

BULATS

Business Language Testing Service

Candidate Handbook

**For: the Standard Test
the Speaking Test
the Writing Test
the Computer Test**

Version 3.0

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1 Introduction

What is BULATS?

BULATS stands for the Business Language Testing Service. It is a service for companies to find out the level of language skills among their staff, trainees or job applicants. It assesses language skills which are needed for the workplace and for students and employees on language courses or on professional/business courses where foreign language ability is an important element of the course.

At the moment, four different types of test are offered: the Standard BULATS Test, the BULATS Speaking Test, the BULATS Writing Test and the BULATS Computer Test.

BULATS is a multilingual service, offering parallel tests in English, French, German and Spanish. Tests of English are produced by the University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate (UCLES), French by the Alliance Française, German by the Goethe-Institut and Spanish by the Universidad de Salamanca. The service is co-ordinated by UCLES, which has been producing language examinations since 1913 and has roughly a million candidates a year in over 160 countries worldwide.

This Handbook contains information for candidates preparing for the Standard Test, the Speaking Test, the Writing Test or the Computer Test. The examples in this Handbook are all for English tests. The other languages follow the same format and approach, but you should also look at a Sample Paper for the particular language you are to be tested in.

What level is BULATS?

BULATS provides tests for all learners of a foreign language. There is no “pass mark”; all candidates are placed in one of six levels. These levels are based on the ALTE Level Framework - the Association of Language Testers in Europe.

ALTE Level	Description	BULATS scores	Cambridge exams at this level
Level 5	Upper Advanced	90-100	CPE
Level 4	Advanced	75-89	CAE, BEC3
Level 3	Upper Intermediate	60-74	FCE, BEC2
Level 2	Intermediate	40-59	PET, BEC1
Level 1	Elementary	20-39	KET
Level 0	Beginner	0-19	-

Who is BULATS suitable for?

BULATS is suitable for any learner who needs to use a foreign language at work (English, French, German or Spanish). The test is carefully designed to be suitable for a wide range of people at work – technicians, secretaries or managers, in banking, in education or in manufacturing, in administration, research or marketing. It does not require any previous business experience, and so it is also suitable for students who may need to use the foreign language in the future.

What topics and situations are covered?

Personal information

Asking for and giving personal details (name, occupation, etc.)
Asking about and describing jobs and responsibilities
Asking about and describing a company and its organisation

The office, general business environment and routine

Arranging appointments/meetings
Planning future events and tasks
Asking for and giving permission
Giving and receiving instructions
Predicting and describing future possibilities
Asking for and giving opinions
Agreeing and disagreeing
Making, accepting and rejecting suggestions
Expressing needs and wants
Discussing problems
Making recommendations
Justifying decisions and past actions

Entertainment of clients, free time, relationships with colleagues and clients

Discussing interests and leisure activities
Inviting, accepting and refusing offers and invitations
Thanking and expressing appreciation
Apologising and accepting apologies

Travel

Making enquiries, reservations, requests and complaints

Health

Health and safety rules in the workplace
Leisure activities, interests and sports

Buying and selling

Understanding and discussing prices and delivery dates, offers and agreements

Products and services

Asking for and giving information about a product or service
Making comparisons, expressing opinions, preferences, etc.
Making and receiving complaints

Results and achievements

Descriptions and explanations of company performance and results, trends, events and changes

Other topic areas

A number of other topics in areas of general interest, such as food and drink, education (training, courses), consumer goods, shopping and prices, politics and current events, places, weather, etc. may be included.

2 The Standard Test

What is in the Standard Test?

The Standard Test lasts 110 minutes and tests listening and reading skills, and knowledge of grammar and vocabulary.

