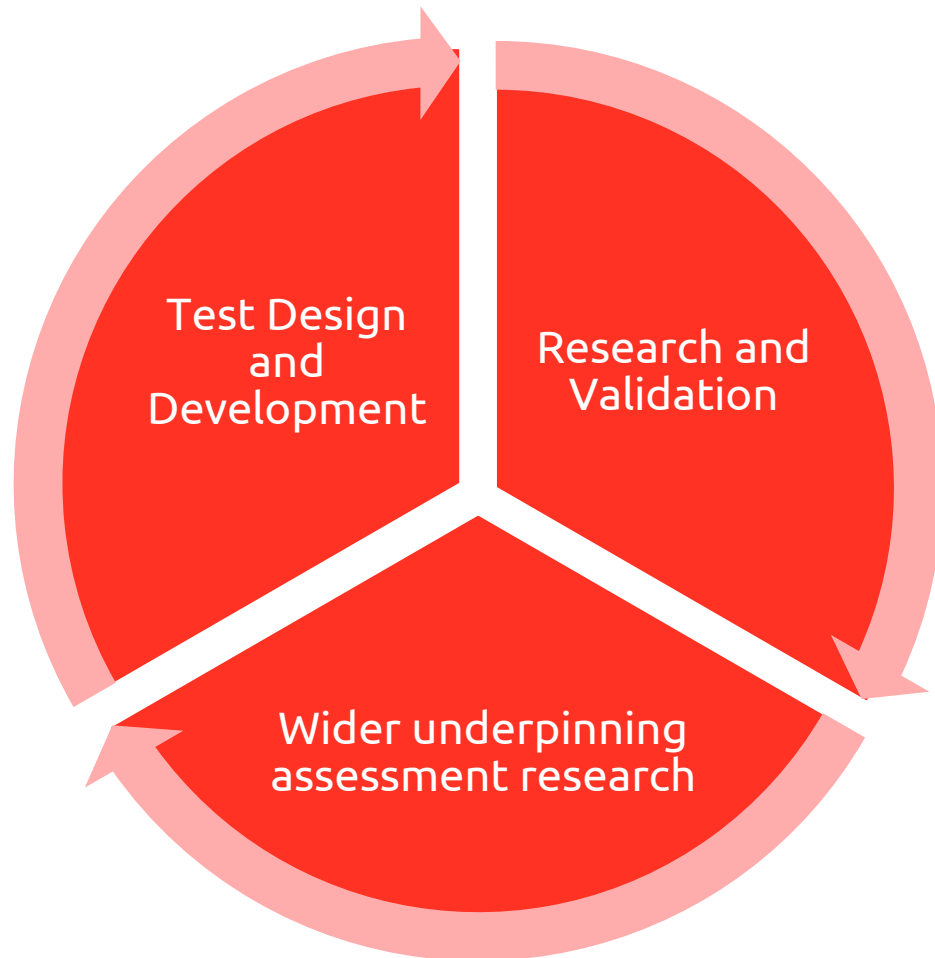- Alignment to IELTS Academic scores through equipercentile ranking analysis

LanguageCert

LanguageCert research programme

- Statistical analyses of test and test taker performance
  - ➢ validation, calibration, and performance analysis of test materials

- Validation projects
  - ➢ concordance studies, framework mapping/benchmarking

Language
Cert

The LanguageCert Global Scale: Alignment to the Canadian Language Benchmarks

❑ Currently conducting a benchmarking study with the aim of aligning LanguageCert General with the Canadian Language Benchmarks. Study components/stages include:

- Familiarisation: Training Activities to ensure participants' detailed knowledge of the CLB;

- Specification: Self-audit of coverage of the examination (content, task types, etc.) and completion of relevant forms by panel participants;

- Standardisation Training and Benchmarking: Benchmarking performance samples and tasks/items;

- Analysis of Panel input and corroboration of Test Design and Specification claims.

Language
Cert

Test Quality and Alignment to Standards

Test Design and Development

Research and Validation

Wider underpinning assessment research

Language
Cert

LanguageCert

Thank you!