

A DETAILED GUIDE TO BEC HIGHER

TEST OF READING

Timing: 1 hour

PART	Main Skill Focus	Input	Response	Number of Questions
1	Reading for gist and global meaning	Authentic business-related text – either a single text or 5 short, related texts (about 450 words in total)	Matching	8
2	Reading for structure and detail	Authentic business-related text (450 – 500 words) with sentence-length gaps	Matching	6
3	Understanding general points and specific details	Longer text based on authentic source material (500 – 600 words)	4-option multiple choice	6
4	Reading – vocabulary and structure	Single business-related text with primarily lexical gaps (approx. 250 words)	4-option multiple choice cloze	10
5	Reading – structure and discourse features	Single business-related text with structure and discourse gaps (approx. 250 words)	Rational deletion Open cloze	10
6	Reading – understanding sentence structure; error identification	Short text (150 – 200 words) Identification of additional unnecessary words in text	Proof reading	12

A DETAILED LOOK AT THE TASKS

Part One

This is a matching task. The text is approximately 450 words long, and is either a single text or five related shorter texts of authentic origin. Examples could be a set of related product descriptions, a set of advertisements (for instance, for different types of services), notices or messages, book or video reviews, or short newspaper items on related topics.

Texts may be edited, but the source is authentic. They are identified as texts A – E.

There are eight items, each of which is one sentence long, numbered 1 – 8. Each sentence is a statement which can be matched with only one of the texts. The candidate's task is to read the sentence and then scan the texts for the one to which the sentence applies. Candidates are tested on whether they can understand the language of the item and relate it to the meaning of the text, which is expressed in different language.

Preparation

- Present students with sets of related short texts (e.g. job advertisements, hotels, etc.) from newspapers, magazines, brochures.
- Longer texts may also be divided into sub-headed sections.
- Students should be encouraged to identify facts or ideas within each text, describing how the texts are similar and what differences they contain.
- The register or style of the task sentences is likely to differ from that of the texts, and students should be given practice in recognising the same information in different styles, e.g. by rewriting advertisements into objective prose.
- The task is designed to go beyond simple word-matching and students will need to practise paraphrasing.
- Activities that help students to identify target information among otherwise superfluous text (e.g. choosing what to watch from TV listings) would be beneficial.
- Above all, students should treat the task as an example of information-processing skills which are frequently employed in social and professional life.

Part Two

This is a gapped text with six sentence-length gaps. The text is 450 to 500 words long, and comes from an authentic business-related source, although it may be edited. Sources include business articles from newspapers or magazines, books on topics such as management, or company literature such as annual reports. Candidates have to read the text and then identify the correct sentence to fill each gap from a set of eight sentences marked A – H. Sentence H is the example, and one other sentence is a distractor which does not fit any of the gaps. Understanding, not only of the meaning of the text but of some of the features of its structure, is tested.

Preparation

- This task requires an overt focus on cohesion and coherence to which many students may not be accustomed.
- It would be helpful for students to piece back together texts that have been cut up, discussing why texts fit together as they do.
- It would also be useful for students to discuss why sentences that do not fit together do not do so.
- Students could benefit from altering the cohesion of texts to make sentences that do not fit together do so, and vice versa.
- Since culture affects discourse, including the order of argument development, discussions exploring this would be beneficial.
- The cut and paste functions of word-processing, where available, could be exploited for this task.

Part Three

This task consists of a text accompanied by four-option multiple choice items. The stem of a multiple choice item may take the form of a question or an incomplete sentence. There are six items, which are placed after the text. The text is 500 to 600 words long. Sources of original texts may be the general and business press, company literature and books on topics such as management. Texts may be edited, but the sources are authentic.

Preparation

- Multiple choice questions are a familiar and long-standing type of test; here they are used to test opinion and inference rather than straightforward facts.
- Correct answers are not designed to depend on simple word-matching, and students' ability to interpret paraphrasing should be developed.
- Students should be encouraged to pursue their own interpretation of relevant parts of the text and then check their idea against the options offered, rather than reading all the options first.
- It could be useful for students to be given perhaps one

of the wrong options only, and for them to try to write the correct answer and another wrong option.

Part Four

This task is a modified cloze: in other words, a gapped text in which the gaps are carefully chosen. There are ten multiple choice items, most of which test vocabulary. The text is approximately 250 words long, and is based on authentic source material of one of the text types listed above. The candidate's task is to choose the correct option from the four available to fill each gap.

Preparation

- It is important for students to appreciate that the correct answer in each case is correct in relation to the gap itself, rather than in relation to the other three options.
- It is worth emphasising that this task tests lexical and collocational knowledge, and that the best (if not the only) route to this knowledge is to read widely within the kinds of texts that the task employs.
- It is worth discussing what aspects of linguistic knowledge are tested (collocations, fixed phrases, register, etc.).
- It might be useful to give students gapped texts and have them produce alternative words which fit or do not fit the gaps.
- Any vocabulary-building activity is likely to be helpful in preparing for this task.

Part Five

This task is an open cloze: a gapped text in which the candidate has to supply the word to fill each gap. There are ten items. Gaps are formed by rational deletion, being chosen rather than being simply those which occur if (for example) every seventh word is deleted. The focus is on structure, and coherence/cohesion in the text. Items tested may include prepositions, auxiliary verbs, pronouns, conjunctions, etc.

The text is based on authentic material, and is approximately 250 words long. A title is usually included.

Preparation

- The kinds of words which are gapped may well correspond to the kinds of errors students make; and therefore discussion of photocopied examples of students' compositions could be helpful.
- Students should be encouraged to circle the word or words in the text that dictate what the answer is, in order for them to see that such clues to the answer may be adjacent to the gap or several words distant.
- Students should brainstorm various likely words which might fit a particular gap, and then discuss why others do not fit.

- Students could be given several possible answers for a gap and discuss why the correct answer is correct.
- This task tests grammatical and structural aspects of language, and any practice in these areas should be beneficial.

Part Six

This is an error-correction or proof-reading task based on a text of 150 to 200 words, with twelve items. Candidates identify additional or unnecessary words in a text.

