



### **The Advanced Level Certificate in English examination (ALCE™)**

The Advanced Level Certificate in English examination (ALCE™) is a standardized examination for candidates who wish certification at advanced proficiency level in English. The examination has been mapped on the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) as reflecting the content and difficulty of C1 level. Thus, the typical candidate for the examination should have a sound knowledge of English at advanced level.

The ALCE™ is developed and scored by Hellenic American University in accordance with the highest international standards of educational measurement. All parts of the examination are written following specific guidelines and test specifications. Items are pre-tested to ensure standardization and validity. Care is taken that the tests are fair and accessible to all examinees.

The ALCE™ tests communicative competence in all four skills: reading, writing, listening and speaking. It also contains sections which specifically test grammar and vocabulary resources. The examination focuses primarily on the educational and occupational domains appropriate for this level, and this is reflected in its content and tasks. Candidates who are successful in the ALCE™ examination obtain a certificate which documents their level of English for educational, occupational, public or personal purposes.

### **Uses of the ALCE™**

The ALCE™ is used by organizations, firms, public agencies, and academic institutions for a wide range of purposes. The following is just a sample of possible uses:

- Educational organizations can use the ALCE™ for admission purposes for non-native speakers of English
- Corporate users can use the ALCE™ as a useful tool when recruiting a global workforce
- Government agencies can use the ALCE™ when setting language requirements for migrants
- Job placement agencies can use the ALCE™ when setting language requirements for non-native speakers of English

### **The Level of the ALCE™**

The ALCE™ has been mapped to the C1 level of the Common European Framework of Reference. At the C1 level, language users:

- can understand a wide range of demanding, longer texts, and recognize implicit meaning

- can express themselves fluently and spontaneously without much obvious searching for expressions
- can use language flexibly and effectively for social, academic and professional purposes
- can produce clear, well-structured, detailed text on complex subjects, showing controlled use of organizational patterns, connectors and cohesive devices

## Format & Content of the ALCE™

Section	Time	Short Description	Number of items
<b>Listening</b>	Approx. 40 min	<b>Part 1</b> (multiple choice) Five extracts from radio broadcasts, each followed by two questions with three answer choices. The questions are also printed in the test booklet. The extracts are heard once.	10
		<b>Part 2</b> (multiple choice) Ten short dialogues, each followed by a question with three answer choices that is printed in the test booklet. The dialogues are heard once.	10
		<b>Part 3</b> (multiple choice) A recorded radio interview, broken into five segments. Two questions with three answer choices follow each segment. The questions are printed in the test booklet. Each segment is heard twice, followed by the questions.	10
		<b>Part 4</b> (multiple choice) A long recorded talk, broken into two segments, each followed by five questions with three answer choices that are printed in the test booklet. Each segment is heard once.	10
<b>Grammar, Vocabulary, Reading (GVR)</b>	80 min	<b>Grammar</b> (multiple choice) Candidates complete each sentence by choosing from four possible answer choices. Only one choice is grammatically correct.	40
		<b>Vocabulary</b> (multiple choice) Candidates complete each sentence by choosing from four possible answer choices. Only one choice is semantically correct.	40

		<p><b>Reading Part 1</b> (multiple choice) A review of a book, play, film, etc, followed by seven questions with four answer choices.</p>	7
		<p><b>Reading Part 2</b> (multiple choice) A text on a scientific/academic topic, followed by seven questions with four answer choices.</p>	7
		<p><b>Reading Part 3</b> (multiple choice) A text examining a social issue, followed by six questions with four answer choices.</p>	6
<b>Writing</b>	30 min	Candidates chose one from a choice of two possible tasks. Both tasks comprise an argumentative essay, in which the candidate argues a case based on at least two of the prompts provided. The candidates have thirty minutes to complete their chosen task and should write approximately 250 words.	1 task
<b>Speaking</b>	11 – 13 min	<p><b>Task 1: Warm Up</b> Candidates answer non-sensitive personal questions.</p> <p><b>Task 2: Introduction to Topic</b> Candidates are presented with one question, helped by prompts, to which they give an extended answer.</p> <p><b>Task 3: Topic Questions</b> Candidates answer two to four questions on the topic, supported by prompts for each question.</p> <p><b>Task 4: Arguing a Case</b> Candidates are given the context for a controversial issue, as well as points for each side. They are</p>	4 tasks

		expected to choose one side and argue their case effectively.	
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### **The Listening section of the ALCE™**

The listening section of the examination is designed to test the candidates' ability to comprehend spoken English at the C1 level of the Common European Framework for Languages. In total, the listening test comprises forty items and is divided into four parts, each with a different focus. The items test the candidates' familiarity with the sub-skills of listening appropriate for this level, such as listening for specific information, drawing inferences and extracting salient points from a presentation on an unfamiliar topic. Candidates are expected to have considerable vocabulary resources and knowledge of discourse features in order to be able to follow spoken text in both formal and semi-formal contexts.

