

Topic  
Specific

# Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines

for English Language Education Providers



Dearbhú Cáilíochta  
agus Cáilíochtaí Éireann  
Quality and  
Qualifications Ireland



# Topic Specific

## Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines for English Language Education Providers

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## **SECTION 1: LEGISLATIVE BACKGROUND**

### **1.1 Background to the Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012**

Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) was established in November 2012 by the Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012. The 2012 Act sets out the functions of QQI, which includes the establishment of a code of practice for the provision of programmes of education and training to international learners, and the authorisation of an international education mark (IEM).

The 2012 Act was amended by the Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) (Amendment) Act 2019. References to the legislation hereafter will be to the 2012 Act as amended.

The 2012 Act as amended provides that QQI shall publish a code of practice in such form and manner as it thinks appropriate, and that it may include different provisions in respect of different providers or providers of different classes.

### **1.2 Statutory Codes of Practice**

QQI policy is to establish and publish two codes of practice in respect of providers of different classes:

- one for higher education providers (HE Code)
- one for English language education providers (ELE Code).

The codes of practice are part of a suite of measures, provided for in the 2012 Act as amended, that are designed to protect the interests of international learners<sup>1</sup> who engage with the Irish education and training system. The purpose of the ELE Code is to ensure that international learners attending ELE institutions that have demonstrated their compliance with the ELE Code, and have obtained authorisation to use the IEM, receive a high-quality and consistent learning experience.

Compliance with the ELE Code for the purpose of obtaining authorisation from QQI to use the IEM is required of ELE providers who recruit international learners in the State on ELE programmes. A provider's compliance with the ELE Code, and its authorised use of the IEM, will attest to the quality of the provider, the quality of its ELE programmes, and the quality of the learner experience on those programmes.

<sup>1</sup> Section 2(1) of the 2012 Act as amended defines an international learner 'as a person who is not an Irish citizen but is lawfully in the state primarily to receive education and training'. In relation to the establishment of codes of practice for the purpose of QQI authorising providers to use the international education mark, section 60(1) of the same act further defines an international learner as one who:

- is in the state enrolled on a programme leading to an award included in the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ);
- or
- is in the state enrolled on an English language programme;
- or
- is a learner outside the state enrolled on a programme leading to an award included in the NFQ.

For the purposes of establishing the ELE Code, and QQI's role in authorising ELE providers to use the IEM, these definitions include all categories of international learners enrolled on ELE programmes at ELE providers, as outlined below:

- non-EU/EEA learners enrolled on ELE, foundation year and teacher training programmes of 12+ weeks' duration;
- non-EU/EEA learners enrolled on ELE, foundation and teacher training programmes of fewer than 12 weeks' duration;
- EU/EEA learners enrolled on ELE, foundation and teacher training programmes of any duration.

### 1.3 Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines for English Language Education Providers

This document outlines the Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines established by QQI for English language education providers. These guidelines are 'statutory': under the 2012 Act as amended, QQI is required to publish quality assurance guidelines. The 2012 Act as amended requires providers to "have regard to" QQI's quality assurance guidelines when establishing their own quality assurance procedures. The principles underpinning these guidelines are set out in the [QQI Policy on Quality Assurance Guidelines](#). ✨

These Quality Assurance (QA) Guidelines for ELE Providers supplement the Core Quality Assurance guidelines, which are applicable to **all** providers, and they add to the core guidelines by addressing the more specific QA needs and requirements of ELE providers.

These QA Guidelines for ELE providers should be read by ELE providers in conjunction with the ELE Code. They should also be read in conjunction with the QQI Policy on Statutory QA Guidelines and the following QQI Statutory QA Guidelines:

1. [Core Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines developed by QQI for use by all Providers](#) ✨
2. [Sector Specific Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines developed by QQI for Independent/Private Providers coming to QQI on a Voluntary Basis](#) ✨

#### 1.3.1 What is the purpose of the Statutory QA Guidelines for ELE providers?

These guidelines address the responsibilities of ELE providers in the context of accessing the statutory and regulatory functions of QQI. They set out statutory, QA guidelines specific to ELE providers that come to QQI on a voluntary basis for the purpose of seeking authorisation to use the IEM. They are to be used by ELE providers, along with the ELE Code of Practice, when

- designing, implementing, and reviewing their quality assurance policies and procedures;
- designing, implementing, and reviewing their curricula, syllabuses and course programmes/schemes of work in alignment with the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR).

These guidelines are **not** intended to prescribe how ELE providers are to carry out their work or run their organisations, nor are they to be considered as a 'how to' manual for ELE providers on the establishment of their QA procedures. Rather, it is up to ELE providers to establish an internal quality system that is appropriate to their individual context and that incorporates operational QA procedures and a system of review to monitor the effectiveness of those procedures.



## **SECTION 2: STATUTORY QUALITY ASSURANCE GUIDELINES FOR ENGLISH LANGUAGE EDUCATION PROVIDERS**

These guidelines comprise quality assurance criteria to be met by ELE providers under the following categories:

- **Organisational Structures;**
- **Management and Governance of Quality Assurance;**
- **Academic Management Structures;**
- **Programme Design;**
- **Supports and Services for International Learners;**
- **Staff Supports and Development.**

### **2.1 Organisational Structures**

#### **2.1.1 Organisational and administrative structures**

- (a) There is a mission statement, which may also describe the core values and objectives of the ELE provider.
- (b) The organisational chart supports the efficient operational management of the ELE provider in all areas of organisational, administrative, and academic management.
- (c) Organisational, administrative, and academic management structures are clear, transparent, appropriate to the size of the ELE provider, adaptable as required and are understandable by staff, learners, education agents, recruitment partners, consultants and other key stakeholders.
- (d) Responsibilities and line management structures among members of administrative and academic management, and administrative and academic staff, are clear, transparent, efficient, and understandable by all staff.
- (e) Strategic organisational and operational planning is carried out periodically and supports the ELE provider's developmental and enhancement objectives.

*(Please see the ELE Code, section 6, Operational, Risk and Human Resources Management, and Appendix Four, for details of requirements for academic staff.)*

#### **2.1.2 Administrative staffing**

- (a) The administrative staff profile meets the needs of the ELE provider and all administrative staff are suitably qualified/trained and/or experienced for their role.
- (b) Each centre<sup>2</sup>, whether permanent, additional or temporary, has an administrative team in place which is proportional to the size and functions of the centre and to the current number of enrolled learners present at the centre during operational hours.

<sup>2</sup> For the purposes of establishing the ELE Code and QQI's role in authorising ELE providers to use the IEM, the definitions of 'centre' in the context of ELE are as follows: the main centre is defined as the premises where the main administration and academic team, and principle classrooms, whether year round or seasonal, are based; an additional centre is defined as a permanent centre with a different address and Eircode from the main centre; a temporary centre is defined as a premises with a different address and Eircode from the main centre, and that is used at certain times of the year, e.g., during summer. Temporary classrooms are defined as spaces within a ten-minute walk from the main or additional centre that the provider uses to accommodate an increase in learner enrolments at peak periods.

### 2.1.3 Administrative systems

- (a) There is a management system in place to support effective administrative, enrolment and academic management operations, as well as management of internal monitoring and provision of required information and data, as needed. All members of staff are trained in the use of this system as relevant to their role.
- (b) Data management systems, including data on the school management system, are efficient and meet the needs of the ELE provider.

### 2.1.4 Communications

- (a) Communication channels among members of administrative and academic management, and administrative and academic staff, are clear, transparent, efficient, and understandable by all staff.
- (b) There is regular, documented communication among the management team(s) and between management, administrative and academic teams. Administrative and academic teams coordinate and communicate effectively.
- (c) Members of staff meet with their line manager periodically to discuss their role, performance and training and development needs, and to receive guidance and support, as needed, and these meetings are documented.

## 2.2 Management and Governance of Quality Assurance

### 2.2.1 Quality assurance systems

- (a) ELE providers have quality assurance policies in place which inform the management and development of quality assurance procedures in all areas of the organisation.
- (b) There is a dedicated and suitably trained Quality Assurance Officer who is responsible for the development, embedding and management of provider quality assurance policies and procedures throughout the organisation, as well as the enhancement of ELE provision and associated services, as required and appropriate. The role of the Quality Assurance Officer may be part of another role of a member of staff. However, it is important to note that quality assurance development and management is a part of the functions of all staff members, relevant to their specific role, as well as of the whole organisation.
- (c) Quality assurance policies and procedures of the ELE provider are aligned with the mission and strategic objectives of the provider and are developed, embedded and managed on a cross-organisational basis, with the involvement of relevant internal and external stakeholders.
- (d) Quality assurance policies and procedures are suitably and sustainably resourced to support operations, ELE provision and all services offered by the ELE provider.

### 2.2.2 Quality assurance policies and procedures

- (a) ELE providers have quality assurance policies and procedures in place to ensure protection of key internal and external stakeholders and to support efficient operations and development.

- (b) Quality assurance policies and procedures may include, but are not limited to, the following areas:
  - (i) Corporate and academic governance;
  - (ii) Management and operations;
  - (iii) Environmental sustainability;
  - (iv) Health and safety;
  - (v) Enrolment, fees, refunds and subsistence;
  - (vi) Learner welfare and supports;
  - (vii) Learner and other stakeholder complaints and grievances;
  - (viii) Accommodation services, where offered;
  - (ix) Safeguarding;
  - (x) Human resources;
  - (xi) Staff welfare and supports;
  - (xii) Staff training and development;
  - (xiii) Staff complaints and grievances;
  - (xiv) Equality, diversity and inclusion;
  - (xv) Curriculum, syllabus, programme and assessment design, management and quality reviews;
  - (xvi) Award and certification services, where offered;
  - (xvii) Academic integrity;
  - (xviii) Ethical marketing and recruitment;
  - (xix) Evaluation of provision and services.
- (c) Quality assurance policies and procedures inform the need to make changes in the organisation in order to continue to develop and enhance ELE provision, services and operations.
- (d) Quality assurance policies and procedures are designed in consultation with all members of staff involved in their implementation and management and are updated and enhanced periodically, and as needed.

### 2.2.3 Quality assurance reviews

- (a) Periodic self-assessments take place during which all areas of the organisation are reviewed and evaluated and following which appropriate action is taken where needed to ensure the development and enhancement of quality.
- (b) ELE providers produce a monitoring report every 18 months, i.e., at the mid-cycle point in the three-year IEM authorisation period following the assessment of the provider's compliance with the ELE Code and QA Guidelines for ELE Providers. This report describes provider activities, developments and enhancements during this 18-month period and plans for the coming 18-month period. This report is submitted to QQI.
- (c) There are procedures in place which enable learners, staff and other stakeholders to evaluate the ELE provider. Evaluation is varied in type and is gathered on areas such as, but not limited to:

- (i) premises and facilities;
  - (ii) organisational management;
  - (iii) ELE provision;
  - (iv) accommodation and catering, where offered;
  - (v) events programme;
  - (vi) other services offered;
  - (vii) developments and enhancements;
  - (viii) staff development and conditions.
- (d) Data gathered from different types of evaluation and feedback are used to support decision-making regarding strategic organisational planning, development and enhancement, and to inform the planning of future programmes.
- (e) Identified issues are dealt with immediately. For this reason, it is recommended that initial feedback be gathered from learners during the first week of the programme in order to resolve potential issues as soon as possible.

*(Please see the ELE Code section 6, Operational, Risk and Human Resources Management, section 7, Programme Design, section 8, Supports and Services for International Learners, section 9, Marketing and Recruitment and Section 10, Enrolment, Fees, Refunds and Subsistence.)*

## 2.3 Academic Management Structures

### 2.3.1 Qualifications and experience

The academic staff profile meets the needs of the organisation and all members of academic staff are suitably qualified, and experienced, where required, for their role.

*(Please see the ELE Code, section 6, Operational, Risk and Human Resources Management, and Appendix Four, for details on requirements for academic staff.)*

### 2.3.2 Communications

- (a) There is regular, documented communication among the academic management team and among academic management, trainers and teachers. Meetings may include, but are not limited to the following:
- (i) regular academic administration meetings to confirm schedules and monitor learner attendance and participation;
  - (ii) materials and resources selection, implementation and management;
  - (iii) curriculum, syllabus and schemes of work review and development;
  - (iv) formative and summative assessment framework review and development.
- as well as regular CPD sessions for teachers and trainers. As a guideline, it is recommended that CPD sessions be offered to teachers and trainers once a month.
- (b) There are systems in place to offer academic and mentoring support to teachers and trainers.

### 2.3.3 Programme development

- (a) Considerations on new programme developments are discussed at corporate management and academic management level, with inputs from sales and marketing management as required, as well as inputs from external stakeholders, such as HE providers in Ireland.
- (b) All decisions regarding potential new programme developments are agreed with the academic governance committee or external ELE expertise, in the case where a provider's scale is such that it cannot support an academic governance committee internally.
- (c) All decisions regarding new programme developments are made with regard to the capacity and capability of the ELE provider and business plans are agreed between corporate management and academic management to support decision making in each case.

*(Please see the ELE Code, section 6, Operational, Risk and Human Resources Management, and section 7, Programme Design.)*

### 2.3.4 Academic materials

- (a) Academic materials and resources for each existing or new programme are selected and updated to support teaching and learning needs, as well as new developments and practices.
- (b) A member(s) of staff is/are responsible for the management and curation of all academic materials and resources, and a budget is agreed.
- (c) All new academic materials and resources are approved by the Academic Governance Committee or the external expert.

### 2.3.5 Attendance at briefings and conferences

- (a) A member of the academic management staff attends scheduled QQI briefings, which may be held online or in person.
- (b) A member(s) of the academic staff attend(s) relevant training and development sessions and conferences in Ireland, and learnings are cascaded to colleagues in CPD sessions.
- (c) ELE providers sponsor academic staff members to attend events and conferences, and learnings are cascaded to colleagues in CPD sessions.

### 2.3.6 Operational academic management

- (a) There is an appropriate learner : teacher/teacher trainer ratio for all programmes to ensure participation opportunities on the part of the learners and effective classroom management on the part of teachers and teacher trainers.
- (b) The number of dedicated full-time academic managers per centre is proportional to the number of enrolled learners at the centre at any one time during operational hours.
- (c) Teaching schedules of a maximum of thirty contact teaching hours per week are fully supported by well-designed curricula, syllabuses, and schemes of work, which

are closely aligned to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR).

- (d) There is an effective system in place to substitute teachers and teacher trainers as required.
- (e) Academic managers are responsible for the monitoring of all academic administrative documentation, which is stored on the school management system.
- (f) Records of work completed in class are recorded in sufficient detail (i.e., to enable another teacher to understand what has been completed) on the management system and this is monitored by academic management staff. Follow-up work with teachers is completed when records are insufficient.
- (g) Compliance with copyright and other intellectual property rights legislation is monitored by academic managers.