This task can be related to the authentic task of checking a text for errors, and suitable text types are therefore letters, publicity materials, etc. The text is presented with twelve numbered lines, which are the lines containing the items. Further lines at the end may complete the text, but they are not numbered.

Preparation

- Students should be reminded that this task represents a kind of editing that is common practice, even in their first language.
- Any work on error analysis is likely to be helpful for this task.
- It may well be that photocopies of students' own writing could provide an authentic source for practice.
- A reverse of the exercise (giving students texts with missing words) might prove beneficial.

PART ONE
Questions 1 – 8

- Look at the statements below and at the five advertisements for postgraduate business courses held at five different institutions on the opposite page.
- Which course or institution (A, B, C, D or E) does each statement 1 – 8 refer to?
- For each statement 1 – 8, mark one letter (A, B, C, D or E) on your Answer Sheet.
- You will need to use some of these letters more than once.

Example:

0 This institution has been running business courses for a long time.

0	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	A	<input type="checkbox"/>	B	<input type="checkbox"/>	C	<input type="checkbox"/>	D	<input type="checkbox"/>	E	<input type="checkbox"/>
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- 1 You can spend part of this course at a different educational institution if you want to.
- 2 Work experience in the world of business is offered as part of this course.
- 3 Other institutions use a method that this one invented.
- 4 This institution has won a prize for its achievements.
- 5 At this institution, you can do a short course first to prepare you for the postgraduate business course held there.
- 6 Representatives of this institution will be publicising the courses offered.
- 7 You might be able to get some financial help towards the cost of this course.
- 8 On this course, you learn how to get the best results from the people who work for you.

2

A

UNIVERSITY OF PORTCHESTER – MASTERS IN BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION

Why choose Portchester? Last year we received the prestigious King's Award for Excellence in Business. We have a tradition of academic excellence, with 30 years of MBA experience within a 70-year-old business school and a 200-year-old university. We offer a two-semester MBA programme with the emphasis on economic analysis and rigorous thinking. Each year, 110 students from all over the world are carefully selected to do the course. We also offer a 6-week pre-MBA programme for students without previous in-depth business experience.

B

THE EXTON BUSINESS SCHOOL – MASTERS IN BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION

The Exton Business School MBA, taught by experts in the field, enjoys international recognition. This programme attracts high flyers from 55 countries, who contribute to the culture of excellence. This is the MBA which gets results, and it will be your passport to success in the global business community. The programme lasts 21 months, starting each October. We will shortly be giving a series of presentations on our programmes in different cities around the world. For further details on these, please contact Janet Fairclough on the number below.

C

University of Newhaven – MBA

Let the University of Newhaven prepare you to meet the challenges of the global marketplace. In 25 months you will gain a Master of Business Administration degree and a Certificate in International Business. This MBA gives students the opportunity to spend 6 weeks on a placement with an international company, as well as on-going language training in the major world languages. The University of Newhaven offers a limited number of scholarships to home and international students. We also offer an Advanced Management Programme for senior executives who want to strengthen their ability to meet the challenges of intensified global competition and improve their organisation's results.

D

The Connaught Institute – Advanced Industrial Marketing strategy

Keep up to date with the latest concepts in business-to-business marketing with our Advanced Industrial Marketing Strategy, and gain the skills you need to outperform the competition. We are the acknowledged leaders in the field of Industrial Marketing Strategy. The acclaimed approach developed by our MBA department includes the leading edge ECONOMIX technique adopted by top business schools around the world. At the Connaught Institute you will discover the value and application of the concepts that underpin successful marketing strategies. The programme will also identify the dynamics of customer-supplier relationships, how to structure profitable alliances, and how to motivate staff.

E

CATSFIELD SCHOOL OF MANAGEMENT – MASTER OF SCIENCE IN INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS

This is an invitation to join one of Europe's leading business schools in an MSc programme for people who wish to pursue a career in international management. This intensive, challenging, two-year programme will provide you with a thorough grounding in the central theories and research traditions of international business, with the emphasis on international marketing. This mind-stretching experience prepares students for the challenges they will face in the world of business today. Other specifications available include marketing, strategy, and financial economics. Exchange programmes with other prestigious universities in the field are also offered.

Turn Over ►

3

PART TWO
Questions 9 – 14

- Read this text taken from a business magazine.
- Choose the best sentence from the opposite page to fill each of the gaps.
- For each gap 9 – 14, mark one letter (A – H) on your Answer Sheet.
- Do not use any letter more than once.
- There is an example at the beginning. (0).

Plan your business

If you fail to plan, you plan to fail. Whether it's to back up an application for a loan, or to work out where you will be going over the next few years, businesses should have business plans. (0) ...It's true there are no guaranteed ways to predict a business's chances of failure or success, but there are some useful indicators. These are: the people who will run the business, the marketplace it will operate in, the practicality of the basic idea, and the management of money. (9) Such factors should also be checked after creating the plan, as a way of testing its validity.

It's a good idea to go through this process whenever you are planning something new. You may well have had your business up and running for some time. (10) In particular, you should scan the environment where you operate or intend to operate, considering the political, economic, technical and social situation. Having done this, there are several points to decide. You need to be precise about the range of products or services you intend to sell. It's also important to be clear about where you will position yourself in the market, in terms of price,

quality and volume. Another point to establish is who your customers will be. (11)

Having looked at the general picture, and then your potential business, it's time to look at yourself. Consider what skills you are going to need in order to make your business work. (12) This may be particularly true in the case of financial strategy, and you will probably need some input from your accountant. Together you can draw up a cash flow forecast. (13)

You now have all the basic ingredients you need to put together your business plan. It's important to remember that the plan is meant to be a way of mapping the scene so that you can make better decisions about your business, not a completely rigid set of instructions that you have to follow to the letter. Don't expect your plan to be perfect first time. (14) In fact, you can be sure that almost as soon as you have finished it, something will change, such as the price of fuel. However, having a plan will enable you to decide how to respond to such changes.

