

**BEC Higher Exam**  
**University of Cambridge ESOL Examinations**

To download sample papers go to <http://www.cambridgeesol.org/resources/learner/index.html>

Writing 70 min.	Contents	This part of the exam tests	Suggested exam technique:	Definition
<b>Part 1</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A short report in the form of a memo, an email or a report describing figures and making inferences based on information from a chart or table.</li> <li>• Length: 120-140 words</li> <li>• Time: maximum 25 minutes</li> <li>• Marks: You are given marks out of 10 for this task. The writing paper carries 30 marks in total.</li> </ul>	<b>your ability to</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• describe the facts and figures commonly presented in graphs, bar charts, pie charts and tables in business contexts</li> <li>• understand information presented in graphic form</li> <li>• convey information clearly.</li> </ul>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Read the instructions carefully and make sure you know whether you should write an email, a memo or a report.</li> <li>2. Study the charts/graphs. Make sure you understand what the charts show.</li> <li>3. Make a brief plan. In fact, you should be able to describe the information in the order in which it appears on the page. However, your first sentence should be an introductory sentence which says in general what the chart(s) show(s)</li> <li>4. When you write, use linking phrases such as <i>on the other hand</i>, <i>although</i>, <i>in contrast</i>, <i>consequently</i>, etc.</li> <li>5. Make sure you include <b>all</b> the important information.</li> <li>6. When you have finished, check what you have written               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• for mistakes in your English</li> <li>• to make sure you have mentioned everything</li> <li>• to make sure it is written in a clear style which is easy to understand</li> </ul> </li> </ol>	<p><b>Line graphs, pie charts and bar charts</b>  <b>Line charts</b> are usually employed to show a trend and describe changes over a period of time. Line charts may contain several lines, in which case you will have to</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• describe the changes</li> <li>• compare or contrast the trends between the things shown by the different lines.</li> </ul> <p><b>Pie charts</b> show how the whole of a category is divided. The complete "pie" represents 100%. For example, a pie chart could be used to show a number of companies' market share. You may see two pie charts side by side, in which case you will have to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• say how much share each division of the chart has of the total</li> <li>• compare the information given in the two charts.</li> </ul> <p><b>Bar charts</b> show totals for different categories, but not what would constitute 100%. You may have to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• describe trends or changes</li> <li>• compare facts and figures</li> <li>• say how much each bar represents.</li> </ul>

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Writing	Contents	This part of the exam tests	Suggested exam technique:	Definition
<b>Part 2</b>	<p><b>You are given a choice of:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• a proposal</li> <li>• a report, or</li> <li>• a letter.</li> <li>• Length: 200-250 words</li> <li>• Time: 45 minutes (if you have spent 25 minutes on Part 1)</li> <li>• Marks: You are given marks out of 20 for this part. The writing paper carries a total of 30 marks.</li> </ul>	<p><b>your ability to</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• do a longer writing task, including planning and organizing your writing in a logical and coherent manner and</li> <li>• whether you can use the correct format and appropriate register for the type of task (correspondence, report or proposal) and the type of reader.</li> <li>• Your range of grammar and vocabulary.</li> <li>• If you decide to write a report, you will probably have to describe and summarize information.</li> <li>• If you decide to write a proposal, you may have to describe, summarize, recommend a course of action and persuade the reader.</li> <li>• If you write a letter, you may have to carry out a variety of functions such as complaining, informing, enquiring, apologizing, etc.</li> </ul>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Read all three questions and choose the one you think you can do best. Ask yourself: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do I know enough about the topic?</li> <li>• Have I got a good range of vocabulary for this task?</li> <li>• Can I write in an appropriate style?</li> </ul> </li> <li>2. Read the instructions, carefully underlining key information: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What type of task is it (letter, report, etc.)?</li> <li>• Who is the reader (a customer, your managing director, etc.)? This will decide the register.</li> </ul> </li> <li>3. Write a plan. Make sure your plan covers <b>all the points required in the question</b>. Organize your plan in a logical way.</li> <li>4. Write your answer from your plan using the correct format and an appropriate register.</li> <li>5. Use linking words and phrases to connect your ideas (e.g. however, although etc.)</li> <li>6. Check your answer for mistakes.</li> </ol>	<p><b>Register</b> The register you use will depend on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the subject you are writing about</li> <li>• who you are writing to.</li> </ul> <p>For example, if you are writing an email to an important customer, the register will be quite formal, but if you are writing to a close colleague, you may use quite an informal register.</p> <p><b>Report or proposal?</b> The format and style of reports and proposals is very similar. However:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• a report concentrates on information which you have gathered and may give recommendations for further action</li> <li>• a proposal makes suggestions for possible courses of action to take in the future.</li> </ul>

**Writing Test Assessment Sheet**

<b>TASK</b>	Are all the points in the rubric adequately covered?	
	Is the answer the correct length?	
<b>ORGANISATION</b>	Is it easy to follow the writer's ideas?	
	Are the writer's main points adequately supported?	
	Is the layout clear and appropriate? (paragraphs, headings, bullets etc.)	
<b>CLARITY</b>	Is the answer free of redundancy and repetition?	
	Are the sentences of an appropriate length?	
	Are linking words and phrases used clearly and naturally?	
<b>LANGUAGE</b>	Is there a range of vocabulary, grammar and functional language?	
	Is the language generally accurate?	
	Is the formality and tone appropriate and consistent?	
<b>COMMENTS</b>		

## Writing Paper Part 2: Exam practice

Write an answer to **one** of the questions **2–4** in this part. Write your answer in **200–250** words.