*(Please see the ELE Code, section 6, Operational, Risk and Human Resources Management, and Appendix Six, Resources for providers, for information regarding copyright laws.)*

#### 2.3.7 Teaching and learning

- (a) Teachers plan and deliver ELE programmes in a learning environment that is appropriate and of a sufficient standard to facilitate learners' achievement of the intended learning outcomes.
- (b) Lesson planning, teaching approaches, methods and skills reflect the ELE provider's philosophy, mission statement and strategic objectives for the organisation and help learners meet their language learning objectives.
- (c) Lesson planning and teaching approaches reflect the ELE provider's commitment to the close alignment of the provider's curriculum, syllabus and course programme to the CEFR.
- (d) Lesson planning and teaching skills are core competences that are developed on initial teacher training courses and further developed and fine-tuned as a teacher develops their skills in the organisation.
- (e) Design and delivery of lessons is monitored by academic managers.
- (f) Academic managers, senior teachers and teacher trainers help newly qualified and less experienced teachers to continue to develop lesson planning and teaching skills and support newly qualified and less experienced teachers when planning and teaching.
- (g) There are developmental observation systems, e.g., self- and peer observations, in place to help all teachers and teacher trainers learn from each other in relation to approaches, skills, techniques, and to help less experienced teachers learn from more experienced colleagues.

#### 2.3.8 Lesson planning

- (a) Teachers plan lessons with clear intended learning outcomes, with reference to the curriculum, syllabus, course programme/schemes of work, learner needs and course materials, and planning is clearly and closely aligned to the CEFR.

- (b) When lesson planning, teachers demonstrate an ability to:
  - (i) take learner needs, interests and cultural background into account;
  - (ii) incorporate a variety of teaching approaches as appropriate;
  - (iii) formulate clear and achievable intended learning outcomes;
  - (iv) formulate coherent and achievable stages and stage aims;
  - (v) consider learner-centredness;
  - (vi) for language skills: formulate detailed language analysis of meaning, form, pronunciation (and appropriacy, as necessary), considering learner participation, and detailed anticipated problems;
  - (vii) for skills: focus on achievable intended learning outcomes in terms of learner development of sub-skills;
  - (viii) include a variety of interaction patterns to support learner participation and effective classroom interaction;
  - (ix) incorporate authentic use of language;
  - (x) incorporate self- and peer evaluation by learners;
  - (xi) include content and language feedback following speaking/writing stages;
  - (xii) adapt course book materials and design materials, including authentic materials, depending on learner needs and interests and intended learning outcomes;
  - (xiii) include some reflection on the lesson and learning.

### 2.3.9 Lesson delivery

- (a) Lessons are delivered with clear reference to the syllabus, learner needs and CEFR 'can do' descriptors, as well as course materials.
- (b) Teaching skills demonstrate teachers have developed and continue to develop core competencies, including, but not limited to, the following:
  - (i) an understanding of the need to empathise and personalise with learners and to generate rapport;
  - (ii) an understanding of the need to promote effective learner training and study skills;
  - (iii) an understanding of effective classroom management skills, including, but not limited to, the following areas: elicitation, task setting and instructions, suitable classroom layout, management of materials and resources, and management of learners and the lesson;
  - (iv) an ability to monitor, correct and manage feedback, including management of emergent language;
  - (v) an ability to evaluate learning and assess achievement of intended learning outcomes or progress towards these;
  - (vi) an ability to adapt approaches and techniques in accordance with learner needs and learning preferences;
  - (vii) an awareness of inter-cultural diversity and needs;

- (viii) an awareness of the language needs of learners, depending on their first language influences and interferences;
- (ix) an awareness of differentiation.

#### 2.3.10 Online provision

- (a) Where online provision is offered, providers can demonstrate that teachers have been suitably trained in effective planning and skills for the synchronous online context, including training on materials development, effective use of the online platform and tools, and planning for effective interaction in the online classroom.
- (b) Where online provision is offered, providers can demonstrate that learners have been suitably trained in effective use of the online platform, tools, materials and types of interaction in the online context.
- (c) Where online provision is offered, providers can demonstrate that teachers have received training in effective online platform management, classroom management and teaching skills for the online classroom context.
- (d) Providers have an emergency remote plan in place, together with a training plan for teachers, to upskill teachers quickly as and when required, and to enable the academic team to move to online provision with limited disturbance to staff and learners.

#### 2.3.11 Monitoring of lesson planning and delivery

- (a) The quality of the learning experience is monitored on an on-going basis with regular quality assurance observations.
- (b) Quality assurance observation feedback is disseminated to teachers and this feedback is recorded.
- (c) Quality assurance observation feedback informs teacher/teacher trainer development needs and helps academic managers to plan development programmes to meet these needs.

## 2.4 Programme Design

### 2.4.1 Curriculum and syllabus design

- (a) Curriculum and syllabus design is completed and managed by suitably qualified and experienced senior academic staff, with learner needs and interests in mind.
- (b) Curriculum and syllabus design is clearly and closely aligned to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), with clearly defined learning outcomes, which are articulated in 'can do' descriptors.
- (c) Curriculum and syllabus design and updates are approved by the academic governance committee, or external ELE expertise, as appropriate, and approvals are documented.

#### 2.4.1.1 Curriculum design

Curriculum design considers:

- (i) the provider's educational philosophy and mission statement.
- (ii) approach(es) to be taken, e.g., Communicative Approach, Task-Based Learning, aligned to the CEFR 'can do' descriptors.



#### 2.4.1.2 Syllabus design

Syllabus design considers, as appropriate:

- (i) intended learning outcomes, clearly and closely aligned to the CEFR 'can do' descriptors;
- (ii) assessment framework;
- (iii) formative and summative assessment;
- (iv) learner age, where relevant e.g., teens, young adults, over 30s;
- (v) learner interests and needs;
- (vi) prior learning of learners;
- (vii) contact and guided learning hours to complete a given programme;
- (viii) materials, including essential and suggested supplementary resources;
- (ix) self-study and guided learning opportunities;
- (x) opportunities for learner decisions on input, depending on interests and needs;
- (xi) adjustment and modification options at different stages, based on learner and teacher feedback and evolving needs;
- (xii) learner training;
- (xii) opportunities for learners to develop cultural awareness and to learn about life in Ireland – ideally, the programme includes lessons that are connected to the events programme;
- (xii) pathways to higher education;
- (xv) employment opportunities;
- (xvi) learner development of an understanding of study and academic integrity conventions;
- (xvii) learner development of learner independence and learner training strategies;
- (xviii) opportunities for learners to practise English outside the classroom;
- (xix) remedial action opportunities for programme completion;
- (xx) reflection and evaluation.

#### 2.4.1.3 Curriculum, syllabus and course programme/schemes of work reviews

Curriculum, syllabus and course programme/schemes of work reviews are periodically carried out by the academic management and teaching team(s) as needed in order to:

- (i) meet evolving needs of the ELE provider, e.g., new programme and learner types;
- (ii) meet evolving needs and interests of learners;
- (iii) incorporate evolving practice and approaches;
- (iv) incorporate changes made as a result of feedback from teachers, teacher trainers, learners, and other stakeholders;

- (v) include new materials, which are approved by the academic governance committee.

#### 2.4.2 Assessment systems

- (a) The provider's assessment framework
  - (i) establishes the provider's approach to assessment of learners in both external proficiency examinations, and in-house formative and summative assessments;
  - (ii) is clearly and closely aligned to the intended learning outcomes of each programme, expressed in 'can do' descriptors from, or adapted from, the CEFR;
  - (iii) meets learner needs;
  - (iv) addresses assessment administrative arrangements;
  - (v) includes provisions for the reasonable accommodation of learners with specific needs, e.g., dyslexia, visual or auditory impairments.
- (b) A suitably qualified/trained member(s) of the senior academic staff is/are responsible for assessment within the organisation.
- (c) Providers have quality assurance procedures, structures and resources in place to ensure that all assessment types are clear and accessible and that the principles of validity, reliability and impact are well considered.
- (d) Providers ensure that formative and summative assessments of programmes are designed for the learner group and the skills practised.
- (e) Providers ensure that learners enrolled on ELE programmes leading to external proficiency examinations are sufficiently prepared for these examinations.
- (f) Learners are informed about when, how, and why they are assessed, and are provided with feedback on their progress and expected outcomes in internal and external summative examinations.
- (g) Regular tutorials are offered to learners during their course, e.g., following mock, mid-level and end-of-level exams, to help them focus on their learning needs and objectives.
- (h) Remedial support is offered to learners where needed.
- (i) Learners periodically receive reports from teachers following an assessment, with guidance for further study. Reports are monitored by academic managers.
- (j) There is an internal appeal process in place for learners who consider an internal assessment result to be unfair or incorrect.

##### 2.4.2.1 Types of assessment

- (a) A clear and accessible placement testing system is in place, which considers the principles of validity, reliability and impact, to ensure that learners are placed in the correct level at the beginning of their course. This test may be taken either before the learner arrives at the centre or on their first day. The placement test includes an assessment of grammar, lexis and speaking, and, if possible, writing, reading and

listening. If it is not possible to include writing, reading and listening in the placement test, the academic manager ensures that these skills are assessed as soon as possible following the start of the learner's programme in order to enable the learner and their teacher assess learning needs. Effective corrective systems are in place to ensure that learners who have been incorrectly placed are moved to a more suitable level. This correction is completed as soon as possible, ideally by Day Two.

- (b) Clear and accessible formative and summative assessment systems are in place which consider the principles of validity, reliability and impact. These systems meet learner needs and are tailored to suit the language skills and systems practised on the programme.
- (c) Assessment may take different forms, including, for example, recycling, quizzes, tasks, projects and presentations, as well as more traditional test types
- (d) Mock examinations are provided to learners preparing for external proficiency examinations and the principles of validity, reliability and impact are well considered.

#### 2.4.2.2 Academic integrity and security

- (a) Procedures and systems are in place to manage the security and integrity of assessment processes, including:
  - (i) dissemination of information to learners, as appropriate, about academic integrity;
  - (ii) assessment procedures for academic and administrative staff, as required;
  - (iii) standardisation of productive skills assessment;
  - (iv) storing of assessment materials;
  - (v) records of learner assessment.

#### 2.4.2.3 Information about assessment procedures

Information relating to assessment procedures is made available to learners, including, but not limited to, the following:

- (i) course programme and assessment calendar;
- (ii) formative and summative assessment types;
- (iii) learner responsibilities in relation to assessment;
- (iv) academic integrity;
- (v) end of level/exit certificates and reports;
- (vi) guidance for learners on the selection of a proficiency exam appropriate to their level and needs, e.g., progression to higher education;
- (vii) information on grading systems for external proficiency examinations and its relationship to the CEFR scale;
- (viii) tutorials;
- (ix) remedial support.

### 2.4.3 Teacher training centres and programme design

Where the ELE provider is also a teacher training centre, input on teacher training courses may include:

- (i) an introduction to the principles of course design in order to help trainee teachers understand the basic concepts;
- (ii) an introduction to the principles of the CEFR and its 'can do' descriptors;
- (iii) an introduction to the principles of assessment;

in addition to the other input sessions typically included on initial teacher training courses.

### 2.4.4 Academic staff development and programme design

- (a) ELE providers ensure that all academic staff develop an essential awareness of:
  - (i) the provider's philosophy and educational mission statement;
  - (ii) the curriculum and syllabus rationale;
  - (iii) the principles of the CEFR ;
  - (iv) alignment of the curriculum and syllabus to the CEFR;
  - (v) development of course programmes/schemes of work and lesson materials aligned to the CEFR descriptors and levels;
  - (vi) development of forms of assessment aligned to the CEFR
- (b) All staff members, particularly those who are in contact with learners and education agents, recruitment partners and consultants, also receive training on the principles behind the CEFR.

*(Please see the ELE Code, section 7, Programme Design, Annex One of these QA Guidelines, Guidelines for ELE Providers on the Alignment of ELE Programmes to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), and Annex Two of these QA Guidelines, Guidelines for Assessment in English Language Education.)*

## 2.5 Supports and Services for International Learners

### 2.5.1 Learner orientation and induction

Inductions include, but are not limited to, information on areas such as the following:

- (i) information about the centre;
- (ii) provider approach to teaching and learning;
- (iii) description of academic programme;
- (iv) assessment;
- (v) lesson schedules and breaks;
- (vi) events programme;
- (vii) practical skills workshops;

- (viii) practical advice, e.g., opening a bank account and who in the organisation to seek advice or help from;
- (ix) what to do and who to contact in an emergency;
- (x) learner responsibilities, e.g., in relation to non-EU/EEA students requiring entry visa and/or immigration permission;
- (xi) provider responsibilities;
- (xii) health and well-being;
- (xiii) management of emergencies;
- (xiv) local events and organisations of interest;
- (xv) cultural and inter-cultural awareness;
- (xvi) code of conduct;
- (xvii) complaints and grievances procedures;
- (xviii) academic integrity.

*(Please see the ELE Code, section 8, Supports and Services for International Learners.)*

- (a) Learners are provided with a student handbook, which includes the information above, as well as other relevant information, such as a map of the area and public transport options.
- (b) Learner groups consist of a variety of language speakers, in order to optimise English language learning opportunities. Where this is not the case, ELE providers ensure that learners are made aware of this before enrolling in a programme of study.

*(Please see the ELE Code, section 9, Marketing and Recruitment)*

### 2.5.2 Learners requiring entry visas and/or immigration permission

- (a) Further induction and information dissemination is offered to non-EU/EEA learners who require entry visas and/or immigration permission on requirements learners must be aware of.

*(Please see the ELE Code, section 8, Supports and Services for International Learners.)*

- (b) ELE providers offer advice to learners on areas including, but not limited to, the following:
  - (i) pathway options to further and higher education study;
  - (ii) finding part-time employment;
  - (iii) applying for a PPSN number;
  - (iv) opening a bank account;
  - (v) finding accommodation, if not provided by the provider.
- (c) Providers ensure the information provided to learners at induction is clear, accurate, transparent, accessible, relevant and up-to-date, and that it is available throughout their programme, as needed. Providers offer learners reminders of this information at key points during the programme e.g., in the lead-up to examinations.

### 2.5.3 Academic supports

- (a) Academic managers and the student welfare officer are available to offer study advice to learners on an on-going basis. Information on further and higher education study opportunities is made available to learners as needed.
- (b) Academic materials and resources are made available for learners to use outside of class time. These may be made available on-site as hard copies and/or online as soft copies.

### 2.5.4 Events programme

- (a) Providers offer information on integration opportunities available to international learners, such as membership of book or film clubs, and encourage learners to avail of those opportunities.
- (b) The events programme is linked to learner needs and interests and may be linked to the academic programme, if appropriate. Events coordinators liaise with academic managers to manage events selection and planning, including any tasks linked to the ELE programme, as required by the provider.
- (c) The number of events staff members is proportional to the number of learners at the centre and there is a system in place to substitute members of staff as needed.
- (d) Events administrative procedures include, but are not limited to, the following:
  - (i) the formulation of risk assessments for each event, with appropriate staff : learner ratios;
  - (ii) management of any activities and tasks linked to the academic programme, in collaboration with academic management;
  - (iii) management of attendance at events and completion of attendance reports;
  - (iv) recording of events and tasks completed on events, as required by the provider.