Example:

0 A B C D E F G H

- A** You should make it monthly for the first year and quarterly afterwards.
- B** If you haven't got them yourself, you need to involve people who have.
- C** As preparation for your plan, all these points have to be carefully considered.
- D** After all, it can only reflect the information you have available now and you can update it later.
- E** Your success will therefore depend on the speed of the operation.
- F** However, you should always plan as though it is a new business you are about to start.
- G** When you've decided that, work out how you will let them know that you exist as a business.
- H** They enable business people to have some control over their future.

PART THREE
Questions 15 – 20

- Read the following extract from an article about professional service firms and the questions on the opposite page.
- For each question 15 – 20, mark one letter (A, B, C or D) on your Answer Sheet for the answer you choose.

According to management expert Tom David, a professional service firm – a company of consultants, lawyers or auditors, for example – is the best model for tomorrow's organisation in any industry. He says that these firms are typically informal and flexible in their structure, and good at teamwork and knowledge-sharing. In contrast, the world's big old corporations can easily be portrayed as crawling along behind.

The reality is perhaps more subtle. The rapid growth which professional service firms (PSFs) are experiencing is causing them management problems which the typical big corporations addressed long ago. They are turning themselves into conglomerates, trying to coordinate themselves globally rather than by country, as corporations like Unilever have done for years. The more sophisticated big corporations today are moving towards the partnership model, with flexible structures which actively involve employees. But the bigger PSFs are moving the other way. They are becoming the clumsy giants of the future.

However, there are positive aspects of PSFs – leadership, for example. The secret of good

leadership is to guide and steer people without actually managing them. This means being very clear about the firm's objectives. If these are clear, then leaders can be flexible, encouraging employees to come up with their own solutions to problems. The leader's job is to watch carefully and adjust people back towards the objectives. Because of this approach, in many PSFs, nobody is expected to spend more than half their time on management in the conventional sense.

Teams are essential in PSFs and are central to the training process. A huge amount of the training employees receive is in the discussion and debate with those who have been down that road before. When young people join the firm, they join teams. This works when there are enough senior people with enough time to devote to them.

At the same time, it is vital that people do not identify with the team too closely. The leadership skill is in ensuring you don't create firms within firms. So you move people from group to group and you organise around clients. As well as focusing on the clients' needs, it's also important to keep the firm's needs in mind. It's relatively easy

to narrow your focus to those clients that concern you, and leave worrying about your people as a whole to someone else. But the one thing which absolutely motivates junior people to stay is that senior people demonstrate they care about needs within the firm.

There is one more area in which PSFs claim a clear lead over other big companies: knowledge management. There are two main technology-based ways in which they transfer their knowledge from those who have it to those who need it. First, the creation of e-mail networks. Second, the logging of data onto central computer systems. Are they effective? Jane Griffith, head of Northern Consulting, gives an example: 'Suppose I have a client in the ice-cream business and I need to find out about the industry. I don't want to have to read all 5,000 electronic entries on ice-cream, what I do want is to use the system to find out one e-mail address of somebody who knows about the ice-cream business and then contact them to ask them about the ice-cream business. It's that kind of co-operation that builds success.'

15 In the first paragraph, Tom David praises professional service firms because they

- A have specialist knowledge.
- B are not organised in a rigid way.
- C influence big corporations.
- D do not rely on teamwork.

16 The writer says that professional service firms are responding to growth by

- A trying to be more sophisticated.
- B going into industrial activity.
- C organising themselves internationally.
- D focusing on their employees.

17 The writer says that good leadership is important because

- A it can change people's ideas.
- B many employees avoid responsibility.
- C people need strong management.
- D it makes everyone work towards the same goal.

18 What is said about teams in the fourth paragraph?

- A They save time for the company.
- B They can be changed frequently.
- C They combine experience with discussion.
- D They suit the way young people work.

19 According to the writer, what is the disadvantage of having teams?

- A It can lead to high staff turnover.
- B It may result in customers' needs being neglected.
- C They seldom generate new business.
- D They may operate separately from the rest of the company.

20 What are we told is the best way to transfer knowledge?

- A using computers to make personal contacts
- B going to meetings with experts in the field
- C studying comprehensive databases
- D contacting senior managers of large companies

Turn Over ► 7

PART FOUR
Questions 21 – 30

- Read the article below about data presentation.
- Choose the best word to fill each gap from **A, B, C** or **D** on the opposite page.
- For each question **21 – 30**, mark one letter (**A, B, C** or **D**) on your Answer Sheet.
- There is an example at the beginning. (**0**).

Clear presentation of data

The preparation and presentation of data is a common part of business life. In **(0)** ... **A** ... of preparation for meetings, it is essential to remember that it should be presented in a user-friendly way. That means it must be in a form to which members of the meeting can easily **(21)** "Never underestimate intelligence, but never over-estimate knowledge" is a good expression to remember in this context. Most people can understand the most complex information, **(22)** it is presented in a form they find accessible. Thus, all data should avoid jargon and use **(23)** language. Written text should be presented in a way that will **(24)** to the average reader. It should be prepared carefully, **(25)** use of headlines, illustrations and photographs. Remember that the human eye sees a page as a picture. If the aim of a document is to be understood, it must be designed in a way that **(26)** the reader comprehends it. This may seem an obvious point but many business people do constantly **(27)** it. Public companies are required by law to produce an annual report on their financial and other activities. These tend to be expensive, professionally-presented documents. However, research **(28)** that only about 5% of shareholders actually read and understand the content. The problem is that such accounts are often so complex that only the authors are **(29)** of following them. It's essential to remember that the point of any document is that it is fully accessible to the **(30)** reader.