Skill	Part	Type of task	Number of questions
Listening	1	Understanding short conversations or monologues	10
	2	Taking down phone messages, orders, notes, etc.	12
	3	Listening for gist: identifying topic, context or function. Short monologues / dialogues	10
	4	Listening to extended speech for detail and inference. Monologue / dialogue.	18
Reading and Language Knowledge	1	Understanding notices, messages, timetables, adverts, leaflets, graphs, etc.	7
	2	Grammar and Vocabulary. Gapped sentences with multiple choice task.	6
	3	Long text. Newspaper or magazine article, advert, leaflet, etc.	6
	4	Grammar. Medium length text open cloze	5
	5	Reading for specific information. Four short texts with matching tasks.	7
	6	Grammar and Vocabulary. Medium length text with multiple choice cloze.	5
	7	Grammar. Medium length text open cloze	5
	8	Grammar and Vocabulary. Gapped sentences with multiple choice task.	6
	9	Reading for gist and specific information. Long text. Newspaper or magazine article, report, etc.	6
	10	Medium length text, error correction task.	7
<i>Total</i>			<i>110</i>

More details and examples of each type of question are given on page 10.

How is the test result reported?

The exact format of your test result is decided by the organisation you work for or study with. Normally, candidates receive a Test Report, which includes their overall score and level and their score on each section. On the reverse of the report there is a summary of the ALTE Can Do statements.

How should you prepare for BULATS?

BULATS tests your ability to use the foreign language in real-life situations. So the best way to prepare for BULATS is to practise using the language in realistic situations.

Listening

Listening to a foreign language can be a very tense and stressful activity if you are not sufficiently prepared. Listening should be practised from the early stages of learning the language, not only just before taking BULATS.

Sources of listening practice:

- 1 your language trainer/instructor
- 2 talks, presentations, meetings, clubs, films – e.g. at the British Council
- 3 radio and TV broadcasts, e.g. BBC World Service and BBC English programmes (contact BBC English, Bush House, Strand, London WC2B 4PH, UK for a free schedule)
- 4 language learning cassettes: most international publishing companies produce excellent cassettes which give you the chance to listen to a variety of native speakers
- 5 there are many websites offering online listening opportunities and activities including the BBC website and the British Council website.

Remember that it is the meaning of what you hear that is important, not the exact words said. Concentrate on understanding the general meaning, before worrying about particular words you could not hear or understand.

Types of listening recordings used in BULATS:

face-to-face conversations
telephone conversations
answerphone messages
recorded information
interviews, discussions, presentations
verbal instructions and explanations

Reading and Language Knowledge

You should prepare for the Reading section by reading a wide variety of relevant materials – see the list below.

You should practise reading extensively as well as intensively: “extensively” means reading lots of materials without stopping to check any difficult words or phrases, while “intensively” means reading slowly and carefully, checking each unfamiliar word. The reading texts in BULATS are quite long for the time available and you need to have developed skills in quickly looking through a text to get the general meaning, and to pick out answers to particular questions.

Sources of reading materials:

1. language learning books – most publishers produce good course books with a variety of business-related texts
2. foreign language libraries, e.g. The British Council

3. foreign or multinational companies – write to them asking for information in the language you are studying
4. foreign language newspapers and magazines
5. graded readers (novels adapted for learners of English)
6. texts on the internet

Types of reading text included in BULATS:

<i>letters</i>	<i>office diaries</i>
<i>memos</i>	<i>company reports (internal or external)</i>
<i>informal messages, notes</i>	<i>instructions, guides</i>
<i>notices</i>	<i>articles from newspapers, newsletters or</i>
<i>adverts</i>	<i>magazines</i>
<i>forms</i>	<i>charts</i>
<i>brochures, catalogues</i>	<i>tables</i>
<i>product descriptions</i>	<i>graphs</i>
<i>records of meetings</i>	

Grammar and Vocabulary

BULATS tests the vocabulary required for general communication at work. It does not include specialised vocabulary for particular areas of business.

A useful way of developing your general business vocabulary is to read a wide range of work-related texts. Course books produced by international publishers also contain many useful exercises for developing grammatical and vocabulary knowledge.

What should you do during the test?

1 *Before the test starts*

Arrive early so that you have time to settle down before the test starts.

Make sure you have a Question Paper and an Answer Sheet. When the invigilator tells you, complete the personal information on the first page of the Question Paper and on the Answer Sheet. You may also need to answer some questions about yourself on another sheet called the Candidate Information Form.