### 2.5.5 Exit procedures for enrolled learners

- (a) Providers issue learners with certificates and reports acknowledging attendance and final level achieved at the end of the learner's enrolment duration. Certificates refer to the CEFR scale and 'can do' descriptors.
- (b) Learners are informed of document storage systems, including storage of learner attendance and assessment records.
- (c) Learners requiring entry visas and/or immigration permission, and who intend to enrol on a further ELE programme with another ELE provider, or on a higher education programme, as permitted, are provided with all required documentation, for example attendance and assessment records, by the provider where learners are currently enrolled on a programme of study, by the learners' final day of study with the ELE provider.

*(Please see the ELE Code, Appendix Six, for information on data protection legislation.)*

## 2.6 Staff Supports and Development

### 2.6.1 Induction procedures

- (a) ELE providers foster an environment which supports the well-being and integration of new staff into the organisation.
- (b) Induction procedures are in place for all new staff and include, but are not limited to, information on the following, as required for their role by the new member(s) of staff:
  - (i) history and ownership of the organisation;
  - (ii) organisational mission statement;
  - (iii) organisational chart;
  - (iv) student body;
  - (v) client journey;
  - (vi) authorisations, memberships and accreditations, including any obligations in place related to these;
  - (vii) organisational and administrative systems, including communication channels;
  - (viii) educational philosophy, curriculum, and syllabus;
  - (ix) approach to teaching, learning and assessment;
  - (x) academic integrity;
  - (xi) HR systems, including details on contractual conditions e.g., leave, payroll;
  - (xii) information and employee rights and benefits;
  - (xiii) intercultural awareness training;
  - (xiv) health and safety;
  - (xv) safeguarding, where appropriate;
  - (xvi) requirements regarding learners requiring entry visas and/or immigration permission;
  - (xvii) training for specific roles, as required;
  - (xviii) possible professional development opportunities and paths within the organisation and relevant educational/training opportunities, including funding opportunities available;
  - (xix) quality assurance policies and procedures;
  - (xx) academic administrative procedures, including completion of attendance, logging of work completed in class and certificate and learner reports, as required;
  - (xxi) events administrative procedures, including the formulation of risk assessments for each event, management of activities and tasks linked to the academic programme, management of attendance records at events and completion of reports as required.
- (c) Staff handbooks are made available to new staff with all the information supplied at induction, as well as other relevant information.

### 2.6.2 Academic staff induction

- (a) Academic staff receive an induction on academic management in the organisation, including information on the following:
  - (i) curriculum, syllabus, course programmes/schemes of work;
  - (ii) CEFR: principles, rationale, descriptors, course design;
  - (iii) academic approach(es), methodologies and skills, lesson planning, selection and design of materials, academic approach(es), methodologies and skills, materials and resources, lesson planning and use of technology;
  - (iv) assessment framework and procedures;
  - (v) learner support and welfare systems;
  - (vi) exit procedures, including certificates and reports.
- (b) Academic staff handbooks are made available to new staff with all the information supplied at the inductions, as well as other relevant information.

### 2.6.3 Student social events staff induction

- (a) Student social events staff receive an induction on areas including, but not limited to, the following:
  - (i) effective planning and management of events and activities, including events with minors, if relevant;
  - (ii) completing risk assessments;
  - (iii) completing attendance records;
  - (iv) essential first aid procedures, as permitted;
  - (v) safeguarding, as relevant.

### 2.6.4 Staff training and development

- (a) Continuous professional development is available to all staff, aligned to the organisation's mission statement, needs and strategic objectives.
- (b) Cross-organisational training is planned to help different members of staff understand structures and roles within the organisation, as well as specific areas, e.g., training in programme and proficiency examination types for administrative and sales and marketing staff, and training in student recruitment for academic staff.
- (c) All staff training is documented.

### 2.6.5 Administrative staff training and development

- (a) Administrative staff receive regular professional development, and training, as appropriate, to ensure that they continue to learn and that their processes and procedures are current.
- (b) A documented CPD plan is in place for all administrative staff and training in areas of administrative systems, such as customer service, as and other areas, such as health and safety, is offered to administrative staff, as required.



### 2.6.6 Academic staff training and development

- (a) A documented CPD plan is in place for all academic staff, including academic managers, teacher trainers and teachers, in order to:
  - (i) meet the training and developmental needs of all academic staff;
  - (ii) ensure that knowledge of the curriculum and syllabus, aligned to the CEFR, is known by all academic staff;
  - (iii) ensure that practice is current.
- (b) CPD includes a developmental observation cycle for all academic team members, including self- peer, short and full lesson observations, and, in the case of full lesson observations, pre-lesson meetings, submission of lesson plans and post observation feedback meetings.
- (c) Developmental needs are identified through the observation cycle and this informs the CPD plan for academic staff.

### 2.6.7 Sales and marketing staff training and development

- (a) Sales and marketing staff receive regular professional development and training, as appropriate, to ensure that processes and procedures, as well as organisational information, are current.
- (b) Training is given in areas such as ethical practices and the London Statement.
- (c) A documented CPD plan is in place for all sales and marketing staff, including managers, to support clear, transparent, knowledgeable, ethical and effective sales and marketing practices.

*(Please see the ELE Code, section 9, Marketing and Recruitment, and Appendix Three, The London Statement 2012.)*

### 2.6.8 Performance reviews

Documented performance reviews for all staff members take place at least on an annual basis, during which training and development needs and career plans are identified and agreed.

## **ANNEX ONE: GUIDELINES FOR ELE PROVIDERS ON THE ALIGNMENT OF ELE PROGRAMMES TO THE COMMON EUROPEAN FRAMEWORK OF REFERENCE FOR LANGUAGES (CEFR)**

### **1 INTRODUCTION**

Section 7 of the ELE Code sets out requirements in relation to ELE programme design. ELE providers who wish to seek authorisation to use the IEM are required to demonstrate that there is a clear and well-designed ELE programme in place, where the curriculum, syllabus, course programme(s)/schemes of work and assessment framework are clearly and closely aligned to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), and where the ELE programme meets the needs of learners. This annex provides guidelines for ELE providers on how to develop, or further develop, their ELE programme framework in alignment with the CEFR in order to meet the requirements set out in Section 7 of the ELE Code.

#### **1.1 Future developments in guidelines on CEFR alignment for providers**

The initial focus of these guidelines is to offer providers support in the development, or further development, of the alignment of their programme framework with the CEFR, as part of their preparation to seek authorisation to use the IEM.

Further development of guidelines for providers on CEFR alignment may include:

- alignment of English for Academic Purposes programmes to the CEFR
- alignment of English for Specific Purposes programmes to the CEFR
- alignment of English for Teens and Young Learners programmes to the CEFR

QQI may also consider further expanding these guidelines to include the alignment of curricula and syllabuses of other language programmes with the CEFR.

#### **1.2 Scope of alignment of ELE programmes with the CEFR**

These guidelines are designed to support providers in the alignment of their ELE programme framework with the CEFR, specifically with the Performance Descriptors detailed in the *Common European Framework of Reference Companion Volume, 2020*. The CEFR is an international, validated set of standards for describing language ability. Aligning curricula and syllabuses to the CEFR will allow ELE providers to further develop and enhance their ELE programmes, and support the quality and consistency of ELE provision to international learners by:

- delivering recognisable and comparable performance objectives for ELE providers, learners and other key stakeholders
- supporting quality assurance for ELE providers, learners, and other key stakeholders

These guidelines outline a process for conducting the alignment of a programme curriculum and/or supporting syllabus to the CEFR. The processes described in these guidelines are based on the Council of Europe document [Aligning Language Education with the CEFR: A Handbook \(2022\)](#) ✨

## 2 BACKGROUND TO THE CEFR

The *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, teaching, assessment* (CEFR), is a key instrument in language education. The result of over twenty years of research, the CEFR was first published in 2001, and was updated to reflect contemporary needs and pedagogies in an edition published in 2020. The framework was designed to provide a clear, transparent, coherent and comprehensive basis for the development of language syllabus and curriculum guidelines, the design of teaching and learning materials and the assessment of foreign or second language proficiency.

The CEFR is built on the concept of communicative language competences and the performance descriptors capture both the communicative activities that a language learner may need, as well as the strategies and competences required to perform those tasks successfully. It is intended as a tool for reflection, communication, and empowerment. Its main aim is to facilitate transparency and comparability in the provision of language education and qualifications nationally and internationally.

According to the [Council of Europe CEFR uses and objectives](#), the main objectives of the CEFR are as follows:

- promoting plurilingualism and diversification in the choice of languages in the curriculum
- supporting the development and demonstration of the plurilingual profile of individual learners
- developing and reviewing the content of language curricula and defining positive 'can do' descriptors adapted to the age, interests and needs of learners
- designing and developing textbooks and teaching material
- supporting teacher education and cooperation among teachers of different languages
- enhancing quality and success in learning, teaching and assessment
- facilitating transparency in testing and the comparability of certifications

A key objective of the CEFR is to “promote common understanding across the education systems of Council of Europe member states.” (*Aligning Language Education with the CEFR: A Handbook, 2022:10*)

Since its inception, the CEFR has gained significant recognition across Europe, and in wider international contexts, as a reliable set of standards that can define language ability and performance across a scale ranging from beginner to very advanced learners.

The CEFR is available in 37 languages, including Irish and sign language. The framework is extensively used in different ways in further and higher education, in language teacher education and in primary and secondary education. It is used by employers, course book writers and national cultural institutes. At government level internationally, it is used to inform national strategy documentation related to language education and curriculum reform, and as formal proof of language level requirements for migrants, students accessing higher education and civil servants.

The *Common European Framework of Reference: Learning, Teaching, Assessment (Companion Volume)*, with revised and additional descriptors, was published in 2020 as a complement to the existing CEFR, and it is this [CEFR Companion Volume](#) which these guidelines will refer to throughout.

## 2.1 CEFR LEVELS, MODES, AND DESCRIPTORS

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The CEFR consists of three levels of proficiency:

A – basic user

B – independent user

C – proficient user

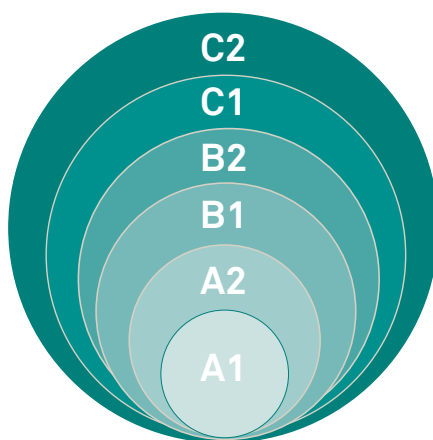
These three levels of proficiency represent broad bands of ability. Each of these levels is further divided into two sub-levels:

A1-A2

B1-B2

C1-C2

defining six performance levels overall. There is also some description of pre-A1, or complete beginner, level. These six core levels form the scale within which the performance descriptors are set. In some instances, the core levels are sub-divided into an upper and a lower element. These are often referred to by users as core and + levels, e.g., A2 and A2+. The diagram below illustrates how the CEFR perceives ability to expand both vertically and horizontally:



(Adapted from *CEFR Companion Volume*, 2020:36)

The CEFR recognises different language learning contexts, e.g., General English, English for Academic Purposes and English for Work.

The scales within which the performance descriptors are set are divided into four main modes of communication:

- Reception (listening and reading)
- Production (speaking and writing)
- Interaction (spoken and written)
- Mediation (facilitating communication between individuals, e.g., reporting written texts in speech, resolving delicate situations, and translating)

Each of the four modes has a Descriptor scale which describes overall abilities, e.g., Overall Oral Production. Each mode also has detailed scales which describe sub-sets of these abilities, e.g.,

- Reading: Reading for Orientation
- Listening: Understanding Announcements and Instructions.

These modes are supported by scales and strategies for Communicative Language Competences (CLC).

The process in these guidelines focuses on the following modes:

- Reception
- Production
- Interaction

but it also takes into consideration aspects from the Mediation mode, which can be integrated into Reception, Production and Interaction modes.

Other scales, e.g., plurilingual, can be utilised, depending on the given contexts.

(Please see the [CEFR Companion Volume Section 2.4](#). ✎)

It is important to note that the CEFR:


- is a tool which is flexible to allow for localised or specific settings and contexts. The Scales and Performance Descriptors within should be seen as a base point which can be adjusted to learner needs, as long as the standardised process for alignment is followed.
- describes the threshold abilities of learners that belong to a particular level. If a learner does not have the abilities listed in the descriptors, then they will not be deemed to have this level of ability.

### **3 ALIGNMENT OF A CURRICULUM AND SYLLABUS WITH THE CEFR**

#### **3.1 BENEFITS OF ALIGNMENT OF A CURRICULUM AND SYLLABUS WITH THE CEFR**

There are several advantages to aligning a curriculum and syllabus with the CEFR:

- (a) it creates a shared and transparent understanding of performance in the selected educational context.
- (b) it establishes a solid basis for prospective learners to compare elements of an ELE provider's ELE programme.
- (c) it allows for monitoring of quality assurance both within and across ELE providers.
- (d) it increases international recognition across a wide stakeholder base, including ELE providers, higher education institutes and government departments nationally and internationally, thus increasing further opportunities for collaborations and partnerships internationally.
- (e) it has the benefit of consensus, as the CEFR has been compiled by ELE experts as well as national and international practitioners in the ELE and HE sectors.

(Please see [Aligning Language Education with the CEFR: A Handbook, 2022](#), Sections 1.3 and 1.4)

#### **3.2 MODELS OF ALIGNMENT WITH THE CEFR**

There are two alignment models:

- Model A: Aligning a provider's existing curriculum with the CEFR.
- Model B: Developing a new curriculum from the CEFR.

These guidelines will present a series of questions to help ELE providers decide on which curriculum alignment model, A or B above, the ELE programme under consideration is to be based before presenting an outline of the core process for alignment. This is followed by a description of what is needed to validate\* the alignment and to ensure ongoing quality assurance.

*\*Please see the Glossary below for a definition of 'validate' and of other terms as used in these guidelines.*

#### **3.3 CURRICULUM OR SYLLABUS?**

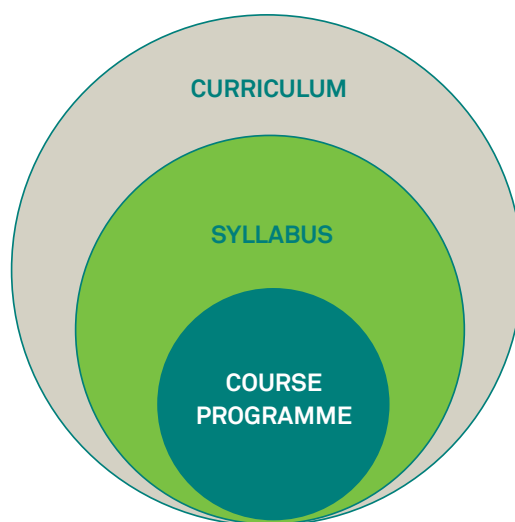
Deciding on a definition of curriculum or syllabus can be a challenge for language education providers, especially as there is currently no agreed definition (Beaco et al, 2016). For the purpose of these guidelines, curriculum is understood as

*the overall intended learning outcomes and functions for the programme under consideration.*

Syllabus is understood as

*the manifestation of the curriculum through more detailed elements, such as programme topic, content, language systems and language skills etc.*

The course programme (also known as schemes of work) for each level is then placed within the syllabus. The relationship between curriculum, syllabus and course programme/ schemes of work is illustrated below:



There are multiple elements, or strands, to a curriculum. For the purpose of these guidelines, alignment of ELE provider programmes to the CEFR will focus on the intended learning outcomes strand.