Example:

A terms **B** regard **C** points **D** reference

0 **A** **B** **C** **D**

- 21** **A** associate **B** relate **C** join **D** unite
- 22** **A** according **B** providing **C** depending **D** seeing
- 23** **A** ordinary **B** usual **C** typical **D** frequent
- 24** **A** appeal **B** interest **C** engage **D** attract
- 25** **A** doing **B** putting **C** taking **D** making
- 26** **A** convinces **B** confirms **C** ensures **D** allows
- 27** **A** make over **B** overlook **C** put over **D** oversee
- 28** **A** points **B** tells **C** indicates **D** informs
- 29** **A** able **B** possible **C** skilful **D** capable
- 30** **A** target **B** aim **C** goal **D** ambition

READING ANSWER KEY

Part One	Part Two	Part Three	Part Four	Part Five	Part Six
1 E	9 C	15 B	21 B	31 BE	41 DOWN
2 C	10 F	16 C	22 B	32 THAN	42 CORRECT
3 D	11 G	17 D	23 A	33 OF	43 WILL
4 A	12 B	18 C	24 A	34 EACH/ONE	44 THE
5 A	13 A	19 D	25 D	35 NOT	45 MORE
6 B	14 D	20 A	26 C	36 IS	46 BEING
7 C			27 B	37 FOR	47 IT
8 D			28 C	38 WHO/THAT	48 FOR
			29 D	39 THERE	49 CORRECT
			30 A	40 TO	50 CORRECT
					51 WITH
					52 CORRECT

TEST OF WRITING

Time: 1 hour 10 minutes

PART	Functions/Communicative Task	Input	Response	Register
1	e.g. describing or comparing figures from graphic input, making inferences	Rubric and graphic input	Short report (medium may be memo or e-mail) (120 – 140 words)	Neutral
2	<p>Report: describing, summarising</p> <p>Proposal: describing, summarising, recommending, persuading</p> <p>Correspondence: e.g. explaining, apologising, reassuring, complaining</p>	Rubric, possibly supplemented by brief input text, e.g. notice, advert	Candidates choose from report (medium may be memo or e-mail) or proposal (medium may be memo or e-mail) or business correspondence (medium may be letter, fax or e-mail) (200 – 250 words)	Neutral/formal

A DETAILED LOOK AT THE TASKS

Part One

For BEC Higher, candidates are required to produce two pieces of writing:

- a short report based on graphic input;
- one of the following (of the candidate's choosing):
 - a piece of business correspondence;
 - a longer report;
 - a proposal.

For definitions of these task types please see page 50.

Part One

This is a guided writing task, in which the candidate produces a brief (120 – 140 word) report. The task provides a realistic situation in which it is necessary to analyse some sort of graphic input and express the information it conveys in words. Graphs, bar charts and pie charts of the type frequently used in the business pages of newspapers, company reports and brochures may provide a starting point.

The graphic input is taken from an authentic source, but may be modified in the same way that a text may be edited. The rubric acts to amplify and clarify the situation, as well as making clear what the task involves.

Part Two

In most parts of the BEC Writing tests, all candidates are required to perform the same task because there is no danger of individuals or groups of candidates being disadvantaged by that task. The exception is BEC Higher Writing Part Two: in order to generate the range of language which is characteristic of this level of language learner, the task contains no input or minimal input, resulting in a relatively high background knowledge requirement from the candidate. In the absence of a choice of tasks this would be

likely to disadvantage some candidates, so a choice of tasks is given.

Candidates choose from three options: a report, proposal or a piece of business correspondence. The task is supplied by the rubric, which provides an authentic reason for writing, and indicates for whom the piece of writing is being produced. The input is therefore more detailed and specific than that of the traditional 'essay question' task type.

Preparing for the Writing Questions

The first writing task involves the kind of graphic input of information which is common in the business world, and students should be exposed to a wide range of examples of graphs and charts from newspapers, magazines, company literature, etc. The interpretation involved is the translating of the graphic input into prose, rather than the recommending of action. Students should have practice in the clear and concise presentation of written information. Specific vocabulary and phrasing should also be developed.

The second writing task requires students to plan carefully in order to be able to produce successful answers. They should be given practice in considering:

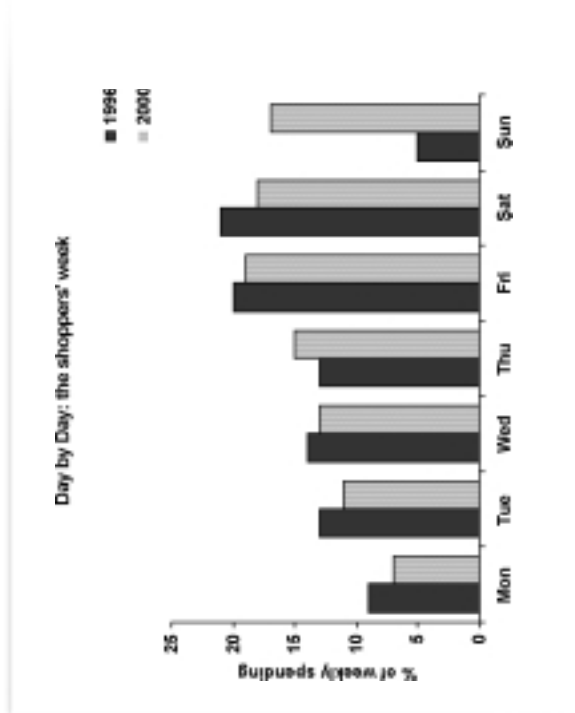
- the target reader
- the purpose of writing
- the requirements of the format (letter, report, etc.)
- the main points to be addressed
- the approximate number of words to be written for each point
- suitable openings and closings
- the level of formality required.

Exposure to, and discussion of, as wide a range as possible of relevant texts would be beneficial.

For the BEC Higher Writing component, candidates write their answers on lined paper provided by the centre.

PART ONE
Question 1

- The bar chart below shows the quantity of sales made by all retailers in Britain on each day of the week for the years 1996 and 2000.
- Using the information from the bar chart, write a short **report** describing all the changes that took place between 1996 and 2000.
- Write **120 – 140** words on the separate answer paper provided.



PART TWO

Answer **ONE** of the questions 2, 3 or 4 below.

Question 2

- Your department has recently introduced some new equipment. Your manager has asked you to write a report analysing the effects this equipment has had on the department.
- Write your **report**, including the following information:
 - a brief description of the new equipment
 - the reason(s) it was introduced
 - the benefits it has brought to the department
 - any problems it has caused
- Write **200 – 250** words on the separate answer paper provided.

Question 3

- Your company or organisation is becoming more successful. In order for this success to continue, you want to expand and increase the budget of your department. The Directors have asked you to write a proposal saying why your department needs extra money.
- Write the **proposal**, explaining why your department needs more money, and include the following points:
 - whether extra staff are needed (and, if so, why)
 - whether changes to the office space and equipment should be made
 - what plans you have for future development
 - how the investment would generate extra business.
- Write **200 – 250** words on the separate answer paper provided.