2 *Listening section*

The recordings for the Listening section are played twice in parts 1 and 4 but only once in parts 2 and 3. You are not expected to understand every word – even if it is repeated a second time. You just need to pick out the information which is being tested. It is important not to panic when the cassette starts and it seems fast and difficult to understand to begin with.

It is also important to be very clear about the questions: listen carefully to the instructions (they are also written down in the Question Paper), and during the 15–20-second pause before the recording begins, read quickly through the text or options.

For the Listening section, you write your answers on the Question Paper as you listen to the cassette. When the cassette finishes (after about 50 minutes), you have five minutes to copy your answers from your Question Paper to your Answer Sheet. It is important that you do this carefully, as only the Answer Sheet will be marked.

3 *Reading and Language Knowledge section*

There are two parts in this section with four sections in Part One and six sections in Part Two. You only have 60 minutes to do them, so you need to work quite quickly. You still need to read carefully, but you must avoid getting stuck on irrelevant details or unimportant words. One good approach to the reading questions is first to read the text through quickly to get an idea of what it is about, then look at the question to see what information you need to find out, then go back to the key part of the text which will give you that information.

Do not worry if the topic of the text is one you are unfamiliar with – the questions do not assume any previous knowledge of the topic.

Remember, for the language knowledge questions:

- a) you can only write one word for section four in Part One and section three in Part Two.
- b) for section six in Part Two, some of the lines may have no error in them, and you must put a tick for those lines.

Sample Questions

Listening section

The recordings for Part 1 and Part 4 of the Listening section are played twice.
The recordings for Part 2 and Part 3 of the Listening section are only played once.

Listening Part 1 Understanding short extracts (10 questions)



You listen to some short recordings (about 20 seconds long) and try to understand what they are talking about, or who is talking or what they are trying to say in each one.

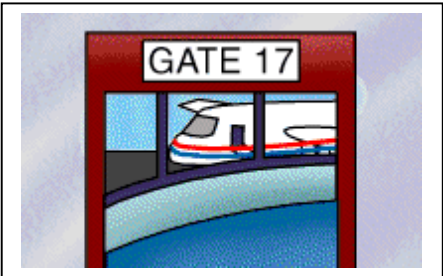
Example: You look at this on the question paper.

Part One
Questions 1 – 10

- You will hear 10 short conversations.
- For questions 1 – 10, circle **one** letter **A**, **B** or **C** for the correct answer.
- You will hear each conversation **twice**.

1 Which is the gate number for the flight to Bangkok?

A  B 

C 

Then you listen to this.

Instructions: Question 1. Which is the gate number for the flight to Bangkok?

Announcement: Attention all passengers waiting at Gate 17 for flight BA203 to Bangkok. Please proceed immediately to Gate 12 where your plane will be boarding shortly.

The correct answer is B.

Listening Part 2 Taking down messages, notes, etc. (12 questions)

You listen to three phone conversations. For each one, you have a form or message to complete, using the information you hear in the conversation. You hear each conversation only once.

Example: You look at this on the question paper.

Message One, questions 11–14

- Look at the form below.
- You will hear a man calling to place an order.

ORDER FORM

CUSTOMER DETAILS

Name: Ken(11).....

Company: Greenlight Communications
201 Hall Road, Manchester

Tel: 064 313988 **Fax:** (12).....

ORDER DETAILS

Item: (13).....

Quantity/ Amount: (14).....

Then you listen to this.

Instructions: Message One, questions 11 to 15.
Look at the form below. You will hear a man calling to place an order.