*(Please see the Glossary below for definitions of ‘curriculum’ and ‘syllabus’.)*

### **3.4 SELECTION OF MODEL OF ALIGNMENT WITH THE CEFR**

ELE providers may have in place one or more of the components of a curriculum, e.g., a curriculum, a syllabus and a course programme/schemes of work, or may just have a syllabus and course programme/schemes of work. Providers may also work with a syllabus based on a selected ELE course book.

The statements below will help ELE providers decide which alignment model they should select for their specific teaching and learning context.

#### **3.4.1 Questions for ELE providers to consider regarding the selection of an alignment model:**

Which of these scenarios does your programme most closely identify with? Please select all that apply:


- i) The programme is logically structured with a clear rationale and learning outcomes specifically tailored to learner needs
- ii) The programme has a list of content points which support the curriculum, i.e., a syllabus.

- iii) The programme has a list of content points but no overarching intended learning outcomes or communicative functions.
- iv) The programme follows the syllabus of a selected course book.

Selection of option (i) and/or (ii): please follow **Alignment Model A** below in 5.

Selection of option (iii) and/or (iv): please follow **Alignment Model B** below in 5.

The process described in these guidelines represents a concise version of the process detailed in *Aligning Language Education with the CEFR: A Handbook, 2022*. These guidelines outline the basic steps in an alignment relevant to the context of the ELE sector in Ireland in order to provide an accessible and actionable method of alignment for providers.

(Please see [Aligning Language Education with the CEFR: A Handbook, 2022](#),  Chapters 2-6.)

## **4 DECISIONS TO BE MADE PRIOR TO STARTING THE ALIGNMENT PROCESS**

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### **4.1 CREATE A DECISION GROUP**

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The academic manager(s) should begin by creating a group of participants, or Decision Group. Participants for the Decision Group are selected based on criteria which are decided on by the academic manager(s), and all participants should have some understanding of the progression of CEFR levels. The entire process should be collaborative; therefore, several academic staff members should be involved in the Decision Group. Smaller ELE providers may choose to involve all academic staff members, while in larger ELE providers, academic managers may choose participants for the Decision Group based on their qualifications, experience and/or responsibilities.

Options to select from when creating a Decision Group:

- (i) Invite all academic staff members to participate. It is essential that all participants have some understanding of the progression of CEFR levels, and a proportion should have relevant qualifications and/or experience, e.g., experience in the development of a curriculum and syllabus in alignment with the CEFR, or experience of using CEFR-aligned materials.
- (ii) Invite teachers with relevant experience to join initially and invite other teachers to join at a later stage, e.g., the reviewing stage
- (iii) Smaller ELE providers: invite teachers with relevant experience and recruit some external expert support.

(Please see the Glossary below for a definition of 'external expert'.)

The academic manager(s) or Decision Group should select and appoint a coordinator. In larger ELE provider organisations, this is often the lead teacher, coordinator or academic head for the specific ELE programme or target learner group under consideration, while in smaller providers, it may be the academic manager who takes the role of coordinator.



## 4.2 ALLOCATE A TIMELINE AND A BUDGET FOR THE PROCESS

The time allocated and costs will affect the scope of what ELE providers can achieve. This may affect academic choices made e.g., the level of detail or specificity. It is important to follow each stage and step in the process as this is an essential part of validating the alignment. However, it is recognised that ELE providers must work within their means and achieve what is possible in the first instance. It is important to consider the process as iterative and organic and to achieve the objective of putting a foundation in place. This foundation can then be adjusted and expanded, as needed, over time.

## 4.3 BUILD A SCHEDULE FOR THE PROCESS

The academic manager(s) and Decision Group decide on a schedule, allowing time for reflection within and between stages. The scope of the schedule may form part of an ELE provider's validation argument by demonstrating that decisions have been made in a timely manner.

*(Please see Appendix One below for a list of questions to consider, and [Aligning Language Education with the CEFR: A Handbook, 2022:17](#). ✎)*

## 4.4 DOCUMENT THE PROCESS

Each stage of the process is reported. This reporting is captured in a series of documents, which are essential for:

- (i) providing evidence for the validation of the process and outcomes
- (ii) creating a record of rationales to inform future iterations.

For each stage, including those decisions made before the start of the process, the following is documented:

- the selection criteria for participants in the Design Group and the expertise and roles of participants
- the different steps taken within each stage of the process
- a description on what decisions have been made, as well as how and why they were made
- the outcomes of each specific stage.

These reports will provide evidence for quality monitoring and quality assurance at later stages in the process.

## 4.5 A NOTE ON YOUNG LEARNERS (YLS)

The Council of Europe defines YLs as those between the ages of 7 and 15. The typical age profile of YLs who study an ELE programme at an Irish ELE provider is 11-16/17. The CEFR is

designed for young adult and adult learners and is therefore not suitable for YLs. However, there are now two sets of CEFR Descriptors which reflect the needs and cognitive abilities of younger learners. These contain the CEFR Descriptors which are relevant to the 7-15 age group, together with some descriptors from accredited portfolios. ELE providers who offer ELE programmes for YLs should use the especially selected performance descriptors in these documents. The process is the same, but the descriptors have been validated by a team of experts as suitable for YLs.

*(Please see References and Further Reading below for links to these sets of YL Descriptors.)*

The CEFR is not intended for very young learners under 7 years of age. If ELE providers offer programmes, e.g., with family groups, to this learner cohort, they should seek other methods to validate their content externally, e.g., by aligning their programmes to state primary school programmes.

## **5 MODELS OF ALIGNMENT: MODEL A AND MODEL B**

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This section describes the core process for alignment of curricula and syllabuses to the CEFR. As mentioned above, ELE providers may select from one of two models of alignment:

- Model A: Aligning a provider's existing curriculum and syllabus with the CEFR.
- Model B: Developing a new curriculum and syllabus from the CEFR.

### **5.1 MODEL OF ALIGNMENT A: ALIGNMENT OF AN EXISTING CURRICULUM AND SYLLABUS TO THE CEFR**

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This section describes the core process for aligning an existing curriculum and syllabus to the CEFR. The process described includes examples for a General English context as well as specific contexts, such as English for Academic Purposes or preparation for an external proficiency exam. ELE providers should follow this process, which will inform the validation argument. The detail within each step may differ according to ELE provider resources, as outlined in 4.1 above.

These guidelines outline four core stages to the process:

Stage A: Familiarisation

Stage B: Specification

Stage C: Standardisation

Stage D: Validation (confirmation of quality)

<b>A</b> Familiarisation	<b>Knowledge-building:</b> the process of making sure the Decision Group is familiar with CEFR descriptors, levels and approach
<b>B</b> Specification	<b>Analysis:</b> the process of aligning the course curriculum to the CEFR levels
<b>C</b> Standardisation	<b>Decision-making:</b> the detailed process of aligning a syllabus to CEFR descriptors and across the relevant modes within each level
<b>D</b> Validation	<b>Checking:</b> implementing internal processes to check and assure quality standards

### 5.1.2 Points to consider for the academic manager:

- (i) Outline the different stages for the Decision Group before beginning the process to ensure clarity
- (ii) As the group passes through each stage, allow time between each stage for reflection by members of the Decision Group
- (iii) Each stage may be expanded, depending on available time and resources.
- (iv) The Decision Group should not reduce or conflate any stage beyond what is outlined in these guidelines.

(Please see [Aligning Language Education with the CEFR: A Handbook](#) (2022) to clarify detail and/or expand steps in the process.)

### 5.1.3 Stage A: Familiarisation

#### Purpose

- To ensure all participants are familiar with the purpose and approach of the CEFR
- To decide which scales are relevant to the context of the specific curriculum which is undergoing alignment.

Note: all page numbers in the graphics below refer to the [CEFR Companion Volume \(2020\)](#)

1 Give individuals time to read through the scales in order to get a sense of the scope and how the scales function	
If familiar with CEFR, scan p47 - 142	If not familiar with CEFR, look at the <i>Overall scales</i> , e.g., overall oral p48.
2 Meet as a group to build understanding of levels	
Q: Is there anything which has altered your understanding? Why?	Order the performance descriptors into levels. (Please see example in Appendix Two, activity 2.)
3 Agree which scales and levels are appropriate to your offer	
Q: Which scales are relevant? Why?	Q: Which levels are relevant? Why?
4 Document the process, participants' roles and decisions taken, together with rationales.	

#### 5.1.4 Points to consider

- Participants do not need to memorise the scales or performance descriptors. The focus is to become familiar with the approach and to start thinking about levels and progression.
- In Stage A, if the Decision Group is unfamiliar with the CEFR, they should use scales at the Overall level. If the Decision Group is familiar with the CEFR, the academic manager(s) may wish to choose scales which the Group may find more challenging to level, e.g., speaking.
- For Stage A, with a particular context in mind, the academic manager(s) may wish to pre-select some of the scales the Decision Group should focus on, e.g., for a Business English course, a focus on Reading Correspondence (p54) would be more relevant than Reading as a Leisure Activity (p58). However, the focus is on understanding the levels generally and decisions regarding which scales are relevant will be made when the Decision Group has the discussion in Step 3.
- After Step 3, allow the Decision Group time to reflect on the activity and how far their own experience and knowledge has informed their understanding, and if there was anything that challenged this.

*(Please see Appendix Two for example activities and [Aligning Language Education with the CEFR: A Handbook \(2022\) Chapter 2](#)\*)*

### 5.1.5 Stage B: Specification

#### **Purpose**

- To analyse which levels are represented in the learner group under consideration and how the curriculum for this group might be reflected in the CEFR levels

1 Check that the Decision Group agrees on the distribution of levels for the learner group.

Q: Which levels does the course curriculum identify?

2 Using understanding from Stage A, agree which CEFR levels are represented in the learner group

Q: How many levels of the CEFR are represented across the whole learner group?

Q: How many levels of the CEFR are represented in one class in the learner group?

3 Discuss issues of any flexibility in level boundaries

Q: Can you identify where different levels in the learner group overlap or repeat?

Q: Is any overlap/repetition across levels desirable? Why?

4 Check decisions made in Step 3 in Familiarisation

Q: Which scales are needed for which learning purpose?

Q: Which scales are needed at each level within the learner group?

5 Document process, participants' roles and decisions taken, together with rationales

### 5.1.6 Points to consider:

- At this stage, it is important to remain focused on the scales which reflect the target learner group's needs rather than the ELE provider's curriculum.
- It is not essential for the target learner group to represent all CEFR levels and it is possible that a given target learner group profile may represent more than one CEFR level.
- There may be some overlap in the scales between target learner groups, e.g., an elementary group and a lower intermediate group may both have some Performance Descriptors from A2 level in them.
- In Step 4, relevant scales may change through the levels, e.g., at lower levels, Reading for Pleasure may not be relevant but may be pertinent at higher levels.
- After Step 4, allow the group time to reflect on the process and how satisfied they are with their analysis.

(Please see Appendix Three for example template and [Aligning Language Education with the CEFR: A Handbook, 2022, Chapter 3](#)\*)

### 5.1.7 Stage C: Standardisation

#### Purpose

- To decide which elements of the syllabus match the CEFR scales and performance descriptors
- To identify and make decisions about any missing or additional elements

1 Check agreement in Stage B4

Q: Do you want to make any changes? if so, why?

2 For each level, check the syllabus against the CEFR performance descriptors

Activity: Look at the syllabus for a specific level within the learner group. Compare/match to the scales of the selected level of the CEFR

3 Swap and check within the Decision Group

Agree any adjustments to wording in the light of the CEFR performance descriptors

4 Identify what is missing from the syllabus for the learner group and what is extra

Q: Do you want to include any performance descriptors in the CEFR not currently in your syllabus? Why?/Why not?

Q: Do you want to exclude any parts of your syllabus? Why?/Why not?

5 Agree rationales for including or omitting any abilities in the CEFR scales that are missing in your syllabus, as well as rationales for keeping or discarding any additional abilities your curriculum/syllabus specifies

6 Document process, participants' roles and decisions taken, together with rationales

### 5.1.8 Points to consider

- The Decision Group decides how to divide the syllabus alignment work based on resources, e.g., whether to focus on the alignment of one level or several levels in one meeting, or whether to assign break-out groups who later meet and discuss with others.
- It is important to remember that the wording of the ELE provider syllabus is likely to be different from the wording of the CEFR performance descriptors, depending on the needs of the target learner group, but it is important to use the closest match possible. The wording of the provider syllabus does not need to be the same as the performance descriptors, but it should represent their intention and meaning.
- Some elements of the syllabus may capture more than one performance descriptor. For example, a speaking syllabus may include using a range of language for giving opinions which might be reflected in different scales in the CEFR, e.g., Oral

Production and Linguistic Competence. Equally, a syllabus may specify separate learning outcomes which are covered by only one CEFR performance descriptor. For example, a writing syllabus may specify 'giving opinions' and 'using supporting examples' as separate lesson objectives but these may be covered by a single performance descriptor in the Writing Production scales of the CEFR.

- There may be repetition across the different levels in a course. The Decision Group may decide that this is a desirable pedagogy, especially with younger learner groups. However, the Decision Group should ensure that any repetition of a learning outcome happens at the start or end of a course reflecting the progression of learning across the CEFR levels.
- If the syllabus is defined by the coursebook assigned to a course, it is essential not to assume the book has been already aligned to the CEFR, despite publisher claims. The Decision Group should conduct their own alignment process to check these claims and significant differences may be found. The Decision Group will then need to agree on any amendments they wish to make based on target learner needs and the purpose of learning.
- After Step 5, allow the Group time to reflect on the outcomes and how far they feel they can defend their decisions.

*(Please see Appendix Four for example activities and [Aligning Language Education with the CEFR: A Handbook, 2022, Chapter 4](#).)*

### 5.1.9 Stage D: Validation

#### **Purpose**

- To build an evidence base to support claims of reliable linking of the curriculum to the CEFR
- To report on the processes, the evidence collected, and decisions made via clear documentation
- To ensure there is an ongoing process to check quality standards

1 Checking of documentation	
Has every process and decision, along with the rationales, been documented in appropriate evidential detail?	Is the documentation clear and accessible to all stakeholders?
2 Checking the line of argument	
Does the documentation for each Stage report and summarise the evidence to support the decisions and outline a rationale for progressing to the next Stage?	Do the decisions across the Stages flow from each other in a logical way?
3 Developing a QA process	
How will feedback from implementation be managed and reflected in the alignment?	What steps can be implemented for ongoing quality checks, e.g., annual?