Question 4

- You recently attended a one-day training course. You were disappointed with many aspects of the event, and have decided to write a letter of complaint to the company that ran it.
- Write your **letter** to the company, including the following information:
 - which course you attended
 - what was unsatisfactory
 - what you had hoped to gain from the course
 - what you expect to happen now.
- Write **200 – 250** words on the separate answer paper provided.

ASSESSMENT OF WRITING

An impression mark is awarded to each piece of writing. The General Impression Mark Scheme is used in conjunction with a Task-specific Mark Scheme, which focuses on criteria specific to each particular task. This summarises the content, organisation, register, format and target reader indicated in the task.

Acceptable performance at BEC Higher level is represented by a Band 3.

The band scores awarded are translated to a mark out of 10 for Part 1 and a mark out of 20 for Part 2. A total of 30 marks is available for Writing.

The Mark Scheme is interpreted at Cambridge/ALTE level 4.

General Impression Mark Scheme

Band 5

Full realisation of the task set.

- All content points included.
- Controlled, natural use of language; minimal errors.
- Wide range of structure and vocabulary.
- Effectively organised, with appropriate use of cohesive devices.
- Register and format consistently appropriate.

Very positive effect on the reader.

Band 4

Good realisation of the task set.

- All major content points included; possibly minor omissions.
- Natural use of language; errors only when complex language is attempted.
- Good range of structure and vocabulary.
- Generally well-organised, with attention paid to cohesion.
- Register and format on the whole appropriate.

Positive effect on the reader.

Band 3

Reasonable achievement of the task set.

- All major content points included; some minor omissions.
- Reasonable control, although a more ambitious attempt at the task may lead to a number of non-impeding errors.
- Adequate range of structure and vocabulary.
- Organisation and cohesion is satisfactory.
- Register and format reasonable, although not entirely successful.

Satisfactory effect on the reader.

Band 2

Inadequate attempt at the task set.

- Some major content points omitted or inadequately dealt with; possibly some irrelevance.
- Errors sometimes obscure communication and are likely to be numerous.
- Limited range of structure and vocabulary; language is too elementary for this level.
- Content is not clearly organised.
- Unsuccessful attempt at appropriate register and format.

Negative effect on the reader.

Band 1

Poor attempt at the task set.

- Notable content omissions and/or considerable irrelevance.
- Serious lack of control; frequent basic errors.
- Narrow range of structure and vocabulary.
- Lack of organisation.
- Little attempt at appropriate register and format.

Very negative effect on the reader.

Band 0

Achieves nothing. Either fewer than 25% of the required number of words or totally illegible or totally irrelevant.

TEST OF LISTENING

Time: approx. 40 minutes including 10 minutes transfer time

PART	Main Skill Focus	Input	Response	Number of Questions
1	Listening for and noting specific information	Informational monologue	Gap-filling requiring limited written responses (i.e. no more than 3 words)	12
2	Listening to identify topic, context, function speaker's opinion, etc.	5 short monologues linked by theme or topic, from 5 different speakers	Multiple matching	10
3	Listening for gist, specific information, attitudes, etc.	Conversation/interview/discussion between 2 or more people	3-option multiple choice	8

A DETAILED LOOK AT THE TASKS

Part One

This is a sentence-completion, gap-filling or note-taking task. The candidate has to supply only the key words of the answer, which will not be more than three words per item.

The spoken text lasts about two to three minutes and is a monologue. The text is heard twice. It is informational and focuses on a series of identifiable facts. Topics might involve instructions, changes in arrangements or instructions, the programme for an event or meeting of some kind or details of the organisation of an event. The setting for the task could be someone giving information over the telephone, or a speaker addressing a roomful of delegates at a conference or people on a training course.

Listening tasks may be based on recorded material taken from authentic sources or more usually on scripted material. There are twelve items, which are distributed evenly throughout the text, so that candidates have time to record their answers. Answers to items may be numbers or amounts of money, but these will not involve the candidate in any calculations. Items of information are tested in the same order in which the information occurs in the text.

Part Two

This is a matching task based on five short extracts linked by theme or topic and spoken by five different speakers, in monologue form. The texts last a total of approximately three to four minutes.

There are two tasks for each of the five extracts. These tasks relate to the content and purpose of the extracts, and candidates are asked to do any combination of the following: identify speakers, interpret context, recognise the function of what is said, identify the topic, understand specific information, identify a speaker's opinion or feelings.

The series of extracts is heard twice, and candidates must attempt both tasks during this time. It is for the candidates to decide whether they choose to do the first task the first time they listen to the text, and the second task the second time, or whether to deal with the two tasks for each extract together. For each task, they have a list of eight options to choose from.

Materials for this task are scripted, and relate to a business topic or situation.

Part Three

This task consists of a dialogue, usually with two or more speakers. There are eight items, which are three-option multiple choice. The task relates to a topic of interest or concern in the world of work. The text is heard twice.

Preparing for the Listening Paper

All listening practice should be helpful for students, whether authentic or specially prepared. In particular, discussion should focus on:

- the purpose of speeches and conversations or discussions
- the roles of speakers
- the opinions expressed
- the language functions employed
- relevant aspects of phonology such as stress, linking and weak forms, etc.

In addition, students should be encouraged to appreciate the differing demands of each task type. It will be helpful not only to practise the task types in order to develop a sense of familiarity and confidence, but also to discuss how the three task types relate to real life skills and situations.

- The first is note-taking (and therefore productive), and students should reflect on the various situations in which they take notes from a spoken input. They should also be encouraged to try to predict the kinds of words or numbers that might go in the gaps.
- The second is a matching (with discrimination) exercise, featuring differing styles and registers.
- The third involves the correct interpretation of spoken input, with correct answers often being delivered by more than one speaker.

In all three tasks, successful listening depends on correct reading, and students should be encouraged to make full use of the pauses during the test to check the written input.