In the test, male and female speakers are used as their voices have different inflectional and tonal qualities. Pauses between each item have been carefully timed to allow candidates to reflect on their choice of answer to a previous item and then study the answer choices for the next item. For the first three parts of the test, the questions appear in the candidates' test booklet while In the fourth part, the questions do not appear in the test booklet, as the task is to identify the main points of an extended text. For each item of the listening test, three possible answer choices are provided. There is only one possible correct answer for each item.

The Listening Section of the ALCE™ relates to the following 'can do' statements of the Common European Framework:

- Can recognize a wide range of idiomatic expressions and colloquialisms, appreciating register shifts.
- Can follow most lectures, discussions and debates with relative ease.
- Can understand a wide range of recorded and broadcast audio material and identify finer points of detail including implicit attitudes.
- Can easily understand interactions between third parties in group discussions and debate, even on abstract, complex unfamiliar topics.

### **PART 1**

**Aim:** this section tests the candidates' ability to understand the gist of a text, the relationship between speakers, and their attitudes, as well as the ability to make inferences and predictions.

**Format:** the candidates listen to short extracts from five conversations between two speakers taken from radio broadcast material and hear two questions about what was said immediately after each extract. The questions are also written in the test booklet. They choose the appropriate answer choice from three possible answer choices. A pause of nine seconds separates each item.

## **PART 2**

**Aim:** this section tests the candidates' ability to understand stated or implied information in a semi-formal spoken text which contains high-level colloquialisms.

**Format:** the candidates listen to short extracts from ten conversations taken from an educational, occupational or public domain between two speakers. After each extract, the candidates hear a question about what was stated or implied in the extract. The question also appears in their test booklet. The answer choices are short phrases or sentences. There is a pause of nine seconds between each item.

## **PART 3**

**Aim:** this section tests the candidates' ability to use their understanding of specific information and recognition of the opinions of the speakers.

**Format:** the candidates listen to an extended extract from a dialogue between two speakers in the form of an interview on a social, or academic / scientific issue. The extract is broken up into five parts, each of which is followed by two questions relating to specific information included in the extract, for a total of ten questions. The questions also appear in the test booklet.

## **PART 4**

**Aim:** this section tests the candidates' ability to use their understanding of the salient points of an extended text.

**Format:** the candidates listen to an extended talk of a factual nature. The talk is heard in two parts and candidates hear five questions about what was said after each part, giving a total of ten questions.

## **The Grammar section of the ALCE™**

This section tests the candidates' grammatical competence by requiring them to recognize and choose the grammatical structure that best completes sentences of different register and genre. Many of the correct answer choices are context specific in terms of form, meaning, and function.

The Grammar Section of the ALCE™ relates to the following „can do“ statement of the Common European Framework:

- Consistently maintains a high degree of grammatical accuracy; errors are rare and difficult to spot.

**Aim:** the Grammar Section assesses the knowledge of and ability of the candidates to use the grammatical resources of the English language

**Format:** this section consists of 40 multiple-choice items with four answer choices each. Candidates are required to choose the answer that best completes the sentence.

## **The Vocabulary section of the ALCE™**

The vocabulary section consists of 40 multiple-choice questions testing advanced vocabulary.

The Vocabulary Section of the ALCE™ relates to the following statements of the Pilot Manual for the Common European Framework:

- Has a good command of a broad lexical repertoire.
- Can recognize a wide range of idiomatic expressions and colloquialisms, appreciating register shifts.

**Aim:** the vocabulary section assesses the candidates' knowledge of advanced vocabulary, ranging from collocations, idiomatic expressions, metaphors, word grammar, compound words, etc., to topic-related vocabulary and context specific vocabulary of the English language in order to formulate well-formed and meaningful messages.

**Format:** this section consists of 40 multiple-choice questions with four answer choices that tests advanced vocabulary. Candidates are required to choose the answer that best completes the sentence.