### 5.1.10 Points to consider:

- It is important to recognise that validation is not an absolute. The Decision Group can build claims from their evidence base, and these claims support the strength of the validation argument. It is not about creating a 'correct' or 'incorrect' version. Furthermore, it is likely that the validation of a provider's alignment will become stronger over time through review and further enhancement development
- Ensure that all documents are accessible to all stakeholders and consider readability
- Build a communication plan for key stakeholders, e.g., academic staff and Academic Governance Committee, so that any stakeholder that needs to be involved is consulted in a timely manner.
- The ELE provider may wish to consider consulting with an external expert to confirm processes, reporting and arguments.
- After Step 3, allow the Decision Group time to reflect on the dynamics and outcomes of the whole process and decisions made and how far it has increased their understanding and expertise.

(Please see [Aligning Language Education with the CEFR: A Handbook, 2022:45 and Chapter 6.](#)\*)



## 5.2 MODEL OF ALIGNMENT B: DEVELOPING A CURRICULUM AND SYLLABUS FROM THE CEFR

ELE providers may need to develop a curriculum for a General English course or for a specific learning context, e.g., English for Academic Purposes or a preparation programme for an external proficiency exam. In this case, the Decision Group will use the criteria (performance descriptors) in the CEFR to help them develop an aligned curriculum for the given course. In most cases, providers will already be using some form of syllabus, even if this is a basic course book content syllabus. It is best to start with this, i.e., to use what providers already have available rather than try to construct something new, and then to develop the curriculum and syllabus from this working basis.

The Decision Group should follow the overall process outlined below, using the CEFR criteria to build and validate the curriculum and syllabus. Stages A and D are the same processes as those outlined in Model of Alignment A on pages 32-38. Stages B and C are specific to the development of a curriculum and/or syllabus and are outlined below:

Stage A: Familiarisation

Stage B: Specification

Stage C: Standardisation

Stage D: Validation (confirmation of quality)

<p><b>A</b> Familiarisation</p>	<p><b>Knowledge-building:</b> the process of making sure the Decision Group is familiar with CEFR approach, levels and descriptors.</p>
<p><b>B</b> Specification</p>	<p><b>Designing:</b> the process of writing level-appropriate learning outcomes from your specific learning content</p>
<p><b>C</b> Standardisation</p>	<p><b>Decision-making:</b> matching your learning outcomes to the CEFR levels and agreeing relevant performance descriptors</p>
<p><b>D</b> Validation</p>	<p><b>Checking:</b> implementing internal processes to check and assure quality standards</p>

## 5.2.1 Stage B: Specification

### Purpose

- To create overall learner outcomes at curriculum level from the specifics of a detailed syllabus

1 Check the Decision Group agrees on the distribution of class levels for the course.

Q: Which levels can be identified in the learner group?

2 Using understanding from Stage A, agree which CEFR levels are represented in the learner group

Q: How many levels of the CEFR are represented across the whole learner group?

Q: How many levels of the CEFR are represented in one class in the learner group?

3 Design and write learner outcomes for the content points of each level

Q: What is the overall learning outcome for each point of the content or syllabus?

Q: How many of the specific syllabus or content points fit into a learning outcome?

4 Check decisions made as a Decision Group

Q: Are you happy with the overall wording of the learning outcomes?

Q: Does your new set of learning outcomes reflect learner needs?

Document process, participants' roles and decisions taken, together with rationales

## 5.2.2 Points to consider:

- In Step 3, the Decision Group may wish to adjust the sequence of the syllabus.
- After Step 4, allow the Decision Group time to reflect on the process and how far they feel they can defend their decisions.

*(Please see Appendix Five for example activities.)*

### 5.2.3 Stage C: Standardisation

#### **Purpose**

- To match the new learner outcomes to the levels, relevant scales and performance descriptors in the CEFR
- To ensure the supporting syllabus reflects the relevant performance descriptors in the CEFR.

1 Check agreement in Stage B4

**Q: Do you want to make any changes? if so, why?**

2 For each level, check the new learning outcomes (curriculum) against the CEFR performance descriptors

**Look at the relevant CEFR scales for a specific level within the learner group. Compare/match to the learning outcomes in your new curriculum. (Please see Appendix Five for example activity.)**

3 Swap and check within the Decision Group

**Agree any adjustments in the light of the CEFR performance descriptors.  
Aim to adjust any areas of potential subjectivity in the wording of the new learning outcomes with more objective descriptions given in, for example, examples, profiles or grades.**

4 Document process, participants' roles and decisions taken, together with rationales

### 5.2.4 Points to consider

- Provider learning outcomes will reflect the meaning and intention but do not need to reflect the exact wording of the CEFR descriptors
- When discussing decisions in Step 3, it is important that the Decision Group is aware this is not about a wrong or right decision but about calibrating views and highlighting areas of doubt.
- After Step 3, allow the Decision Group time to reflect on any areas of doubt and on the outcomes, and how far they feel they can defend their decisions.

*(Please see Appendices Five and Six.)*

## GLOSSARY OF TERMS AS USED IN THESE GUIDELINES

**Curriculum:** in this document, curriculum is taken to be the highest level of the hierarchy; it describes the focus of learning and overall learning goals and outcomes which are sequenced across a whole ELE programme. It defines the content plan or the whole study programme.

**Syllabus:** this is subordinate to curriculum and defines specific instructions and activities within the curriculum for a particular audience; it may be manifested as elements of language and skills, together with a course programme/schemes of work of learning outcomes or objectives of each lesson or learning unit.

**Decision Group:** this is the group that an ELE provider creates to discuss and make the decisions about the alignment of ELE programmes to the CEFR. The group is also responsible for reporting on their work in order to support and prepare for the validation argument.

### **External Expert/Expertise**

Smaller ELE providers may not have suitably qualified academic staff available to participate in the Decision Group. In this case, they may choose to seek the help of external ELE expert/expertise, e.g., from a fellow ELE provider, language consultancy or accreditation organisation.

### **Generic level terms: beginner, elementary, intermediate, upper intermediate, advanced**

These level terms are used as generic references in examples. Each ELE provider may have a way to label their levels, and these are generic terms. Many ELE providers already use the CEFR level labels, e.g., A2, and may also use sub-divisions of these levels, e.g., A2.1, A2+, but these should be checked carefully via the alignment process to make sure the label is accurate.

### **Scales and performance descriptors**

**Scales** refer to the tables of activities in the CEFR, e.g.,

*Reading for Orientation, Information Exchange*

**Performance descriptors** refer to the specific abilities described within each level of each scale, e.g.,

*Scale: Interviewing and being interviewed*

*A2 Performance Descriptor:*

*Can answer simple questions and respond to simple statements in an interview.*

### **Specification and standardisation**

**Specification:** the process of analysing what an ELE provider has, or designing what a provider needs for the range of levels they have, and checking against the CEFR.

**Standardisation:** agreeing an ELE provider's learning outcomes against the scales in the CEFR (with the level of detail appropriate to provider needs) with the whole group; collecting and presenting evidence to support the provider's alignment claim

**Validation**

Validation as a concept has a specific meaning in this document, as described in [Aligning Language Education with the CEFR: A Handbook, 2022:67](#)✖

Validation is

- the process of ensuring fitness: collecting and presenting evidence to support claims of reliable linking with the CEFR
- fitness for purpose: gathering together the evidence to form a coherent and convincing argument to support claims of reliable alignment with the CEFR

## **REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING**

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- Boyd, E. (2022), Commonality versus localization in curricula, In Little, D. & Figueras, N. (Eds.) *Reflecting on the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages and its Companion Volume*. Bristol: Multilingual Matters.
- British Council, UKALTA, EALTA & ALTE (2022): *Aligning Language Education with the CEFR: A Handbook* [https://www.britishcouncil.org/sites/default/files/cefr\\_alignment\\_handbook\\_layout.pdf](https://www.britishcouncil.org/sites/default/files/cefr_alignment_handbook_layout.pdf)
- Council of Europe, (2020): *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment (Companion Volume)* <https://rm.coe.int/common-european-framework-of-reference-for-languages-learning-teaching/16809ea0d4>
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- Council of Europe, (2018), *CEFR Descriptors for Young Learners Aged 11-15* <https://rm.coe.int/collated-representative-samples-descriptors-young-learners-volume-2-ag/16808b1689>
- Richards, J.C. (2013), *Curriculum Approaches in Language Teaching: Forward, Central and Backward Design*, *RELC Journal* 44 (1): 5-33



## REFERENCE TOOLS

The main CEFR website has a range of tools: e.g., a searchable tool for descriptors  
<https://www.coe.int/en/web/common-european-framework-reference-languages>

*Pease also see [Aligning Language Education with the CEFR: A Handbook, 2022, Tools and Resources, Section 4.3.2](#)*

## **APPENDIX ONE: QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER BEFORE STARTING THE PROCESS OF ALIGNMENT**

1. Why are we doing this?
2. Which steps are essential for us in our context and for our purposes?
3. Which steps do we prioritise?
4. Which steps may not be necessary?
5. How long will the process take?
6. How much will it cost?
7. What expertise will we need, or have access to?
8. What resources (i.e., time, funding, expertise) do we need to plan for?
9. What is feasible, given resources and limitations?

(Please see [Aligning Language Education with the CEFR: A Handbook, 2022:17](#)\*)



## APPENDIX TWO: MODELS A AND B FAMILIARISATION EXAMPLE ACTIVITY


### **Activity 1**

Choose two or three of the Overall scales. Copy and then cut up the performance descriptors into Pre-A1/A1-C2 (including the upper and lower bands within each level) and mix up. Ask participants to order each scale by level, either individually or in pairs. Then check and discuss as a group.

### **Activity 2**

Choose two or more of the Overall scales which are different from Activity 1. Copy out the performance descriptors in each selected scale in random order. Decide which level each performance descriptor belongs to, noting that there may be more than one performance descriptor at each level. Check and discuss reasons why.

The Decision Group is likely to find the Overall scales the most useful at this stage but should also note the full range of scales. If participants in the Decision Group are familiar with the CEFR, the academic manager(s) may wish to choose scales specific to the context of the course which the group is aligning, e.g., for a Business English programme: *Reading Instructions* or *Addressing Audiences*

For reference: overall scales in the [CEFR Companion Volume](#) 

Overall oral comprehension	p48
Overall reading comprehension	p53
Overall oral production	p62
Overall written production	p66
Overall oral interaction	p71
Overall written interaction	p 82
General linguistic range	p130

## APPENDIX THREE: MODEL A SPECIFICATION EXAMPLE TEMPLATE

Template for mapping a curriculum (retrofit) to each CEFR level. This is a very simplified version of the range of forms in Appendices in *Aligning Language Education with the CEFR: A Handbook, 2022*, which can also be used if preferred.

		Examples
<b>Date</b>	date of decision meeting	<i>30<sup>th</sup> June 2023</i>
<b>Target learners</b>	age, needs, etc.	<i>16-18</i>
<b>Domain</b>	public / personal / occupational / educational	<i>General English; personal</i>
<b>Area/skill</b>	reception/production etc.	<i>Speaking: oral production</i>
<b>Levels of class</b>	number of levels and names	<i>4 levels: - beginner - elementary - intermediate - upper intermediate</i>
<b>Learning outcomes</b>	define the learning outcomes in each level for the specified skill	<i>Elementary - describe very familiar topics e.g., self, family - describe daily routine - use simple formulaic expressions - talk about likes &amp; dislikes (and so on for other levels)</i>
<b>CEFR scales</b>	Decide which CEFR scales in the specified skill are relevant to the learning outcomes	<i>Overall oral production Sustained monologue: describing experiences</i>
<b>CEFR levels</b>	Decide which CEFR levels within each selected scale reflect the learning outcomes	<i>Overall oral production: A2 Sustained monologue: describing experiences A1 and A2 (lower and upper band)<sup>+</sup></i>
<b>Level decision</b>	Decide which CEFR level best matches each class level in the learner group	<i>Elementary = A2 (NB with features of A1)</i>

<sup>+</sup>This may help providers with checking/adjusting the sequencing of their curriculum, if necessary.

## APPENDIX FOUR: MODEL A STANDARDISATION EXAMPLE

The example shows how you might align the course syllabus for writing in an upper intermediate\* group in English for Academic Purposes. This may involve matching to several scales, e.g., the overall writing scale or the general linguistic competence scale. The example shows how an alignment might work and points for discussion.

*\*Please see the Glossary on pages 43-44 above for generic language level terms.*

Example: From the Decision Group's discussions in Stage 2, group members have decided that the overall curriculum for the specific learner group level aligns with B2 on the CEFR.

1 The Decision Group selects the scale needed for the curriculum point under consideration, in this case Writing: Reports and Essays. The Group focuses on the agreed level (B2), and on the levels either side of this, i.e., B1 and C1.

### CEFR Writing: Reports & Essays

<b>C1</b>	Can produce clear, well-structured expositions of complex subjects, underlining the relevant salient issues.
	Can expand and support points of view at some length with subsidiary points, reasons and relevant examples.
	Can produce a suitable introduction and conclusion to a longer report, article or dissertation on a complex academic or professional topic provided the topic is within their field of interest and there are opportunities for redrafting and revision.
<b>B2</b>	Can produce an essay or report which develops an argument systematically with appropriate highlighting of significant points and relevant supporting detail.
	Can produce a detailed description of a complex process.
	Can evaluate different ideas or solutions to a problem.
<b>B1</b>	Can produce an essay or report which develops an argument, giving reasons in support of or against a particular point of view and explaining the advantages and disadvantages of various options.
	Can synthesise information and arguments from a number of sources.
	Can produce short, simple essays on topics of interest.
	Can produce a text on a topical subject of personal interest, using simple language to list advantages and disadvantages, and give and justify their opinion.
	Can summarise, report and give their opinion about accumulated factual information on familiar routine and non-routine matters within their field with some confidence
<b>B1</b>	Can produce very brief reports in a standard conventionalised format, which pass on routine factual information and state reasons for actions.
	Can present a topic in a short report or poster, using photographs and short blocks of text.

(CEFR Companion Volume, 2020:68)

The next step the Decision Group makes is to consider how to align the content detail within this. A template can be used to do this:

EXAMPLE: EAP Writing (Essays)		
Upper Intermediate Syllabus	CEFR Descriptor	Notes
Using formal phrases & language		See CLC scale
Using a range of language; paraphrasing		See CLC scale
Opening paragraphs in essays		<i>Not covered?</i>
Planning paragraphs & balancing an argument	B2 Can produce an essay or report which develops an argument systematically with appropriate highlighting of significant points and relevant supporting detail.	Decisions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is this acceptable?</li> <li>• Do we want to adapt our syllabus wording?</li> <li>• †Is this in the most appropriate position in the sequence of the syllabus?</li> </ul>
Giving opinions, with support	B2 Can produce an essay or report which develops an argument, giving reasons in support of or against a particular point of view and explaining the advantages and disadvantages of various options.	Decisions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is this acceptable?</li> <li>• Do we want to adapt our syllabus wording?</li> <li>• †Is this in the most appropriate position in the sequence of the syllabus?</li> </ul>
Using sources to support an argument	B2 Can synthesise information and arguments from a number of sources.	Decisions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is this acceptable?</li> <li>• Do we want to adapt our syllabus wording?</li> <li>• †Is this in the most appropriate position in the sequence of the syllabus?</li> </ul>
Outlining problems & suggesting solutions	B2 Can evaluate different ideas or solutions to a problem.	Decisions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is this acceptable?</li> <li>• Do we want to adapt our syllabus wording?</li> <li>• †Is this in the most appropriate position in the sequence of the syllabus?</li> </ul>

The position of a performance descriptor in the upper or lower band of the CEFR scale may help the Decision Group check that the sequence of the syllabus is appropriate for the learner group.