PART ONE
Questions 1 – 12

- You will hear the new Chief Executive of United Railways giving his managers a talk about the future of the company.
- As you listen, for questions 1 – 12, complete the notes using up to **three** words or a number.
- You will hear the recording twice.

UNITED RAILWAYS

Present situation

The main present strengths of the company are (1)
and (2)

The company is keeping the current (3)

This year

There will be (4) on trains between the capital and the coast.

The company needs to increase the number of passengers by (5)

The Chief Executive intends to make trains (6)

and also to put in (7)

He wants to improve the standard of (8)

Next year

The company will begin a (9) programme of rebuilding.

It will involve spending more than (10)

In trains, all the (11) and carpets will be replaced.

A new (12)

PART TWO
Questions 13 – 22

- You will hear five different people talking about someone they have just met.
- For each extract there are two tasks. For Task One, decide who they met from the list A – H.
- For Task Two, choose the result of the meeting from the list A – H.
- You will hear the recording twice.

TASK ONE – THE PERSON THEY MET

- For questions 13 – 17, match the extracts with the people, listed A – H.
- For each extract, decide who the speaker met.
- Write one letter (A – H) next to the number of the extract.

- | | | | |
|----|-------|---|--------------------------------|
| 13 | ..... | A | a client |
| 14 | ..... | B | a job applicant |
| 15 | ..... | C | the managing director |
| 16 | ..... | D | a personal assistant |
| 17 | ..... | E | an advertising agent |
| | | F | a finance officer |
| | | G | a visitor from another company |
| | | H | an investor |

TASK TWO – THE RESULT OF THE MEETING

- For questions 18 – 22, match the extracts with the results, listed A – H.
- For each extract, choose the outcome each speaker describes.
- Write one letter (A – H) next to the number of the extract.

- | | | | |
|----|-------|---|---|
| 18 | ..... | A | Something planned has had to be postponed. |
| 19 | ..... | B | The speaker will have to give a presentation. |
| 20 | ..... | C | Certain ideas have had to be abandoned. |
| 21 | ..... | D | Another meeting will be needed. |
| 22 | ..... | E | There are now plans to work on a new project. |
| | | F | A contract has been agreed. |
| | | G | A staff vacancy has arisen. |
| | | H | The speaker was offered a job. |

Turn Over ► 3

PART THREE
Questions 23 – 30

- You will hear a radio interview between a woman journalist and a business man and woman.
- For each question **23 – 30**, mark one letter (**A**, **B** or **C**) for the correct answer.
- You will hear the recording twice.

23 When Carol and Ted decided to work together, Carol was working

- A** for a manufacturing company abroad.
- B** on a crafts project in London.
- C** as a member of Ted's sales team.

24 When Carol first talked to Ted about her idea, he

- A** liked it because it was something new.
- B** had serious doubts about it.
- C** agreed to do some research for her.

25 How did Carol and Ted finance the start-up of their business?

- A** with a bank loan
- B** with a loan from their family
- C** with their own money

26 After they formed a company, what was the first thing they did?

- A** carry out market research
- B** start producing textiles
- C** open a showroom

27 What was their largest item of expenditure during the start-up?

- A** travel and accommodation
- B** premises
- C** training

4

28 Carol's main point about staffing is that

- A** training takes up too much of her time.
- B** the turnover is higher than she expected.
- C** it takes a while before new workers fit in.

29 Now the largest market for the company is

- A** Germany.
- B** Scandinavia and Japan.
- C** the US and UK.

30 What does Carol regard as the priority for the future?

- A** to achieve a bigger turnover
- B** to maintain standards
- C** to open new workshops

You now have ten minutes to transfer your answers to your Answer Sheet.

5

LISTENING ANSWER KEY

Part One	Part Two	Part Three
1 SAFETY	13 G	23 A
2 EFFICIENCY	14 E	24 B
3 TIMETABLE	15 D	25 C
4 MORE/EXTRA COACHES	16 A	26 A
5 15%	17 H	27 B
6 CLEANER	18 E	28 C
7 AIR-CONDITIONING	19 C	29 A
8 (CUSTOMER) SERVICE	20 G	30 B
9 3-YEAR	21 F	
10 £20 MILLION	22 A	
11 SEATING/SEATS		
12 TICKET/FARE/PRICE/PRICING SYSTEMS/STRUCTURE		

TAPESCRIPT

Part One. Questions 1 to 12.

Hello everybody and thank you for coming. I know some of you have had pretty long trips up from the regions – so I hope none of our trains was late! Well, as you know, the purpose of this talk – and I'll be as brief as I can – is to outline the situation as regards my appointment and comment on both the present and future of United Railways.

Right, well, to start with, I want to say that we're looking good. The first thing I did when I was appointed was to commission a major customer survey, which I think most of you will know about, and that's shown that we're already highly rated on safety, which is of course of primary importance in any transport service. Not only that, but we've also scored highly on the question of efficiency, which is also very good news. So, we don't need to make any changes there, and in fact we'll be maintaining the existing timetable.

Now, in terms of development, and looking over the next twelve months, one thing we'll need to do is up capacity on some services, so between the capital and the coast we'll put extra coaches on the trains – run longer trains. The demand is there and in some cases we're failing to meet it, simply because we haven't got the capacity. We've got to bring passenger business up by fifteen per cent.

The survey wasn't all good news, and some of the negatives that came out of it need to be addressed, which to some extent sets our agenda for us. For one thing, I want to see the trains cleaner, and this might involve putting the contracts out for tender.

Customers really don't want a dirty travelling environment. Something else I want to phase in is installing air-conditioning. There's no reason why our customers should be uncomfortably hot on our services and some of the cost can be reflected in fare prices.

Another thing that came out in the survey which needs addressing relates to staffing. I'd like to see the quality level raised in customer service – and that means both on trains and stations.

Well, we've got long-term plans, too. Next year will see the launch of our three-year programme of major restructuring and rebuilding right across the entire network. This development will be very significant and represent pretty heavy investment – we're talking about over twenty million pounds. The result will be the transformation of our image, in and out of stations. On the trains themselves, customers are going to benefit from improvements, with all the seats and carpets changed for new designs.