### Question 2

- Your company recently made changes to its delivery systems. Your manager has asked you to write a report on the success of these changes.
- Write a **report**, including the following information:
  - what changes were made to the delivery systems
  - how the success of the changes was monitored
  - whether the changes have led to a more effective delivery system or not.

### Question 3

- Your department has been trying to improve the effectiveness of the presentations given by staff. You have been asked to arrange training sessions with an external consultant for some of the staff in the department.
- Write a **letter** to the consultant, including the following information:
  - the problems staff have with giving presentations
  - which grade of staff you propose to put forward for the training and why
  - what type of training the staff require.

### Question 4

- Your company is considering developing a new product. You have been asked to write a proposal to your manager assessing the desirability of developing this product.
- Write your **proposal** to your manager:
  - commenting on which markets the new product would appeal to and why
  - explaining the problems likely to be encountered
  - suggesting how these problems could be resolved.

Sample answers are given on page 169.

- 3 1 Like As 2 week's weeks 3 in of 4 improving improve  
 5 learn learning 6 correct (though reduce could be changed to  
 reducing) 7 showing shown 8 no not 9 had has 10 enjoyable  
 enjoyably 11 correct 12 of from 13 were was 14 correct  
 15 correct 16 some a 17 of about 18 correct 19 for to  
 20 correct

## Writing Part 2: Exam practice

Suggested answers

### Question 2

#### Report

##### Introduction

The aim of this report is to detail changes that were made to our delivery systems and to discuss how the changes were monitored. It will also assess whether or not the changes were effective.

##### Changes to delivery systems

We made changes to the delivery systems in order to try and achieve a faster turnaround between ordering and delivery to the customer. A new computerised system was installed so that orders are now sent direct to the warehouse without having to be processed by the finance department first. Current staff received training in the new system and extra staff were employed to cope with the faster turnaround time.

##### Monitoring the changes

A control system was set up to double check that orders were received in the warehouse on time and were processed correctly. In addition, a member of staff monitored the warehouse on foot to see whether staffing was adequate and to check if any problems arose.

Furthermore, customers were canvassed to get their views on the new system.

##### The success of the changes

Overall, the system proved effective, though there remain several teething problems to be ironed out. Staff do not always input the correct values if they are working too quickly so a control system needs to remain in place. In addition, we need to have a marking system for goods where payment is delayed to ensure these do not leave the factory before settlement. However, in general, staff and customers were satisfied with the improved service.

### Question 3

Dear Mr Markin,

I am writing to you as I understand your consultancy can arrange training sessions in giving presentations. I am writing on behalf of our sales department as we feel that the presentations given by staff could be improved.

When giving presentations, staff tend to have a poor delivery method (speaking too quickly, etc.) and also fail to get across the main points that need addressing during the presentations. They also seem to handle questions from the audience very badly.

In general, most staff in the department have to give presentations at some stage but I am particularly concerned about our junior sales staff, who need to improve their presentation skills in order to achieve their sales targets. There are about eight of them who I would put forward for this training.

As we need to see substantial improvements, I would like staff to receive training over a period of several weeks. This ideally should include material to address the problems I have raised above, plus some sort of monitoring or testing system whereby staff can see any improvements they have made. This system should also make them aware of areas they still need to focus on. An off-site course would be preferable, so that staff can focus on the matter in hand.

If your consultancy is able to help us in this matter, please contact me so that we can discuss.

Yours sincerely,

### Question 4

#### Proposal

##### Introduction

The purpose of this proposal is to comment on the market for our new MP3 player and to outline any problems with developing the product and suggest ways of addressing these.

##### Potential markets

The issue of whether to market the new MP3 player in Europe has already been discussed but there is more potential for growth if we expand our target market to include India and some of the Gulf States as well. Both these regions have a high proportion of young people who fit our customer profile. In addition, our competitors are offering players which have been on the market for a while and need upgrading. Our product would offer new features and therefore should eat into some of our competitors' market share.

##### Potential problems

One of the main problems we may encounter is the cost of arranging an adequate distribution system in markets where we have no presence at the moment. In addition, there may be a problem in all markets of managing repairs and after-sales service.

##### Suggested solutions

In order to arrange an effective distribution system it would be sensible to contact agents used by our parent company and investigate what they can offer us and at what cost. We would also need to check whether or not they were also operating for our competitors. Regarding after-sales service, I would suggest this is put to competitive tender.

## Speaking Test Part 2: Exam skills

- 2 1 not just because 2 but also because 3 the main point I'd like to make is about 4 What I mean is 5 I think first that 6 for example 7 It also includes 8 A third aspect of this 9 Anyway 10 Finally and in conclusion
- 4 1 My talk is about ...  
 2 I think first ...; It also includes ...; A third aspect ...  
 3 This procedure must, for example, ...  
 4 ... and I say 'boards' because ...  
 5 Finally and in conclusion, ...  
 6 procedures for internal recruitment, human resources, efficiency of the company, inter-staff relations, management and staff representatives, internal advertising of all posts, staff appraisal, personal files, recruitment boards, director or manager of the department, Human Resources department, elected staff representative