Man: I'd like to make an order please.
Woman: Certainly, sir. Could you give me your name, please?
Man: Yes, it's Ken Saunders.
Woman: How do you spell Saunders, please?
Man: S-A-U-N-D-E-R-S. Saunders.
Woman: And the name of your company is ...?
Man: Greenlight Communications, 201 Hall Road, Manchester.
Woman: What was the name of the road again?
Man: Hall, H-A-L-L.
Woman: And could I take a telephone number and fax number?
Man: Telephone 064 313 988, fax 064 318 006.
Woman: Thank you very much. Now can I take your order?
Man: It's for some computer desks. They're model 00519 in your catalogue.
Woman: And how many did you want to order?
Man: Six.
Woman: Right. The computer desks are £800 each, so that will be a total of £4,800 for six, plus £50 transportation charges. That makes a total of £4,850. As soon as we receive your cheque or bank draft, we'll despatch them to you. Delivery usually takes between 2 and 3 weeks.
Man: Good. I'll post it to you today.

- The correct answers are:
- 11 Saunders [exact spelling required]
 - 12 064 318 006
 - 13 computer desk(s)
 - 14 6

Listening Part 3 Understanding short extracts (10 questions)

You listen to some short recordings (about 20 seconds long) and try to understand what they are talking about, or who is talking or what they are trying to say in each one.

Example: You look at this on the question paper.

• You will hear five people answer the question "What do you like about your work?"
• As you listen to each one, decide what the person likes.
• Choose your answer from the list **A to I** and write the correct letter in the space provided.
• You will hear the five pieces **once** only.

Example: I

23 Person 1	A meeting lots of people
24 Person 2	B good salary
25 Person 3	C working on your own
26 Person 4	D variety
27 Person 5	E company has good reputation
	F good office canteen
	G developing useful skills
	H near home
	I foreign travel

Then you listen to this.

Instructions: Question 1. Person 1.

Woman: What do I like about it? Well I suppose it's interesting - when I get in in the morning, I never know what's going to happen. One day I'll be going to five different meetings - the next day I'll be working by myself the whole day writing a report or something.

The correct answer is D.

Listening Part 4 Understanding a longer recording (18 questions)

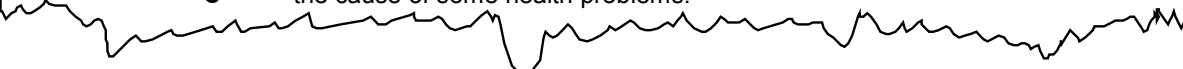
You listen to three longer conversations or presentations and you have to answer detailed questions about what the people are saying.

Example: You look at this on the question paper.

- You will hear a talk given by a representative of the Health and Safety Executive. The talk is about health problems for people working with computers and their visual display units (VDUs).
- For questions 33 – 38, circle **one** letter **A**, **B** or **C** for the correct answer.
- You will hear the talk **twice**.

33 The speaker says VDUs may be


A	better than manual typewriters.
B	unsafe for new computer users.
C	the cause of some health problems.



Then you listen to this.

Man: Good afternoon, I've been invited to talk to you about some of the health hazards which modern office workers face. At the end of the talk you'll have the opportunity to ask questions about anything I say.

Today, Visual Display Units or VDUs have all but replaced the typewriter and are standard equipment in almost every office. But how safe are they? As more and more people begin using them, there is a degree of controversy about their effects on health. There are some operators who report experiencing a number of symptoms – from relatively minor complaints like headaches and itching skin to more serious back and shoulder problems.



The correct answer is C.

Reading Part 1 Longer text with multiple choice questions (6 questions)
Section 3

The questions test your general understanding of the text and your ability to find specific information.

Example:

- Read the article below about women who run their own business and answer questions **64 – 69** on the opposite page.
- For questions **64 – 69**, mark **one** letter **A**, **B** or **C** on your Answer Sheet.

WOMEN RUNNING THEIR OWN BUSINESS

According to recent research, a third of new companies set up in Britain are run by women. Typical examples are Lisa Simons, who started up her own highly successful clothing shops in London with a loan of £15,000 from her bank, and Kate Rogers, who set up *Cellar Cafés* five years ago and sold out to a major restaurant chain this month, at a profit of £3 million.

There are many other examples. *Surprise*, a mail order company selling unusual gifts, had a turnover of \$4 million last year. The company was started by Claire Fuller five years ago in a garage, but later moved into premises in the centre of Coventry. Similarly, Nina Taylor started her company, *NC Books*, in an old warehouse in Bristol. A lawyer by training, she had no previous experience of the retail trade but believes that this worked to her advantage. 'Having no knowledge of the book trade,' she says, 'allowed me to bring fresh ideas into the business.'