Now, all this, as I said, won't come cheap but I've been looking at purchasing patterns and I think there's quite a bit of room for manoeuvre there, which should enable us to mobilise some operational capital. So, plans are being drawn up for changes and we'll be able to bring in a new ticket structure, introducing more rational prices, which will be, I'm convinced, of benefit to customers and our business.

Part Two. Questions 13 to 22.

- F1: I thought we organised everything very well and it all went very smoothly. It was the first time she'd come to the company and she wanted to meet the MD, but he was away. But some members of the board were there and that seemed to satisfy her. We'd arranged it so that she had time for a look round as well and I think she was impressed. I was worried beforehand that she might think our production was too slow compared to what she's used to in her company, but I needn't have been concerned. No, she's very positive about things. It was really worth doing and I think they'll be very happy to work with us on the German contract.
- M1: Well, I had to go and see him to discuss the most effective ways of maintaining a presence in the market so that our sales aren't affected. I was dreading it because I really hadn't liked his suggestions last time. But the truth is, we can't afford to switch to anyone else at the moment. In the end, I think the campaign he was proposing will be OK. We don't want to spend any more this year so his proposals were within the financial limitations of what we can do. The fact is that Finance has really restricted us. It's meant giving up on some of the more interesting things we'd been planning to do. It's a shame that we won't be able to do them after all.
- F2: He drives me mad. Whenever I tell him my plans, he always queries them. For example, he asked me why I needed to meet the investors. He's supposed to be helping me, not questioning everything! I delegate quite a lot to him and I need to be able to trust him to do things properly. Anyway, this time we sat down and got the next few weeks really sorted out. He's often been rude in his dealings with clients so I needed to have a talk with him about it. I thought he'd react very badly to what I said but, in fact he seemed really prepared to listen. So I thought things were going well and then he told me he was leaving! I couldn't believe it. Still, I'm not sorry.
- M2: I'd arranged to be at her office at 11 o'clock to give us time to go through all the details. Anyway, then I had to change the time because Personnel wanted me to see the person applying for David's job. So we moved it to 3 o'clock and I don't think she was very happy about the delay. I thought it was just a simple renewal, but then it turned out she wanted to change details when everything had been typed up. It's effectively the same as last year's – they haven't ordered any more. I wasn't really surprised she was so critical but I was concerned about her response to the increased charges. Anyway, she accepted them, but I'm not sure they'll renew next year on those terms. We'll have to wait and see.

- F3: I have to say it's not my favourite meeting but there's no avoiding it. If they don't continue to support us then we can't expand – we're dependent on them for the cash. The board met the day before and the MD said he was relying on me to keep them all happy. The one I met was Mr Jensen. He's their representative and he reports back to them. He's very nice ... reasonable ... listens carefully. In the past I've been really impressed with his sort of up-beat, positive attitude, but yesterday he told me that they couldn't justify any further expenditure. In fact, he wants to spend less. He put it very nicely but basically it means we'll have to put off our new programme until next year. It's unfortunate but there's nothing we can do about it.

Part Three. Questions 23 to 30.

- Rachel: I'd like to welcome to the programme today Carol and Ted Allen, two young entrepreneurs who, just five years ago, started a small textile company, Finchley Fabrics, which is fast becoming a household name. I think our listeners would be very interested to hear how you did it! ... You were working in South East Asia when you came up with the idea, is that right?
- Carol: Well, I was. I was working for a textile company in their design department but Ted was still working for a marketing firm in London.
- Rachel: So what about the concept? How did you get the idea?
- Carol: Well, it was obvious that many of the local traditional crafts were in danger of dying out, so I could see an opportunity to develop a new market and also at the same time do something sort of useful for the people in the villages. I could help them to keep their skills going. The only problem was, I didn't have any real business experience, which is where Ted came in.
- Ted: That's right. We'd known each other for years but we'd never thought of working together. Mind you, when Carol phoned me initially to see if I was interested I have to say I wasn't all that enthusiastic.
- Carol: To put it mildly. He thought I was mad, actually!
- Ted: Well, it just seemed a bit risky doing something very innovative in a country I didn't know much about.
- Rachel: How did you talk him round, Carol?
- Carol: By persuading him – eventually – that I did know something about the country, and that in fact it wasn't such a bad idea.
- Rachel: So you set up a company?
- Carol: Yes, three months later.
- Rachel: And how did you get started – in financial terms, I mean?
- Carol: Well, we both had some money of our own we could invest. Which was just as well because the banks wouldn't touch us – and our families couldn't put any money into it.
- Rachel: How soon did production start?

Ted: Our priority was market research, which we did in New York, then in Europe, especially Germany. Things like showrooms and offices – and of course actually starting production, came quite a bit later. Anyway, the research came up with amazingly good results, so it was looking as if we were on to something.

Carol: Ted was almost convinced.

Ted: That's not fair! You know that ...

Rachel: So, what was the biggest financial outlay at the beginning?

Ted: At the time it seemed all our money was going on airfares and hotels, but in fact it went on getting and restoring a very old and very dilapidated house in the village, and turning it into a workshop and studio ...

Carol: And home.

Rachel: What about staff at the workshop?

Carol: We started with six, but now we've got 45 people working for us. About a third of them had done this type of work before, but others we've had to train up ourselves.

Rachel: And what are your pay and conditions like?

Ted: Relatively good. Several times the local average salary, in fact.

Carol: And we've had almost no turnover of staff. That's important, not because of training or even the extra expense, but because we have to work closely together as a team ... and that takes time to develop.

Rachel: Who does the marketing?

Carol: Actually we've never done any, surprising as it may seem.

Rachel: Really?

Ted: You see Carol has always argued that the textile buyers will find us – and she's been proved right, so far anyway.

Carol: Yes, there's always a market for quality.

Rachel: So when did the buyers start knocking on your door and things really start to take off?

Carol: About three years ago. We put on a show in New York and for some reason the timing was exactly right. The kinds of designs we'd developed were just becoming popular. That was the turning point. In that year we sold 85% of our stock to the US, the rest we sold in the UK.

Rachel: Is the US still your best customer?

