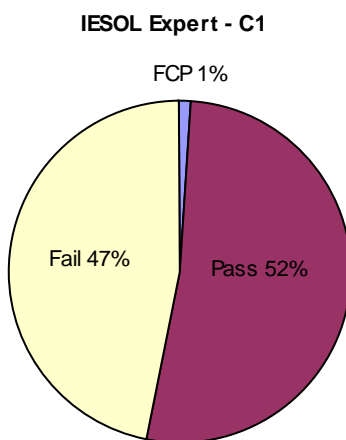


8984 International ESOL - Expert

Chief Examiner report for 2009/2010

General observations

Although the performance at this level last year was reported as disappointing, the situation this year has worsened. Although the Pass rate is slightly higher than last year, this cannot be classed as a cause for celebration as the Fail rate is higher and the number of First Class Passes in particular significantly lower, dropping from 10% to 1%. The distribution of Fails being almost equal to the number of Passes is not what would be expected and candidates need to be more fully prepared for the demands of this level. Some markers feel the cause lies with the Writing paper.



Areas of good performance

Reading generally tends to be the strongest skill with candidates performing well on this paper. Good candidates are those who are familiar with a broad range of texts of different types, both technical and literary, on a wide range of topics. They would be aware of implied meaning and subtle use of language. Those candidates who do well on the Writing paper produce some excellent responses, being particularly imaginative for Writing 2.

Areas for development

Candidates have found the listening tasks difficult across the board so this skill is definitely an area for all-round development. Candidates need to be able to cope with listening to a range of topics produced by a range of voices and to identify idiomatic language both in brief prompts and more extended monologue and dialogue. Writing is the other key area for improvement, both at the micro and macro level. That means a higher degree of grammatical accuracy, improved sentence construction and use of register as well as having greater confidence to express a personal point of view and comment on others.

Recommendations

Candidates need extensive preparation by listening to a wide range of contemporary and world/social issues in order to be familiar with the vocabulary but also with current views on

different subjects. This would then create an overlap that would help with the Writing paper, in commenting on a standpoint and adding personal opinion. For listening, candidates also need to be more familiar with idiomatic expressions, with colloquial or even slang expressions and to recognise degrees of formality and irony.

Tips

- Introduce listening material which crosses various boundaries: the personal, social, local, global, universal. Students should be encouraged to listen in their free time to the BBC world service and to access English-speaking satellite channels, as well reading newspapers in both English and their L1, both for the linguistic and cultural perspectives and for familiarity with current affairs.
- Use recorded material from popular TV programmes to see if candidates can identify relationships based on register and to contrast formal with informal language. These are full of colloquialisms and idioms too.

Additional comments

C1 candidates need to demonstrate their ability, according to the CEFR, to handle 'a wide range of demanding, longer texts and recognise implicit meaning'. They should be able to 'use language flexibly and effectively for social, academic and professional purposes [and] produce clear, well-structured, detailed text on complex subjects, showing controlled use of organisational patterns'. There is no reason why, if candidates are prepared for this level and entered appropriately, they cannot achieve a much higher performance than has been evident this year. Hopefully, there will be marked improvement for next year.