- 64 One-third of new British businesses
- A** consist of chain companies.
 - B** are owned or managed by women.
 - C** operate within the food sector.
- 65 What does the second paragraph tell us about the company called *Surprise*?
- A** The company delivers its products by post.
 - B** The company has made a profit every year.
 - C** The company operates from a garage.

The correct answers are: 64 B, 65 A

Reading Part 1 Filling gaps in a text (5 questions)
Section 4

This section tests your grammatical knowledge of English. Candidates must decide what part of speech is needed and in which form to complete the text.

Example:

- For questions **70 – 74**, read the text below and think of the word which best fits each space.
- Write only **one** word in each space on your Answer Sheet.

Example:

He is very interested computers.

Answer:

0	in	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
----------	----	--------------------------	--------------------------

Maria's Beauty Boutiques

Maria Wilson is the now famous Managing Director of Beauty Boutique International plc, one of **(70)** world's beauty product chains. The daughter of Spanish immigrants, she **(71)** born and educated in Britain.
She opened her first Beauty Boutique in 1976 and it was **(72)** popular that she opened five more shops in 3 years. **(73)** then business has developed at an amazing rate, and the chain of Beauty Boutiques **(74)** now expanding all over the world.

The correct answers are: 70 the, 71 was, 72 so, 73 Since, 74 are

Reading Part 2 **Finding information in short texts** (7 questions)
Section 1

You read four short texts, such as adverts, product descriptions, etc. Then you match different sentences with each of those texts.

Example:

- Read these sentences and the job advertisements on the next page.
- Which job does each sentence **75 – 81** refer to?
- For each sentence, mark **one** letter **A, B, C or D** on your Answer Sheet.

75 You need to have experience of working with newspapers.

76 You have to be able to use a computer.

B

Executive Director

The Women's Environment Network (WEN) is looking for a highly motivated, inspiring woman to lead one of Britain's most successful environmental campaigning and information organisations.

Experience required includes management and organisational skills, media, writing and editing experience and a knowledge of the environment and/or women's movement. You will need to run campaigns and motivate a team of about 30 volunteers and paid staff.

C

Wanted:

EXPERIENCED INTERNATIONAL SALESPERSON

representing leading travel company to companies and multinationals in the UK. Applicants are expected to be able to display word-processing skills and familiarity with database software. Basic salary, excellent commission and company car. We have a full-scale London office.

The correct answers are: 75 B, 76 C

Reading Part 2
Section 2

Filling gaps in a text (5 questions)

This section tests your knowledge of grammar and vocabulary. You have a text with five words missing. You are given a choice of four words for each gap and you have to choose the best one.

Example:

- Read this letter about buying a computer.
- Choose the best word to fill each space from the words below.
- For each question **82 – 86**, mark **one** letter **A, B, C or D** on your Answer Sheet.

1 April

Dear Mr Whitehead

Re: Supply of XR6 Workstations

I have pleasure in confirming our ability to meet your requirements for the Silicon Graphics workstation. In view of your special needs, I suggest that you place your order for the agreed equipment as soon as possible. The(82)..... time for hardware for example is 6 weeks from receipt of order to(83)..... . Thus, an order placed with us tomorrow will(84)..... delivery to your site by the week commencing Monday, 15th May. All orders must be accompanied by a(85)..... of 20% of the total amount shown on the attached(86)..... .

Yours sincerely

Vincent Law
Sales Manager

82 A delivery B arrival C transport D postage

83 A institution B initiation C introduction D installation

84 A compel B ensure C promise D maintain

The correct answers are: 82 A, 83 D, 84 B

Reading Part 2 Filling gaps in a text (5 questions)
Section 3

You have a text with five words missing. You have to think of a word to fill each gap.