Ted: Still a very good customer but nothing like as big as they were. For the last year we've been doing extremely well in Scandinavia and Japan, but not as well as in Germany, which is now our number one.

Rachel: But you still haven't got any shops of your own in these countries?

Ted: No. There's still just the workshop in Asia and the showroom in London and that's it.

Rachel: And the future? – any plans for a showroom in New York, say, or more workshops?

Carol: I suppose we feel we're at a crossroads, don't we Ted?

Ted: Yes, we've come a long way in a very short time, doubling turnover every year ... so far.

Carol: But we may be reaching a point where we have to choose between expansion and the maintenance of quality ... and that worries us. Ted thinks it would be logical to expand but I don't want to if it means lowering our quality level. Anyway, that's a problem we'll have to face up to in the next few months ...

Rachel: Let's hope all continues well for you. Thank you both.

Carol

and Ted: Thank you.

TEST OF SPEAKING

Time: 16 minutes

PART	Format/Content	Time	Interaction Focus
1	Conversation between the interlocutor and each candidate. Giving personal information and expressing opinions.	About 3 minutes	The interlocutor encourages the candidates to give information about themselves and to express personal opinions.
2	A 'mini-presentation' by each candidate on a business theme. Organising a larger unit of discourse. Giving information and expressing and justifying opinions.	About 6 minutes	The candidates are given prompts which generate a short talk on a business-related topic.
3	Two-way conversation between candidates followed by further prompting from the interlocutor. Expressing and justifying opinions, speculating, comparing and contrasting, agreeing and disagreeing, etc.	About 7 minutes	The candidates are presented with a discussion on a business-related topic. The interlocutor extends the discussion with prompts on related topics.

A DETAILED LOOK AT THE TASKS**Part One**

For this part of the test, the interlocutor asks the candidates questions on a number of personal or work-related subjects.

Part Two

In this part, each candidate's task is to choose one topic from a set of three, and to talk about it for one minute. Candidates have one minute in which to prepare, and should use this time to make brief notes. The other candidate listens to the talk and is invited to ask one or two questions at the end. Candidates may make notes while listening to their partner. Each candidate is given a different set of three tasks from which to choose.

It is wise to structure the one-minute talk as points, with an introduction and conclusion (however brief these must, of necessity, be) and to make the structure explicit when giving the talk, in order to show some evidence of planning. Candidates should approach the task as if giving a presentation in a business environment.

Examples of topic areas for the individual speaking task include the following:

advertising, career planning, communications, customer relations, finance, health and safety, management

(personnel, production, transport, etc.), marketing, recruitment, sales, technology, training and travel.

Part Three

This is a two-way collaborative task based on a prompt which is given to both candidates. The prompt consists of several sentences presenting a business-related situation followed by two discussion points. Candidates are given time to read the prompt and then discuss the situation together.

Examiners will be looking for a serious, adult approach to the discussion of the task, with the type of interaction which would be appropriate to a work environment. Candidates need to approach the task as a simulation, imagining themselves in a work environment, faced with a real situation to discuss and on which they should try to reach some decisions. The opinions they express, however, will be their own. They are not required, as in some kinds of role play, to assume particular attitudes or opinions.

Preparing for the Speaking Paper

Students should be made familiar with the seating arrangements and paired assessment procedures that the Speaking test employs. Any speaking practice should be of benefit, in particular paired and small group work.

- Activities designed to develop fluency will be of considerable benefit, as the students need to demonstrate as wide a range of language as possible within the time limits of the test.
- It should be noted that the test is designed to minimise the possibility of attempts to use rehearsed speech, and that examiners will quickly identify it.
- For Part Two, candidates need to develop the ability to prepare effectively for their 'long turn'. They should be given help in developing the skill of long-turn-taking, and in building up a range of discourse features to make their speech both coherent and cohesive. It is also important for them to listen to the other candidate, and be ready to ask relevant questions.
- For Part Three, candidates will benefit from practice in simulations where they are placed in a work environment and required to collaborate whilst discussing and deciding issues. They should be helped to build up a range of resources for turn-taking and the general negotiating of ideas and opinions.

Task Sheet 1

A: Time Management: the importance of punctuality in all aspects of work

B: Recruitment: how to ensure that job advertisements attract appropriate applicants

C: Customer Relations: how to set up an effective customer services system

BEC Higher – PART TWO

Task Sheet 2

A: Advertising: how to advertise a new product effectively

B: Staff Management: the importance of assessing staff performance effectively

C: Product Development: how to decide when it is the right time to withdraw a product from the market

BEC Higher – PART TWO

Task Sheet 1

Attending Trade Fairs

Your company has been invited to take part in a trade fair, which will take place during the busiest time of the year. You have been asked to decide whether staff should be sent to this trade fair.

Discuss and decide together:

- what the advantages and disadvantages are of attending trade fairs
- which members of staff would most usefully represent a company at a trade fair

ASSESSMENT OF SPEAKING

Candidates are assessed on their own performance and not in relation to each other, according to the following analytical criteria; Grammar and Vocabulary, Discourse Management, Pronunciation and Interactive Communication. These criteria are interpreted at Higher level. Assessment is based on performance in the whole test and is not related to particular parts of the test.

Both examiners assess the candidates. The Assessor applies detailed, analytical scales, and the Interlocutor applies a Global Achievement Scale which is based on the analytical scales.

Grammar and Vocabulary

This refers to range and accuracy as well as the appropriate use of grammatical and lexical forms. At BEC Higher level a range of grammar and vocabulary is needed to deal with the tasks. At this level grammar is mainly accurate and vocabulary is used effectively.

Discourse Management

This refers to the coherence, extent and relevance of each candidate's individual performance. Contributions should be adequate to deal with the BEC Higher level tasks. Candidates should produce utterances which are appropriate in length.

Pronunciation

This refers to the candidates' ability to produce comprehensible utterances. At BEC Higher level, meanings are conveyed through the appropriate use of stress, rhythm, intonation and clear individual sounds, although there may be occasional difficulty for the listener.

Interactive Communication

This refers to the candidate's ability to take an active part in the development of the discourse. At BEC Higher level, candidates should be sensitive to turn-taking throughout most of the test and hesitation should not demand patience of the listener.