



Global approval criteria

This document summarises the global criteria for being an exam centre; for regional requirements please contact your nearest Cambridge English office.

Security and premises

- **Secure storage:** The centre must have a suitable safe or container in a secure area. The same applies to all schools, Sub-centres and other external venues if they need to store exam papers before or after the exam. Exam materials must be locked away in a place of high security:
 - **Container:** ideally a strong safe. If a safe is not available a non-portable, lockable, reinforced steel or metal cabinet or other similar container must be used.
 - **Secure area:**
 - the safe or container must be in a securely locked room with access restricted to two or three keyholders
 - the room should preferably be windowless and on an upper floor.
 - windows, whether internal or external, should be fitted with security devices.
 - the door to the room must be of solid construction (i.e. not a hollow panel door), have secure hinges and be fitted with a secure lock.
- **General premises:** A centre will usually have an area that candidates can visit (such as an office, or school reception). All premises accessed by candidates should meet the standards expected of education institutions in the region, such as appropriate levels of cleanliness, and should provide a positive impression of Cambridge English.
- **Exam venues and rooms:** All exam venues must be appropriate for taking our exams:
 - This includes good lighting, low noise levels, sufficient ventilation, heating, etc.
 - The rooms must be big enough and there must be appropriate seating:
 - For paper-based exams the minimum spacing is 1.25 metres between the centre of the working area assigned to any candidate and the centre of the working area assigned to the next candidate in any direction. Dividers must not be used in paper-based tests.
 - Shared desks are allowed as long as the spacing requirements above are met. For paper-based exams desks must allow candidates to work with at least two A4 sheets of paper side by side (approx. 30cm x 42cm). Chairs with side flaps must be avoided and are only acceptable if the side flaps meet this minimum size.

- For computer-based exams the minimum spacing is 1.25 metres between the edge of one candidate's computer screen and the edge of the other candidate's computer screen if dividers are not used. You can use dividers if they are high enough to prevent candidates from oversteering each other's screens and to prevent candidates from communicating with each other. If you use such dividers there is no minimum spacing requirement as long as candidates have enough space to work, cannot see the other candidates' screens and cannot communicate with each other.
- **Listening test:** The venues must have suitable facilities for the Listening test, including good acoustics and equipment, low noise level in the surrounding area, etc.
- **Speaking test:** All venues for Speaking tests must have sufficient number of rooms which can each accommodate two or three candidates and two examiners.
 - These rooms should be in a quiet area so that candidates are not disturbed during the test.
 - For Young Learners, the test rooms should have glass doors or panels so that supervisors can see into the rooms during the test.
 - Only one Speaking test can be conducted in a room at any one time regardless of its size or layout.
 - A quiet and comfortable area, some distance from the test rooms, where candidates can wait without coming into contact with those already examined, is also required.

Business and marketing

- The applicant will be asked:
 - to provide us with a business plan
 - to estimate the number of candidates they will enter each year (please note there are minimum entries for most regions) and to explain how these numbers will be reached – including business development and marketing plans.
 - to confirm that it has the funds to invest in setting up a new centre and has a budget for marketing the exams.
 - to confirm that it will contribute to the support for currency and recognition of Cambridge English exams.
 - to commit to operating as a centre for at least three years if approved.

Staffing

- The centre must have enough staff, or be prepared to invest in enough staff, to properly manage the running of the exams and any associated business and marketing activities.
- The centre must be able to demonstrate a clear understanding of the kind of tasks involved in running a live exam and the challenges and how to deal with them.
- There must be enough support staff (invigilators, supervisors etc.). The current ratio is one invigilator per 25 candidates in each room, but any sole invigilators must be able to summon assistance without leaving the exam room unsupervised. People who are friends, relatives or English teachers who have taught the candidates in the last 3 years cannot invigilate. Teachers of other subjects can invigilate their own students if there is another person invigilating in the exam room.

Capability to run Speaking tests

- Availability of either existing suitably qualified and trained Speaking Examiners (SEs) or suitably qualified teachers to be trained as SEs.
- Understanding of the costs involved in running the Speaking tests and running a centre.

Financial and legal requirements

- The centre must meet all the legal requirements for each country in which it operates. This will vary from country to country and may include being registered as a business and covering any relevant tax costs, insurance costs, etc.
- It must comply with any child protection policies of the country in which it operates.

- The centre must have an unblemished record of professional and financial integrity including compliance with the fiscal and tax requirements of the country in which it is based and must be able to show that it can meet its financial obligations to us.
- It must be capable of issuing receipts to candidates/schools etc. and of being audited

Commitment to Quality standards

- It must be able to demonstrate a commitment to quality standards and customer service, for example by being a member of a leading national/international professional or trade association with an appropriate code of practice.
- The centre's (or institution's) senior leadership team must be committed to adhering to standards, investing in the exams and growing the business.