Example:

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• For questions 87 – 91, read the text below and think of the word which best fits each space.• Write only one word in each space on your Answer Sheet. <p>Example:</p> <p>He is very interested computers.</p> <p>Answer:</p> <table border="1"><tr><td>0</td><td>in</td><td><input type="text"/></td><td><input type="text"/></td></tr></table>	0	in	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
0	in	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	

Millionaire who just loves cars

John Pajackowski is a tall, thin, fit 54 year old who is worth an estimated £145 million thanks to his Car Trader magazines.

Back in**(87)**..... 1960s, John was working in America, selling British sports cars. It was hard work but**(88)**..... he was there, he saw a magazine with pictures of cars for sale. The magazine was regional and anyone**(89)**..... advertise their car in it for a relatively small fee. What impressed John most was that**(90)**..... single advertisement had a picture of the car, unlike normal newspaper adverts, which just provided a written description.

Returning to Britain, John put all of his savings into producing a magazine like the one he**(91)**..... seen in the States. He started in the London region but was soon producing similar magazines for twelve more regions and, by 1990, for three other countries as well.

The correct answers are: 87 the, 88 while, 89 could, 90 every, 91 had

Reading Part 2 Sentences with a gap (6 questions)
Section 4

Example:

• Choose the word or phrase which best completes each sentence.
• For questions 92 – 97, mark **one** letter **A, B, C, or D** on your Answer Sheet.

92 The successful applicant will have a proven track in project management.

A history
B record
C curriculum
D performance

93 When replying, please the above reference number.

A refer
B reproduce
C quote
D allude

The correct answers are: 92 B, 93 C

Reading Part 2
Section 5

Understanding a longer text

(6 questions)

You read a longer text, such as part of a business report, a newspaper article, etc. Then you answer some detailed questions on it.

Example:

- Read the article below about careers advice and answer questions **98 – 103** on the opposite page.
- For questions **98 – 103**, mark **one** letter **A, B, C** or **D** on your Answer Sheet.

Keys to unlock path of career fulfilment

It used to be called vocational guidance. Then it became careers advice and counselling. Since the late 1920s there have been various tests to help guide bewildered and guileless school leavers into job categories suited to their interests and abilities. Hence extroverts have been advised, wisely, to go into sales and marketing, where they thrive on the variability, people-contact and air of optimism. Introverts, on the other hand, find the quiet work of accounts, stores and engineering, where they can work alone in a less people-orientated, frenetic atmosphere, more to their taste.

But good careers advisors need to look at other factors when giving advice. For example, career counselling is flawed if it fails to allow for the possibility of people adapting to, and changing, their jobs once they are in them. Most organisations attempt through various explicit (induction, mentoring, training, appraisal) and implicit (reliance on observation) techniques to mould behaviour into an acceptable pattern. This means that attitudes and even aptitudes of employees may be changed over the first year of employment, sometimes, but not always, in the direction desired by the organisation. Thus what was a 'fit' may easily and quickly develop into a *misfit* and vice versa.

Individuals also change their jobs without leaving them. They rearrange furniture, use space and technology differently and personalise different aspects of the job. They can negotiate with colleagues, earn special privileges and use other means to improve their role and output. In this sense, very soon they are doing the job differently from their predecessors, and possibly from the way recommended by the company. However, both adaptation of personal work-style and attempts to change the way of doing the job are more likely to lead to a higher level of 'fit', because the changes are usually all attempts to increase 'fit'.

- 98** What does the writer say about careers advice in the first paragraph?
- A** Those receiving it have sometimes disagreed with it.
 - B** It has favoured certain types of people over others.
 - C** Some of the standard advice given has been appropriate.
 - D** It has acquired a more appropriate title than it used to have.

- 99** What does the writer say about organisations in the second paragraph?
- A** They can turn suitable employees into unsuitable ones.
 - B** Many of them have a low opinion of careers advisors.
 - C** They are insensitive to the effect their methods have on employees.
 - D** Many are unclear about what to expect from employees.

The correct answers are: 98 C, 99 A

Reading Part 2 Correcting errors in a text (7 questions)
Section 6

You have a text with at least seven lines. Some lines have errors in them. You have to say which lines have errors and then correct them.