Below are examples of some additional points the Decision Group may wish to consider in the above activity.

- This is a C1 descriptor, which the Group might decide is relevant to/covered in the syllabus:

*Can expand and support points of view at some length with subsidiary points, reasons and relevant examples.*

The Group could decide to include it and will then need to decide where to sequence it, e.g., at the end of the Upper Intermediate course.

- The following B2 descriptor is the only one which does not seem to apply to the syllabus:

*Can produce a detailed description of a complex process.*

The Group could decide to add this descriptor as a sub-skill or leave out as non-essential

- The following B1 descriptor is one which the Group may decide to include as revision from a lower-level class or as a starting point in the Upper Intermediate course:

*Can produce a text on a topical subject of personal interest, using simple language to list advantages and disadvantages, and give and justify their opinion.*

## **APPENDIX FIVE: MODEL B SPECIFICATION EXAMPLE**

Elementary coursebook topic/syllabus detail: weather (includes activities to practise weather lexis, grammar/functions for weather, speaking & reading skills activities about the weather, listening to weather forecasts, etc.)

### **1. ASK:**

What is the overall learning outcome?

- To understand information about everyday topics?
- To understand information about the weather?
- To talk about what the weather is like?
- To talk about the weather in the future?
- To write about the typical weather in your country?

### **2. DECIDE ON AND WRITE THE LEARNING OUTCOME(S).**

Try to make sure that the specific topic is not the focus but is an example of the context for a learning outcome.

Example learning outcome from the above syllabus content points:

To understand the most important information in very short monologues on everyday topics (example: weather)

The list of learning outcomes then becomes the higher level curriculum for the course/ learner group.

## **APPENDIX SIX: MODEL B STANDARDISATION EXAMPLE**

The decisions to be made are to find the best match in the CEFR scales and descriptors for each learning outcome in the curriculum the Decision Group has created.

For the example in Appendix Five, the Decision Group could find the following scales and performance descriptors in the CEFR. Which one is most closely aligned to the learning outcome which has been specified?

### **Reception scales:**

Understanding audio media & recordings

*A2: Can extract important information from short broadcasts (e.g., the weather forecast, concert announcements, sports results), provided people speak clearly.*

Reading for information & argument

*A2(+): Can understand the main points of short texts dealing with everyday topics (e.g., lifestyle, hobbies, sports, weather).*

The scale for Audio would be the most relevant and would confirm the appropriate level.

It is important to remember that the topic is not the focus; the specific topic may not be mentioned but may be captured under generic references such as 'everyday' topics, 'abstract' topics, 'less familiar' topics.

## **ANNEX TWO: GUIDELINES FOR ASSESSMENT IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE EDUCATION**

### **1 INTRODUCTION**

Section 7.2 of the ELE Code sets out requirements in relation to assessment systems. ELE providers who wish to seek authorisation to use the IEM are required to demonstrate that:

- (a) There is an assessment framework in place that is developed and managed by suitably qualified and experienced senior academic staff.
- (b) The assessment framework is clearly and closely aligned to the intended learning outcomes of each ELE syllabus/course programme, expressed in 'can do' descriptors from, or adapted from, the CEFR.
- (c) The assessment framework includes testing mechanisms that are fair, clear and accessible, and the principles of validity, reliability and impact are well considered.
- (d) The assessment framework is tailored to learner needs, e.g., higher education or employment, as appropriate.
- (e) The assessment framework is updated as appropriate, dependent on evolving practices, approaches and learner needs.
- (f) The assessment framework is approved by the academic governance committee, or the external ELE expert, as appropriate to the ELE provider context, and approvals are documented.
- (g) There are procedures and systems in place to manage the security and integrity of the assessment process.

This annex provides guidelines for ELE providers on how to develop, or further develop, their assessment framework in order to meet the requirements set out in section 7.2 of the ELE Code and the criteria set out in Section 2.4.2 of these QA Guidelines for ELE.

#### **1.1 The purpose of the Guidelines for Assessment in ELE**

These guidelines are intended to support ELE providers and teachers in ensuring that any form of English language assessment offered is fair, valid and reliable, with a positive impact on learners. The guidelines outline evidenced best practices in both evaluating and developing assessments, and provide a standardised approach to allow assessments to be consistent in quality across all providers.

Any assessment, however informal, risks creating anxiety and concern in the person being assessed, in this case, the learner. Anyone delivering an assessment has an ethical obligation to make sure that the assessment is fair in content, in the way it is delivered, in how the scores or results are used and in any impact on the learner. These guidelines explain principles (AERA & APA, 2014) that need to be considered in order to ensure



fairness and to protect the learner, while at the same time providing useful and reliable data for teachers and academic managers.

## 1.2 How to use the Guidelines for Assessment in ELE

These guidelines should be read in full by the academic manager or senior teacher responsible for the management of assessment in a centre. Users need to ensure they read and understand **3, Principles of assessment**, below, before attempting to evaluate or design an assessment.

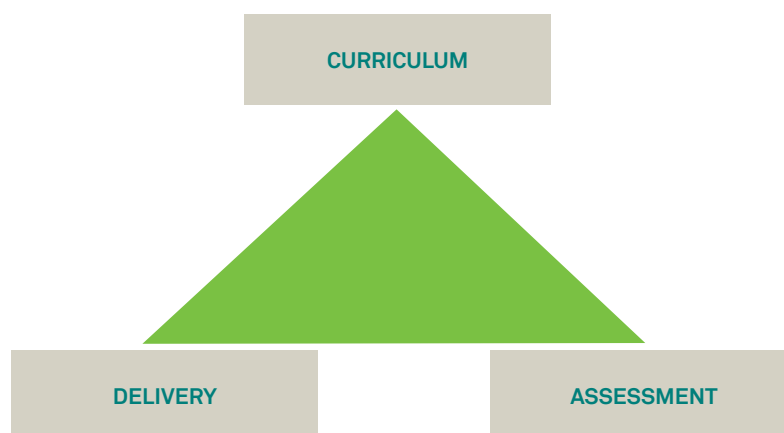
In **4, Supporting effective assessment**, below, the guidelines outline:

- a) the approach and frameworks for evaluating an existing test
- b) the process for designing a new test


The quality of any assessment is based on how well it captures the principles, but the decision about this is based on the strength of the argument. In other words, there is no wrong or right and no test is perfect. However, ELE stakeholders should be able to argue for its fitness for purpose in language centres. Therefore, the academic members of staff responsible for assessment are advised to practise evaluating assessments before attempting to design their own tests. They should also aim to document these decisions for other stakeholders, both internal and external.

## 2 APPROACHES TO ASSESSMENT

It is important that testing is seen as part of the cycle of curriculum and teaching and that it is embedded in the learning process. This has been illustrated by O'Sullivan's concept of a Comprehensive Learning System (CLS) (2021).



Adapted from O'Sullivan, B. (2021) *The Comprehensive Learning System*, British Council, page 8.



There are many different types of assessment, ranging from teacher observation of learner performance to formal, standardised, national tests. This cline is frequently referred to with low stakes testing at the most informal end and high stakes testing at the most formal end. Low stakes tests are usually considered to be those conducted in the classroom, such as progress tests or diagnostic tests. High stakes tests are assessments which can have a life-changing effect on the test taker, such as entry to university or the workplace, or for immigration purposes. However, all tests have an impact on the test taker and their self-esteem, therefore, principles need to be applied to ensure that a test is fair before asking learners to take part in it.

There are different types of assessment, and these types relate to the purpose of the assessment:

- Placement
- Diagnostic
- Progress
- Achievement
- Proficiency

In terms of pedagogy, these different types of assessments are seen as functioning differently in terms of their impact on learning. Formal achievement tests, such as those taken at the end of a programme, and which measure how much a learner has successfully learnt, are typically summative tests and are known as Assessment of Learning (AOL) tests. Less formal assessments conducted as part of an ongoing programme to monitor learner progress and inform teaching are usually formative evaluations and are known as Assessment for Learning (AFL) tests. This is largely because both the learner and the teacher receive feedback from these tests that allow them to adjust their learning, either by the learner doing activities to develop language skills further or by the teacher adjusting their teaching content or approach to meet learner needs. In other words, the assessment becomes part of the learner's learning programme.

Given that most providers have little control over large-scale standardised high stakes proficiency tests, these guidelines generally focus on internal Assessment of Learning (AOL) tests (summative) and Assessment for Learning (AFL) tests (formative) as it is these types of tests that academic managers and teachers will have to consider or design for their learners.

### 3 PRINCIPLES OF ASSESSMENT

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Any assessment has an effect on the test taker. This might be the tension and stress that taking a test can cause or possible negative feelings evoked if the test taker does not succeed in the test. Consequently, it is an ethical responsibility of providers to ensure that all assessments – even those that are part of learning – are fair, clear and accessible to the test taker. In order to make sure that an assessment is fair, a set of principles has been agreed in the field of educational testing which needs to be applied to any form of assessment, however informal (AERA & APA, 2014). There are several principles but the

three most important ones which focus on fairness are Validity, Reliability and Impact. We use these principles to both evaluate and design tests. It is also necessary to consider Practicality to ensure it is feasible to deliver a test and how the delivery might impact on validity and/or reliability.

### 3.1 **Validity**

Validity is now considered to be an over-arching principle that roots the quality and fairness of the test. Validity refers to ensuring that the test is assessing what it claims to assess, i.e., that the results and any inferences made are valid. For example, if a listening test requires the test taker to read a long text in order to give a response, it could be argued that it is testing reading rather than listening.

Validity also relates to how far the test reflects the target language use (TLU) of the test taker. For example, if the test taker is going to use their English in an academic setting, then the test should reflect the kind of tasks that are authentic to that setting, such as assessing listening for detail within a task, where the test taker has to take notes in a lecture.

Therefore, an example of a good test task would be one where:

- the task is authentic and something the test taker might do either in a non-language learning classroom or in the world outside the classroom
- the task only assesses the skills or language use that the test intends to measure.

### 3.2 **Reliability**

This principle applies to how reliable the test scores are and whether or not they are consistent over time and with similar cohorts of test takers. Reliability is important because it affects how far secure inferences can be made from the results of the test. For example, if a writing test is marked by two different teachers, it is important that their scores are consistent with each other; if a reading test asks open questions where test takers have to write a long response, there needs to be a standardised key for the answers, so the responses are all assessed against a set of criteria.

### 3.3 **Impact**

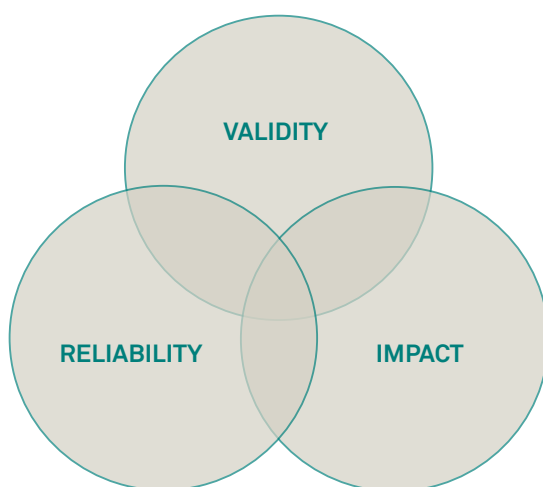
Impact refers to the effect or consequences that the test has on the test taker and other stakeholders, e.g., the teacher, parents and HEI. This principle is important because it is mainly about protecting the test taker from negative impact. In general, the impact of a test tends to have a significant effect on classroom practice by influencing the type of class tasks or activities intended to prepare for the test. This is known as washback (Alderson & Wall, 1993). But even small classroom assessments can have a negative impact on the test taker. For example, a test where learners are not given enough time to complete tasks, or where they do not understand the purpose of the test or the marking criteria, can leave learners feeling confused or demotivated. This means that any assessment or assessment task must be checked to ensure there is little or no risk of negative impact.

An example of a good assessment task would be one where the test taker:

- has had clear and adequate preparation for the task;
- understands how they will be assessed;
- can relate the test task to their lives outside the classroom;
- can connect the assessment task to prior learning.

### 3.4 The relationship between the three principles

The contemporary view of these principles (Fulcher, 2013) recognises that they work together as a whole and can influence each other, causing an effect on the overall validity of the test. For example, if the test task does not reflect the learners' target language use (TLU) in the real world, they may perform badly and the results would be unreliable. Equally, a listening test which does not allow enough time for learners to read questions or write answers may have the impact of causing them to panic, which, in turn, will affect their ability to process an audio text. This would end up being a test of the learner's competence in test strategies rather than listening ability and therefore not valid.



The three principles should be considered together when designing or evaluating any assessment activity to check that the activity is fair to test takers and that the results will be reliable and therefore useful to both learners and teachers.

It is also important to consider issues of practicality, such as whether the test requires, for example, a private or quiet room for speaking assessments, or the availability of teachers to mark a multiple-choice test. These practical issues need to be balanced with validity, reliability and impact. For example, a writing test should ideally be marked by two teachers for reliability, but this may not be practical with available school resources. There is no perfect test, but it is important that any assessment is evaluated using the principles of testing so that learners are given the fairest test possible in the circumstances, that any potential risk can be considered, and that the results are reliable.

*(Please see Appendix Two for an example of identifying validity and reliability issues with productive skills assessment tasks.)*

## **SUMMARY**

### **WHAT DOES AN EFFECTIVE LANGUAGE ASSESSMENT NEED TO DO?**

- ✓ only report the skills it is supposed to test, not something else
- ✓ be representative of the skills in the real world
- ✓ predict the learner's likely performance in the world outside the classroom
- ✓ give everyone the same opportunity to demonstrate the skills or knowledge that are being tested
- ✓ be marked consistently: if two teachers each mark the same test, they should have the same results.

## **4 SUPPORTING EFFECTIVE ASSESSMENT**

### **4.1 Evaluating an existing assessment**

#### Who is involved?

When evaluating an assessment, it is a good idea to allow for some collaboration in the process, even if this is simply discussing it with another colleague. For assessments which are likely to be designed in-house, such as placement tests or progress tests, teachers who work with each CEFR level should be involved in the review of the appropriacy of the tests. If progress tests are used from published material in coursebooks, teachers might like to review these tests together and document their reviews for future users of the material. Part of the evaluation should also be to check that the relationship between the test(s) under review and others in the school assessment system is coherent and logical. Even in the case of tests that the teacher is setting as part of an ongoing process in the classroom, it is nevertheless a good idea to consult with at least one other colleague, preferably with one who teaches a similar level.

