



Certificate in Advanced English (CAE)

Exam specifications from December 2008

For examinations from December 2008, a number of improvements to the CAE examination are being introduced. These will have several benefits for candidates and teachers:

- a shorter exam which will be more appealing for candidates
- a more straightforward progression from FCE to CAE and CPE as the exams will be structured more similarly
- more straightforward for teachers who work with exams at different levels
- enhanced presentation of results to help candidates to

understand how they have performed and provide more information for other users

- incorporation of new technologies which will simplify and speed up the administration process

This document gives an overview of the changes that have been made to CAE. For more information, a full Handbook for Teachers and sample papers are available online at

www.CambridgeESOL.org/CAE

Advice for candidates preparing for the exam is online at www.CambridgeESOL.org/resources

CAE: Summary of changes and rationale

PAPER	CHANGE	RATIONALE
Paper 1 READING	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • removal of one matching task • introduction of themed texts (similar to those in CPE Paper 1) • use of wider range of text types <p>From: 1 hour 15 minutes <i>approx. 45 questions</i> To: 1 hour 15 minutes <i>34 questions</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the range of text types, sources and task focuses in the paper is widened by the addition of themed texts in Part 1 • currently there are two matching tasks with some similarities, so Part 1's matching task is replaced by the themed texts
Paper 2 WRITING	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • reductions in Part 1 input and output • addition of set text questions in Part 2 <p>From: 2 hours To: 1 hour 30 minutes</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • writing more briefly is a relevant real life skill, so the output required in Part 1 is reduced • Part 1 input is reduced to a number of words that falls between FCE and CPE requirements to reduce processing required • the nature of task output remains the same • trialling and research into shorter input and output for Part 1 shows that candidates can be successfully assessed with this length of words • reduction in input and output were found to be a positive development through research with examiners on the new tasks
Paper 3 USE OF ENGLISH	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • reduction to one hour by removing the register transfer, gapped text and error correction, and adding gapped sentences and key word transformations <p>From: 1 hour 30 minutes <i>80 questions</i> To: 1 hour <i>50 questions</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • these changes will result in a more streamlined paper, which will be more similar to other Cambridge ESOL general English exams • key word transformations and gapped sentences are introduced: key word transformations appear in other levels and are efficient at testing grammar and vocabulary • gapped sentences proved successful in CPE, testing vocabulary productively; knowing different meanings of the same word is an advanced skill • as register transfer and error correction can be tested through the Writing paper, both of these tasks are removed • research into the CAE construct shows that the gapped text task has a similar test focus to the gapped text in Reading; its removal does not reduce the range of what is being tested
Paper 4 LISTENING	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • introduction of a fixed format • inclusion of short extracts (as in FCE and CPE) • inclusion of only one productive task • all texts to be heard twice <p>From: 45 minutes <i>30–40 questions</i> To: 40 minutes <i>30 questions</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a fixed format enhances standardisation between versions • a standard format will appeal more to candidates • short extracts will be introduced in Part 1; these work well in FCE and CPE as they test a wide range of focuses and introduce a range of texts, interaction patterns and topics • all parts will be heard twice, following consultation and academic advice • the matching task will be retained as it discriminates well and tests gist listening effectively
Paper 5 SPEAKING	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Part 1 has two sections (instead of three) in which candidates are asked questions about themselves • section 2 of the current Part 1, which invites candidates to 'ask each other something about...', is removed • questions will be included on the visuals page to support the candidate (as in FCE) • no change to the overall timing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • for Part 1, the new approach is more natural and will fit better with the other Speaking tests in the Cambridge ESOL general English exams • as in FCE, Parts 2 and 3 will have questions provided on the visuals page to assist candidates in recalling the task • Part 4 is enhanced with prompts for the interlocutor

CAE: Specifications from December 2008

PAPER	TIMING/LENGTH	TASK TYPES AND FORMAT	TEST FOCUS
READING	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 hour 15 minutes 34 questions approx. 550–850 per text approx. 3,000 words overall <p>NB: The total number of words in the three short texts in Part 1 is within range of 550–850 words</p>	Part 1 three themed texts with two multiple-choice questions on each text Part 2 gapped text – paragraphs removed Part 3 multiple choice Part 4 multiple matching	Part 1 detail, opinion, tone, purpose, main idea, implication, attitude, text organisation features (exemplification, comparison, reference) Part 2 text structure, cohesion and coherence Part 3 as for Part 1 Part 4 specific information, detail, opinion and attitude
WRITING	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 hour 30 minutes 2 parts 	Part 1 compulsory task from: article, report, proposal, letter (180220 words) Part 2 Q,2-4 – choice of one task from the following: article, letter, report, proposal, review, competition entry, contribution to a longer piece, essay, information sheet Q,5 – task based on set texts – task types from: essay, review, article, report; two set books to be used, with a question on each text (220-260 words)	Part 1 focus on evaluating, expressing opinions, hypothesising, persuading Part 2 varying focuses according to task; including giving opinions, persuading, justifying, giving advice, comparing
USE OF ENGLISH	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 hour 50 questions 	Part 1 multiple-choice cloze Part 2 open cloze Part 3 word formation Part 4 gapped sentences Part 5 key word transformations	Part 1 lexical/lexico-grammatical Part 2 grammatical/lexico-grammatical Part 3 lexical/lexico-grammatical Part 4 lexical Part 5 lexical and grammatical
LISTENING	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 40 minutes 30 questions 	Part 1 multiple choice – three short unrelated extracts; exchanges between interacting speakers; two questions per text Part 2 sentence completion – a monologue (could be introduced by a presenter) Part 3 multiple choice – a conversation between interacting speakers Part 4 multiple matching – five short themed monologues. Two linked tasks, requiring selection from list of eight options. All texts will be heard twice.	Part 1 feeling, attitude, opinion, purpose, function, agreement, course of action, general gist, detail, etc. Part 2 specific information, stated opinion Part 3 attitude and opinion Part 4 gist, attitude, main points, interpreting context
SPEAKING	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 15 minutes 4 parts 	Part 1 conversation between the interlocutor and each candidate (spoken questions) Part 2 individual one-minute 'long turn' for each candidate with brief response from second candidate; each candidate is given three visual stimuli, with questions Part 3 two-way conversation between the candidates (visual and written stimuli, with spoken instructions) Part 4 discussion on topics related to Part 3 (spoken questions)	Part 1 general interactional and social language Part 2 organising a larger unit of discourse; comparing, describing, expressing opinions and speculating Part 3 sustaining an interaction; exchanging ideas, expressing and justifying opinions, agreeing and/or disagreeing, suggesting, speculating, evaluating, reaching a decision through negotiation, etc. Part 4 expressing and justifying opinions, agreeing and/or disagreeing
Total Time: 4 hours 40 minutes			