Example:

- *Your secretary has given you this letter for checking.*
- *In some lines there is one wrong word.*
- *If there is a wrong word, write the correct word on your Answer Sheet.*
- *If there is no mistake, put a tick (✓) on your Answer Sheet.*

Example:

One of the items you ordered from our catalogue

0	✓
---	---

is temporary out of stock.

00	temporarily
----	-------------

Dear Mr Rose

It was a pleasure to meet you the other day. I was very grateful

104 that you were able to find some times in your busy schedule to visit us.

105 I thought it should be helpful if I had put on paper some of the points we

106 agreed on at our meeting and indicated some with the action points.

The correct answers are: 104 time, 105 would, 106 ✓

3 The Speaking Test

What is in the Speaking Test?

One examiner will conduct the test for you by yourself. The test is recorded on tape and assessed separately by another examiner.

Part 1: Interview (approx. 4 mins)

The examiner asks you questions about yourself, your work and your interests.

Part 2: Presentation (approx. 4 mins)

The examiner gives you a sheet with three topics on it. You choose a topic and have one minute to prepare a short presentation. You speak on the topic for one minute. Afterwards, the examiner asks you one or two questions about your presentation.

Part 3: Information Exchange and Discussion (approx. 4 mins)

The examiner gives you a sheet with a role-play situation. You ask the examiner questions to get the required information. This leads to a discussion on a related topic.

How will I be assessed?

The examiner will give you marks for:

Accuracy of language - using the right vocabulary and grammar

Range of language - using a wide range of words and sentence structures

Pronunciation - how easy it is to understand your pronunciation

Discourse management - how well you speak when giving longer answers - how fluent and how organised

Interactive Communication - how easy it is for the other person to talk with you - how much does (s)he have to help you, how well do you join in the conversation, how well you understand the questions

Overall Ability - a general assessment of your speaking skills

Each test is recorded and sent to another examiner to check the marks.

How are the results reported?

You are given a Test Report which gives an assessment of your overall ability as well as a profile of your strengths and weaknesses in various aspects of your spoken language skills. This includes a description of what you are likely to be able to do in the language in the workplace (e.g. “can take simple routine messages over the phone”).

How should you prepare for the Speaking Test?

You should prepare for the Speaking Test by:

- a) becoming familiar with the types of task in the Test

To become familiar with the types of task in the Test, look at the sample questions in this Handbook. Practise going through the tasks with your language trainer or with a friend/colleague who is competent in the language. Make sure you know how long each part is likely to take.

- b) looking at the aspects of speaking skills that you will be assessed on and find out where you need to improve most

Read through the assessment criteria and think about how your own speaking skills meet these criteria: *accuracy of language, range of language, pronunciation, discourse management, interactive communication.*

Ask your language trainer for feedback on each of these skills. Try recording yourself speaking in the foreign language and listen to the recording, focusing on each of the skills.

- c) practise speaking, focusing on the areas where you need to improve most.

Decide which skills you need to concentrate on. Ask your language trainer for help with improving each of these skills.

The key to improving is practice. The more you practise, the better you will be.

So how can you get the practice that you need? There are different ways, as follows:

- you can join an English course
- you can use the opportunities from your workplace
- you can combine the two options

Whichever way you choose, it is important to remember that learning a language needs:

- time – you may need many years to become really competent
- discipline – you need to practise regularly
- commitment – you must want to do it

If you have time, discipline and commitment, then you can become a competent speaker of English. In fact, everybody can.

Preparing for the interview

Make sure that you:

- can talk about your own job, studies, career plans and personal interests.
- know what to say if you don't understand a question or get confused.

Preparing for the presentation

You can expect to be asked to give a short presentation about a subject of personal interest or a work topic.

Make sure that you:

- are familiar with talking for one minute - you need a good idea of how long you will need to speak for
- organise the information in a clear and logical manner
- deliver the information clearly and smoothly
- are prepared to answer questions about the presentation content

What should you do during the test?