## **The reading section of the ALCE™**

The purpose of the reading section is to assess whether the candidate can understand lengthy, complex texts in detail. The genres of the texts in the three parts are an in-depth review, a factual scientific text, and a discussion or report on a social issue. The candidates read the three different texts and answer 20 multiple-choice questions, consisting of a range of different item types, in order to provide evidence of the extent of their reading skills. The candidates should have the linguistic knowledge to understand complex texts and be able to use context, vocabulary, grammar and syntax to infer implied meanings and understand attitude, tone and intentions.

The Reading Section of the ALCE™ relates to the following „can do“ statement of the Common European Framework:

- Can understand in detail a wide range of lengthy, complex texts likely to be encountered in social, professional or academic life, identifying finer points of detail including attitudes and implied as well as stated opinions.

## **PART 1**

**Aim:** this section tests detailed understanding of a text at sentence and discourse level, and ability to understand conflicting opinions, as well as inferences and vocabulary in context.

**Format:** 1 text of approximately 500 words in the form of a review of a book, play or other cultural work or event, followed by 7 multiple-choice questions.

## **PART 2**

**Aim:** this section tests detailed understanding of text at sentence and discourse level, and ability to understand multifaceted arguments, logical progression, e.g. cause & effect and vocabulary in context.

**Format:** 1 text of approximately 500 words, in the form of a scientific text, followed by 7 multiple-choice questions.

## **PART 3**

**Aim:** this section tests detailed understanding of a text at sentence and discourse level, and the ability to understand opinionated discussion with several „voices“ and multifaceted arguments, as well as vocabulary in context.

**Format:** 1 text in the form of a newspaper article from a newspaper or periodical of approximately 500 words, followed by 6 multiple-choice questions.

### **The Writing Section of the ALCE™**

The Writing Section of the ALCE™ relates to the following ‘can do’ statement of the Common European Framework:

- Can write 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.

**Aim:** the ALCE™ writing section tests candidates on the production of advanced and sophisticated writing. Candidates should produce texts which not only are well organized and fully developed, but which also demonstrate a solid grasp of complex sentence structure and the ability to employ a wide range of topic-related vocabulary appropriately and effectively. The candidates are expected to have developed a high level of fluency and accuracy at this level.

**Format:** candidates chose one from a choice of two possible tasks. Both tasks comprise an argumentative essay, in which the candidate argues a case based on at least two of the prompts provided. The candidates have thirty minutes to complete their chosen task and should write approximately 250 words.

### **The Speaking section of the ALCE™**

The ALCE™ Speaking Test is a one-on-one interview based on questions supported by prompts. Candidates are tested on their oral expression in the personal, educational, professional, or public domains. Since candidates’ age and educational background vary, the speaking test contains topics that are sophisticated enough for advanced level candidates, but do not require expertise in the field.

The Speaking Section of the ALCE™ relates to the following „can do“ statements of the Common European Framework:

- Can give clear, detailed descriptions of complex subjects.

- Can qualify opinions and statements precisely in relation to degrees of, for example, certainty/uncertainty, belief/doubt, likelihood, etc.
- Can argue a formal position convincingly, responding to questions and comments and answering complex lines of counter arguments, spontaneously and appropriately.

**Aim:** the candidates are tested on their ability to interact orally with fluency, accuracy and coherence and demonstrate a range of language resources appropriate for the context.

**Format:** the ALCE™ Speaking Test lasts approximately 11-13 minutes and is divided into four parts.

**Part 1** is a warm up, while Parts 2, 3 and 4 focus on different aspects of the same topic. Prompts in the form of short phrases are provided for the questions in Parts 2, 3 and 4. All the questions, prompts and the text providing background to the topic are written on the test material that the candidates receive.

The first part of the Speaking Test lasts approximately 1 minute. The candidates are asked several non-sensitive personal questions about their studies, work and hobbies.

**Part 2** lasts approximately 2½ minutes, and the task is based on a picture and a related text. The candidates look at the picture, read the text, consider the prompts and prepare a response to one question.

**Part 3** of the Speaking Test lasts approximately four minutes. The examiner chooses from a range of six questions that focus on different aspects of the topic introduced in Part 2. For each question there are prompts which the candidates can develop.

**Part 4** of the Speaking Test lasts approximately 3½ minutes, and requires that candidates argue a case. The candidates are given time to read both sides of a controversial issue and to look at the two sets of prompts provided, each supporting a different point of view. Then, they prepare a convincing argument in support of one of the points of view.