#### How to evaluate

Using the three principles outlined above in 3, reviewers can ask a series of questions to determine the quality and appropriacy of the test. The review process should also utilise the CEFR scales to check the level and appropriacy of the abilities being assessed. This then provides a validated external standard to support any outcomes. If, after an evaluation, it is decided that the test is not appropriate in places, teachers can consider how they might amend the test to make it more suitable for their learners.

Principle	Questions to ask	Outcome	Amend?
<b>Validity</b>	Does the task test what it claims to test?	<i>Yes because ...</i>	No
	Does the test give an equal chance of success to all those who have the skills being measured, regardless of their background knowledge, gender, first language, etc.?		
	Has everything in the tasks been covered in the lessons?	<i>No because ....</i>	<i>Omit Ex 3</i>
	Are the instructions clear to the learner at the level being tested?	<i>Not in Ex 4</i>	<i>Rewrite shorter and simpler sentences. OR Give example</i>
	Does the task relate to the learner's TLU?		
<b>Reliability</b>	Do all versions of the test consistently reflect the same syllabus content?		
	Can we assess the test in a way that is fair and reliable, e.g., through objective criteria?		
	What protocols are in place if there is more than one assessor?		
	Has any marking key been checked against students' actual answers to ensure all correct options are allowed?		
<b>Impact</b>	How will the results be used?		
	What effect would a 'fail' grade have on the test taker?		
	What effect does preparing for the test have on teaching content?		
	Is it possible to give effective feedback from the test?		
	Does the balance of language skills / knowledge required by the test match the balance in the course syllabus and / or TLU?		

(Please see Appendix One for an example of evaluating constructs in the speaking skill.)

#### 4.2 Developing and designing an assessment

Many of the tests that teachers manage preparation for are external proficiency examinations prescribed by the provider and therefore they will not normally be in a position to design more formal, standardised summative tests. Therefore, this section focuses on formative assessment, i.e., the assessments that teachers are more likely to need to design and use in order to assess their learners' progress and/or achievement.

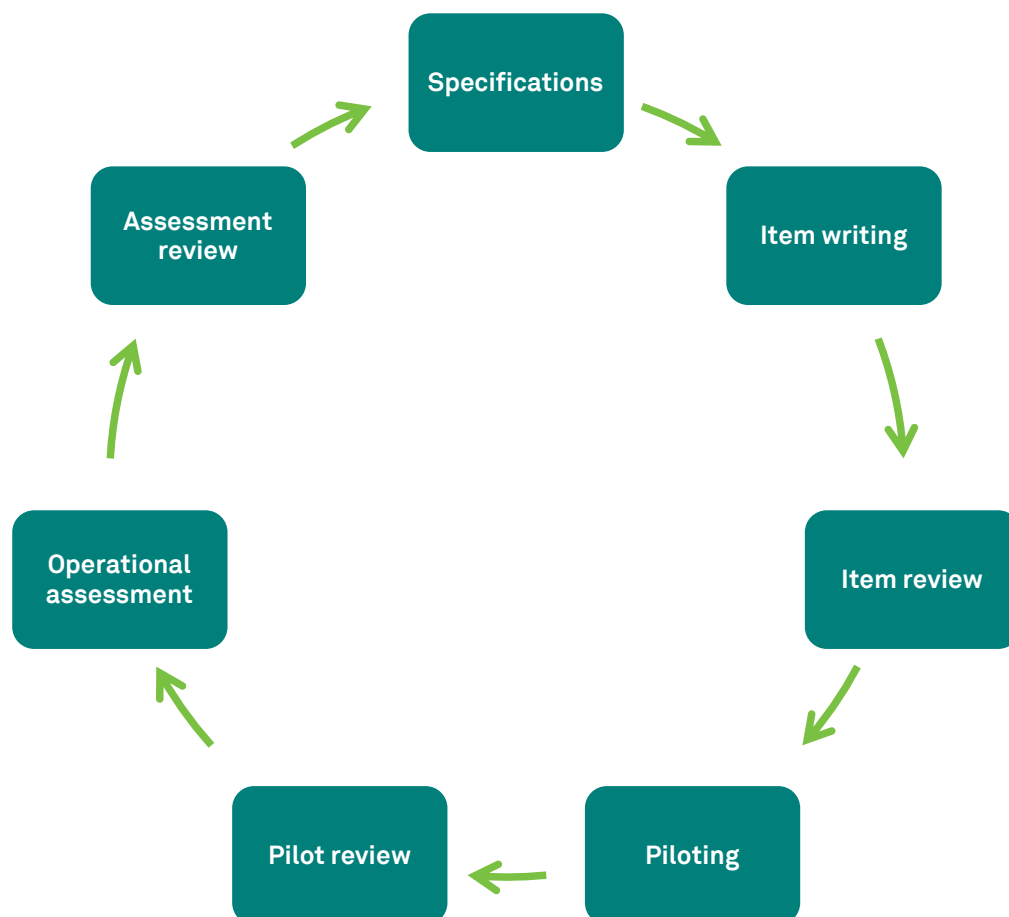
### Who is involved?

Designing assessments is a highly collaborative process. Institutional achievement tests need to be designed with all the relevant teachers taking part, as well as any leaders and assessment experts the provider has access to. If assessment expertise is not available, it is recommended that teachers design achievement tests based on publicly available validated tests while also ensuring that the specific syllabus and learning objectives are the focus of the test.

For formative tests that are used to assess learning or progression, individual teachers may design the tests so they can ensure the tests are closely aligned with the needs of the learning group. However, teachers should review and consult with at least one colleague, especially where there is more than one group at the same level.

### The assessment development cycle

The assessment development cycle ensures that tests are adequately reviewed for fairness and reliability (Green, 2021). We start at the top of the cycle with specifications for a test and feed back into this after the review stages so that the whole process is iterative and ongoing. This process can be used to define development stages for more formal tests, such as achievement tests, but those developing informal classroom tests may only have one review process, e.g., consultation with a colleague.



### 4.3 Designing an assessment: the process

Table 1 below outlines the main process steps when designing an assessment. This is formulated as a series of questions to address during the design.

**Table 1**

Step	Creating Specifications	Description	Why?
1	What is the assessment purpose?	e.g., to diagnose problems, to place in level, to check progress	
2	Who are the test takers?	e.g., age, level, purpose of learning	
3	What level(s) is the assessment?	As defined by the relevant CEFR descriptors	
4	Which skills and sub-skills are being assessed? What are the target test outcomes?	Which abilities from the relevant level are described in the CEFR? Which abilities are going to be assessed? How will each ability be measured?	
5	What is the test structure?	Sections, timing, number of parts (to reflect constructs), etc.	
6	What is the test content?	Topics, genres of any input texts, language features (aligned to the syllabus).  What are the priorities for testing (because we can't test everything)?	
7	What are the marking criteria and how will the test be scored?	Is there a pass mark or are you assessing qualitatively? If there is a pass mark, what is the pass mark? Why? Or will there be feedback from the test with no score (e.g., for a speaking or writing test)?	

The next section describes how to approach each of the decisions 1 – 7 in the process outlined in Table 1 above.

#### 1 DECIDING ON ASSESSMENT PURPOSE

Decide why you are measuring what you intend to measure. For example, what kind of information do you need e.g., diagnostic to identify strengths and weaknesses or progress to check learners have learnt what has been taught? Why do you and/or the learners need this information? How will the responses or results be used e.g., to amend teaching plans or to give learners confidence in their progress?



## 2 DEFINING YOUR TEST TAKERS

Identify the characteristics of the test takers: their age, their purpose for learning, their interests. Use this information to check that each test item or task aligns with the test taker population and how they will need to use the language beyond the test (TLU).

## 3 THE LEVEL OF THE ASSESSMENT

Based on your test taker population, decide which level(s) you need to assess and if you have sub-levels within that level. For example, does the assessment have to cover multiple levels across the CEFR or a single CEFR level? If a single CEFR level, what sub-levels do you have within that level? For example, the example below is the CEFR scale for ‘Understanding conversations between other people’ at A2 level:

A2	Can generally identify the topic of discussion around them when it is conducted slowly and clearly.
	Can recognize when people agree and disagree in a conversation slowly and clearly.
	Can follow in outline short, simple social exchanges, conducted very slowly and clearly.

(CEFR Companion Volume, 2020:49)

There is a lower A2 level and an upper A2 level outlined above in this example. You may want your test to assess both levels or you may need only one of these sub-levels.

You can check the level of your test by making sure it reflects the relevant CEFR descriptors and/or the class curriculum. You can conduct a further check by using other validated tests to help you. For example, you can look at samples from reliable testing organisations to check the level of your test.

## 4 THE CONSTRUCT OF THE ASSESSMENT

The constructs you use should reflect the purpose of your test.

Decide which skills, sub-skills or abilities you need to assess, based on the learning objectives covered in class. You can use the relevant CEFR descriptors for the level you decided in Step 3 in Table 1 above to help you define the construct(s) you need to assess. Think about how you want to measure these skills as well as the language that is the focus of the construct. Decide what you want the test outcomes to demonstrate.

For example, you might want to design a speaking task that gives learners a chance to speak communicatively using all the language resources they have, or a written grammar test that aims to check the structures they have been learning.

## 5 THE STRUCTURE OF THE TEST

The structure of the test is the number of tasks there are, the order they appear in, the timing for the test and any word counts to consider (such as for input texts in reading or listening or for output texts in writing). It is important to ensure that these decisions align with what learners are familiar with from their lessons so that texts are a similar length.

## 6 THE CONTENT OF THE TEST

Decide which parts of the syllabus to assess. It is unlikely that you will assess everything, especially in formative testing, but the test needs to:

- focus on the parts of the syllabus the learners have been covering, i.e., the learning objectives;
- sample the key parts of a wider syllabus as it is not possible to test everything.

For example, if the class has been learning a range of different future forms, decide whether you wish to assess all of these forms (as in a progress test) or only the ones where the class seems to be struggling (as in a diagnostic test). If you have been focusing on different genres of reading texts in class, decide which type(s) to use in the test to check the understanding of, for example, text organisation or register.

## 7 MARKING CRITERIA AND SCORING

If you are designing a test with numerical scores, decide how marks will be allocated in the test. These decisions might include deciding:

- if one task or part of the test is more important than others and weighting the scores to reflect this;
- if one set of questions (items) is more important than others and weighting scores within a task to reflect this;
- how far the assessment reflects other assessments or tasks learners have done in class and whether the assessment being developed needs to align more with these;
- how to create a scoring system that is meaningful to the learner group.

If your assessment includes the speaking and/or writing skill, you will need to create a set of criteria to assess the learners' performance. These should be closely related to the learning objectives. For example, if a learning objective is to be able to organise a text coherently, this needs to be one of the assessment criteria in the related test. It is helpful to refer to the mark schemes validated by large testing organisations for guidance on how to construct the progression of the assessment criteria.

If you are designing a classroom assessment for learning you may not find a score helpful. You may want to give learners a qualitative assessment on their performance. If so, it is important that the criteria for the qualitative judgement reflect the learning objectives and are shared with and understood by the learners.

## 4.4 Designing an assessment: linguistic competences

### Target test outcomes

Decide what you want the test outcomes to be, that is, what you can say about the test taker's competences, based on their results from the assessment. Use the CEFR scales ability descriptors which align with the intended learning outcomes of your curriculum or syllabus.

Examples:

A1 Listening: *Test takers who perform successfully on this test can recognise concrete information (e.g., places and times) on familiar topics encountered in everyday life, provided it is delivered slowly and clearly. (CEFR CV 2020: 48)*

A2 Reading: *Test takers who perform successfully on this test can understand short, simple texts containing the highest frequency vocabulary, including a proportion of shared international vocabulary items. (CEFR CV, 2020: 53)*

B1 Speaking: *Test takers who perform successfully on this test can reasonably fluently sustain a straightforward description of one of a variety of subjects within their field of interest, presenting it as a linear sequence of points. (CEFR CV, 2020:61)*

B2 Writing: *Test takers who perform successfully on this test can produce clear, detailed texts on a variety of subjects related to their field of interest, synthesising and evaluating information and arguments from a number of sources. (CEFR CV, 2020:66)*

## 4.5 Testing receptive skills: reading and listening

Types of texts (based on the CEFR)	
<p><b>Reading:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• reading for general orientation, (e.g., google listings, dictionaries, map legends, museum plans)</li> <li>• reading for information, (e.g., using reference works as a source text, journals, websites/ sources, textbooks)</li> <li>• reading and following instructions (e.g., for using a machine, a recipe, an experiment, using the library, registering for an event)</li> <li>• reading for pleasure (e.g., novels, biography, newspapers, magazines, web media such as blogs)</li> </ul>	<p><b>Listening:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• listening to public announcements (e.g., information, instructions, warnings)</li> <li>• listening to media (e.g., radio, TV, recordings, cinema)</li> <li>• listening as a member of a live audience (e.g., theatre, public meetings, public lectures, entertainment)</li> <li>• listening to an overheard conversation (e.g., at a social event, on the street, with friends, at work)</li> </ul>
Text Selection	
<p><b>A. Key Principles</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is the topic appropriate (curriculum content/specifications)?</li> <li>• What kind of information does it contain or can it be exploited for? (e.g., familiar facts, opinion, main ideas vs detail)</li> <li>• Does it contain enough information for my task in relation to its length?</li> <li>• How difficult is it (e.g., vocabulary, grammar, structure)? Is it appropriate for the level you want to assess?</li> <li>• Is it authentic?</li> <li>• Is it well organised? Does it have a clear narrative structure?</li> <li>• Which task type is it best suited to and why?</li> </ul>	<p><b>B. What to Consider</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Source (possible copyright issues?)</li> <li>• Authenticity</li> <li>• Type of discourse</li> <li>• Domain</li> <li>• Topic</li> <li>• Content</li> <li>• Length</li> <li>• Vocabulary</li> <li>• Grammar</li> </ul>
Task Types	
<p><b>Reading:</b></p> <p><b>Match the item type to the competence you are aiming to assess:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Multiple choice: can be used to assess a variety of constructs</li> <li>• Multiple matching: often gist or organisation; coherence and cohesion</li> <li>• Note-taking or short answer: usually detail</li> <li>• Ordering: organisation of information; coherence</li> <li>• Information transfer: detail</li> </ul>	

*(Please see Appendix Three for examples of matching task types to the reading skill)*

## 4.6 Testing productive skills: speaking and writing

Types of production (based on the CEFR)	
<p><b>Speaking</b></p> <p>Monologue</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Describing experience</li> <li>• Giving information/presenting</li> <li>• Putting a case</li> <li>• Public announcements/addressing audiences/lecturing</li> </ul>	<p><b>Writing</b></p> <p>Production</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Creative writing, e.g., stories, film scripts</li> <li>• Reports</li> <li>• Academic essays</li> <li>• Articles</li> </ul>
<p><b>Speaking</b></p> <p>Interaction</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conversation</li> <li>• Informal discussion (friends)</li> <li>• Formal discussion (meeting)</li> <li>• Goal-oriented co-operation</li> <li>• Obtaining goods and services</li> <li>• Information exchange</li> <li>• Using telecommunications</li> <li>• Interviewing</li> </ul>	<p><b>Writing</b></p> <p>Interaction</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Correspondence, e.g., email</li> <li>• Notes and messages</li> <li>• Postcards</li> <li>• Whatsapp messages and live chats</li> </ul>

Task characteristics
<p><b>Speaking</b></p> <p>General</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Setting (e.g., target test-takers, testing site)</li> <li>• Test rubrics (instructions, structure, time allotment, scoring)</li> <li>• Input (format, language and topical characteristics)</li> <li>• Expected response</li> <li>• Relationship between input and response (reciprocal/non-reciprocal)</li> <li>• Specific</li> <li>• Task instructions: are they easy to understand (tasks are usually written at a level below that which is being tested)</li> <li>• Expectations of performance: are they clear and realistic?</li> <li>• Focus of task: is this clear?</li> <li>• Familiarity of task type to test takers</li> <li>• Number of language functions included</li> <li>• Cognitive demands of the task</li> <li>• Topic and familiarity to test takers</li> </ul>

Task characteristics	
<b>Writing</b> (Weigle, 2002:203)	
<b>Dimension</b>	<b>Examples</b>
Subject matter	Self, family, school, technology, etc.
Stimulus	Text, multiple texts, graph, table
Genre	Essay, letter, informal note, advertisement
Rhetorical task	Narration, description, exposition, argument
Pattern of exposition	Process, comparison/contrast, cause/effect, classification, definition
Cognitive demands	Reproduce facts/ideas, organise/reorganise information, apply / analyse / synthesise / evaluate
<b>Specification of</b>	
Audience	Self, teacher, classmates, general public
Role	Self/detached observer, other/assumed persona
Tone, style	Formal, informal
Length	Less than ½ page, ½ to 1 page, 2-5 pages
Time allowed	Less than 30 min, 30-59 min, 1-2 h
Prompt wording	Question vs statement, implicit vs explicit, amount of context provided
Choice of prompts	Choice vs. no choice
Transcription mode	Handwritten vs. word processed
Scoring criteria	Primarily content and organisation, primarily linguistic accuracy, unspecified
Weigle (2002). Adapted from Purves, Soter, Takala, and Vähäpääsi (1984, pp 39-398) and Hale et al. (1996)	

*(Please see Appendix Four for an example of defining competences in the writing skill)*

#### 4.7 The range of task types

As well as the more traditional task types we use in assessment, such as multiple-choice or essay writing, there are a range of other options we can use to observe and assess learners, especially when we are using assessments for learning. These include:

- portfolios
- projects
- conferencing (asking questions)
- quizzes
- observations
- group work
- journals
- presentations
- field work

Decisions about the purpose and focus of the test will constrain which task types can be selected. However, most of the tasks offer a degree of flexibility and it is a good idea to use as wide a range of task types as possible to cover all the dimensions of learner performance. In each case, the tool used must fit the principles of design, i.e., align with learning objectives, reflect the TLU and demonstrate a consistent and transparent method of measuring performances.

#### **4.8** Designing an assessment: scoring and mark schemes

The scoring and/or mark scheme is influenced by what the assessment aims to measure. The issue of how to plan your scoring system and/or mark scheme is outlined as part of number 7 in the design process (page 66). While standardised achievement tests tend to use traditional criteria for assessment, in formative testing, there are many other options. For example, with a class of young learners, their behaviour or attitude can be assessed by developing a set of criteria to focus on this. The benefit is that some learners may score well on this which, if they score less well in language competences, means the assessment still have a positive outcome for them. Equally, learners can be rewarded for their effort or focus, even if their linguistic performance scores less well. These wider criteria allow all learners to feel positive about assessment, which in turn can help with motivation and confidence. Therefore, it is important to consider the full range of options when designing the assessment.

#### **4.9** Documenting the process

When formal standardised tests are created, there is extensive documentation to describe the rationale and development, because this forms part of the test validation process. For tests in a language centre that are designed by the institution, there should also be a process for documenting and reporting the assessments.

For achievement tests which are designed by the language centre, it is a good idea to document (a) **how the test(s) were designed**. For example, are they based on the focus and content of public tests or have they been designed in-house for very specific purposes? Who was consulted on the design? How was the test piloted to ensure it was valid and reliable?

(b) the **specifications** which include an outline of the features of each test, e.g., purpose, format, content and scoring along with **how the results of the test are used**.

(c) **any adjustments** over time should also be reported so that new staff can see how and why elements have been changed.

For formative assessment for learning, a formal system is not normally necessary. However, teachers and school leaders should document the plans, delivery and outcomes of the formative assessment process. The purpose of this is to create a reliable record for the teachers, for learners and for other stakeholders, such as parents. This documentation should include:

- A **plan** for delivering formative assessment.

**Why?** Assessment is not random.

In order to be fair to learners, it should be planned along with learning objectives. Effective assessment for learning will cover a wide range of assessment tools and types and this variety can be assured by planning. Decide the following: When does it happen? How often? What are the different purposes? What different types of assessment are used? (e.g., oral, paper, observation, quizzes, etc)

- A **log** of how each learner has performed and whether this is a score or an observational comment.

**Why?** The log has several functions including allowing teachers and learners to see progress across time and forming a record for teachers and to inform other stakeholders.

- A **record** of the type and extent of feedback given and how it relates to the assessment objectives.

**Why?** Assessment for learning is only effective, i.e., learners can only learn from the assessment if they are given effective feedback. The feedback must relate to the assessment objectives and should be varied in format. Keeping a record of this allows teachers to see where feedback has been taken up effectively or where remedial action is required and what type of feedback might be most effective for the learning group.

#### 4.10 [The importance of feedback](#)

It is important to involve learners in every stage of an assessment whether an achievement test or less formal assessments for learning. This means that learners understand the purpose of the test and how it relates to their learning objectives. As part of the whole process of assessment, learners should always have feedback from any tests they do. This helps them understand the outcomes of the assessment and how to improve if necessary.

Teachers often comment that it can be hard to find time to give feedback but it is an essential part of learning (Wiliam, 2018), and it is only fair that learners understand the outcomes of any assessment. The key elements of effective feedback are that it:

- is linked to
- learning objectives
- focuses on the task not the learner
- is well-timed
- is specific and clear
- is actionable and achievable
- offers strategies not solutions

These elements need to be considered when designing the assessment to ensure the feedback can be effective.



The format of feedback should be varied and can be:

- whole class feedback: making a specific general point to the class along with a task to help them improve
- individual feedback: oral, written or managed online
- peer feedback: with specific support guidance, e.g., tell your partner one thing they can improve in this task and suggest how they can do this.
- group feedback: making a specific general point to a group and possibly asking them to think of what tasks they could do to help them improve.

*(Please see Appendix Five for an example to practise feedback techniques.)*

## GLOSSARY

Please refer to this British Council glossary for further details on terms used in these guidelines:

[https://www.britishcouncil.org/sites/default/files/a\\_to\\_z\\_glossary\\_final.pdf](https://www.britishcouncil.org/sites/default/files/a_to_z_glossary_final.pdf)

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## **FURTHER REFERENCES**

### **CEFR level check: grammar and vocabulary**

The following resources can be used to check the CEFR level of grammar and vocabulary in any test. You should also use your expertise judgement and ensure any vocabulary and grammar in the test has been covered in the classroom.

- Equals / British Council Core Inventory posters  
<https://www.equals.org/resources/the-core-inventory-for-general-english/>
- English Vocabulary Profile  
<https://www.englishprofile.org/wordlists>
- English Grammar Profile  
<https://www.englishprofile.org/english-grammar-profile>
- Pearson GSE Teacher Toolkit  
<https://www.english.com/gse/teacher-toolkit/user/lo>

### **CEFR level check: texts**

The following resource can be used to check the CEFR level in texts.

EDIA Papyrus text analyser  
<https://www.edia.nl/papyrus>

## APPENDIX ONE: 3.1 EVALUATING CONSTRUCTS

Look at the example from a B1 level Speaking test. Look at the CEFR descriptors for Speaking at B1 level. Which speaking skills do you think this task measures? How?

<b>Interlocutor</b>	Now I'd like each of you to talk on your own about something. I'm going to give each of you a photograph and I'd like you to talk about it.  <b>A</b> , here is your photograph. It shows <b>people learning a language</b> .  <b>Place Part 2 booklet, open at Task 1.A, in front of candidate.</b>  <b>B</b> , you just listen.  <b>A</b> , please tell us what you can see in the photograph.
<b>Candidate A</b>	..... approx. 1 minute
<b>Back-up prompts</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Talk about the people/person</li><li>• Talk about the place.</li><li>• Talk about other things in the photograph</li></ul>	
<b>Interlocutor</b>	Thank you. (Can I have the booklet please?) <b>Retrieve Part 2 booklet.</b>

This task uses Cambridge Assessment English *B1 Preliminary* sample tests which are available online:

<https://www.cambridgeenglish.org/exams-and-tests/preliminary/exam-format/>

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## **APPENDIX TWO: 3.1 IDENTIFYING VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY ISSUES WITH PRODUCTIVE SKILLS ASSESSMENT TASKS**

**Look at these example tasks from a Writing test. What problems might they cause for valid and reliable assessment?**

### **TASK 1**

#### **WRITING \_\_\_\_\_/10 points**

You are the Manager of the Green Gardens Hotel, which is used by different companies as a venue for training sessions for their staff. Three weeks ago, a training session, 'Total Quality Management', for the staff of DSJ Services, was held at the Green Gardens Hotel. The company had used this hotel several times successfully. But three weeks ago something went wrong.

**Write a letter of complaint to Mr Paul Morris**, the Human Resources Manager of DSJ Services, to express your dissatisfaction at the way the session was organized by DSJ Services. The company's address is 30 High Street, Norville MN 1 3RT.

**Cover the following points:**

1. Express regret at the need to complain.
2. Report non-payment of the bill.
3. Explain what information had not been sent to the hotel concerning the number of staff, necessary equipment and type of menu.
4. Explain what problem the hotel staff had with an aggressive man (what did he do?)
5. State what you expect to be done to resolve the issues.

**Do not forget about the layout of a business letter. You may assume that the company headed paper is used.**

### **TASK 2**

#### **PART 1. Write an APOLOGY LETTER for a missed deadline.**

You can use Apology Letter tips given below.

Apologise for a missed deadline as soon as possible after the incident. The tone of your letter should be respectful because you have probably caused some inconvenience. The letter should focus on actions you will take to make up for the missed deadline.

### TASK 3

#### II. TEXT ANALYSIS: Identify the cohesive devices such as Reference, Conjunction, Substitution, and Repetition etc in the following texts: 5 points

##### Who is Faye Wong?

Born in Beijing, she is the daughter of a busy engineer and a classical singer who sings cultural folk songs. She spent most of her early life in day care and living with her aunt. In her teen years she became interested in singing and won many awards in school for her fine voice. At around the age of eighteen, she was supposed to go to Fuching University in Fujian but her father asked her to come to Hong Kong instead.

Not knowing Cantonese, the main language of Hong Kong, she was terribly bored there. She took up a short term modelling course and suffered some ridicule from her peers who regarded her as a backward mainland girl with no taste. Through the arrangement of her parents, she took vocal courses with a voice trainer named Dai Shi Cong. After about a year of training, Dai Shi Cong recommended her to Chan Siu

*Text continues . . .*

*All sample assessment items in Appendix Two are supplied from the personal collection compiled by Thom Kiddle at Norwich Institute for Language Education.*

## APPENDIX THREE: 3.2 ALIGNING THE CEFR WITH ASSESSMENT DESIGN

You can use the CEFR to identify the constructs or abilities you want to assess and then decide which task type is likely to elicit the performance of that ability.

Example: Reading at A2 level.

CEFR scales for Reading	Descriptor A2 level	Need to assess	Possible task type
<b>Correspondence (p55)</b>	Can understand a simple personal letter, email or online post in which the person writing is talking about familiar subjects (such as friends or family) or asking questions on these subjects.	e.g., purpose of writing, main points, detailed information	Read an email Answer multiple choice questions
<b>Orientation (p56)</b>	Can find specific, predictable information in simple everyday material such as advertisements, prospectuses, menus, reference lists and timetables.	e.g., identifying concrete information, facts	Read an advertisement Complete gap-fill notes
<b>Information and argument (p57)</b>	Can follow the general outline of a news report on a familiar type of event, provided the contents are familiar and predictable.	e.g., understand main points, detailed information	Read a news report Answer multiple choice or multi-choice gap-fill sentences
<b>Instructions (p58)</b>	Can follow a simple recipe, especially if there are pictures to illustrate the most important steps.	e.g., understand how to do something	Read parts of a recipe Order the information



## **APPENDIX FOUR: 3.2 DEFINING COMPETENCES IN WRITING**

**Which areas of language knowledge and aspects of cognitive processing would you need to complete these tasks?**

Writing English letters accurately by hand

Writing a one-page outline for your LTA assignment

Filling in a visitor landing card when entering a country

Writing a dissertation

Writing a Whatsapp/text message on a mobile phone

Writing a short story (creative writing)

Doing a spelling test





## APPENDIX FIVE: GIVING FEEDBACK TO STUDENTS

What feedback would you give, and how?


### Example: Writing task

You have set a timed writing task asking B2-level students to write a **film review** for an online website aimed at teenagers. The task asks them to:

- write between 150-200 words
- cover a number of areas including plot, characters, and setting, and give a clear opinion and recommendation from the writer’s perspective.

This is the assessment scale you are using.

CEFR level	Communicative Achievement	Organisation	Language
<b>B2</b>	Uses the conventions of the communicative task to hold the target reader’s attention and communicate straightforward ideas.	Text is generally well organized and coherent, using a variety of linking words and cohesive devices.	<p>Uses a range of everyday vocabulary appropriately, with occasional inappropriate use of less common lexis.</p> <p>Uses a range of simple and some complex grammatical forms with a good degree of control.</p> <p>Error do not impede communication.</p>
	<b>Content</b>		
<b>5</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All content is relevant to the task.</li> <li>• Target reader is fully informed.</li> </ul>		
<b>3</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Minor irrelevances and/or omissions may be present.</li> <li>• Target reader is on the whole informed.</li> </ul>		
<b>1</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Irrelevances and misinterpretation of task may be present.</li> <li>• Target reader is minimally informed.</li> </ul>		
<b>0</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Content is totally irrelevant.</li> <li>• Target reader is not informed.</li> </ul>		



After your students have completed the timed assessment task, think about how you would manage feedback. Consider:

- Who would give the feedback? (e.g., teacher, peers)
- How would you deliver the feedback? (oral, written)
- What kind of abilities, skills or competences would you comment on?
- What tasks could you give students to help them improve?

These Guidelines use Cambridge Assessment English *B2 First* sample tests which are available online: <https://www.cambridgeenglish.org/exams-and-tests/first/exam-format/preparation>

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