Make sure you arrive early so that you have time to settle down before the test starts.

During the test:

1. Try to give full answers where possible - don't just say "yes" or "no", but give a little more information or an explanation.
2. Don't worry too much about grammar mistakes - grammatical accuracy is only one of the skills being assessed.
3. Concentrate on communicating the information and ideas in the best way that you can.
4. Know what to say or do when you don't understand a question or you are not sure what to do.
5. Be relaxed.

Sample Questions

No sample questions are provided for Part 1 of the Speaking Test.

Part 2 Task Sheet

INSTRUCTIONS

Please read all THREE topics below carefully.
Choose ONE which you feel you will be able to talk about for one minute.

You have one minute to read and prepare your talk.
You may make notes.

Topic A

Describe an important business meeting you attended.

You should say:

- where it was;
- what it was about;
- why it was important.

What were the most interesting moments? Give reasons for your answer.

Topic B

Describe someone you particularly enjoy working with.

You should say:

- what this person does;
- what sort of work you do with this person;
- why you like working with this person.

Would you change anything about this person? Give reasons for your answer.

Topic C

Describe the best workplace you have ever had.

You should say:

- where the workplace was;
- what you were doing there;
- why you liked to work there.

Would you change anything about it? Give reasons for your answer.

Part 3 Information Exchange and Discussion

Set 1

Conference arrangements

You have one minute to read through this task.

Information Exchange

You are making the arrangements for a one-day conference at a local hotel. The Examiner is the Conference Organiser for the hotel and is visiting you to discuss the conference.

Find out this information

- i) the size of the largest conference room
- ii) the cost for that room
- iii) equipment available

You will then be asked to give your opinion on this information.

Discussion

Now discuss this topic with the Examiner:

What makes a successful conference?

4 The Writing Test

What is in the Writing Test?

There are two parts to the BULATS Writing Test:

Part 1: Short Message / Letter (50-60 words) 15 mins

You write a short message or letter using information given.

Part 2: Report (180-200 words) 30 mins

You write a short report following brief instructions. For this part, you choose a task from two alternatives.

How are you assessed in the Writing Test?

You are assessed independently by two trained assessors.

You are assessed on

- how accurately and appropriately you use the language (the grammar and vocabulary)
- how well you organise your ideas
- how effectively the piece of writing achieves its purpose.

How are the results reported?

You are given a Test Report which gives an assessment of your overall ability as well a description of what you are likely to be able to do in the language in the workplace.

How should you prepare for the Writing Test?

You need to prepare by improving your general writing skills. The actual content of the test is difficult to predict, and you will not be able to prepare specific pieces of writing for the test.

Make sure that you:

- know, in general, the appropriate format and style for a standard short message, business letter and business report
- know how to select the appropriate information to be included in your document
- know how to structure the information in clear and logical sections
- know how to write in a style appropriate to the type of document and reader
- know how to use a range of basic grammar and standard phrases accurately
- keep within the time frame for the task

What should you do during the test?

Arrive early so that you have time to settle down before the test starts

1. Read the instructions very carefully. Many candidates lose marks for not following the instructions correctly.
2. Make sure you cover all the points in the instructions.
3. Plan a logical order for the information you are going to give.
4. Concentrate on communicating the information in the most appropriate style for a document.
5. Do not worry too much about the exact number of words; examiners usually just check that there is approximately the right length of text, rather than actually counting the exact number of words.
6. Think about who the letter or report is for - you should write in an appropriate style.
7. For most people, there is not enough time to write the whole text in full draft before writing on the Answer Sheet. Just make a few notes about what points you are going to make and in what order. Then start writing on the Answer Sheet.

Sample Questions

Part One

You have seen this advertisement for some part-time job vacancies:

Part-time Job Opportunities

**Part-time vacancies for students
in our Marketing, Accounts and Customer Service Departments**

Applicants must be students on business-related courses

Apply to: David Jenkins, Mirai Computers

Write a **short letter** applying for one of the jobs:

- say which job you are interested in;
- confirm that you meet the requirements;
- say when you are available to start work.

For your answer, write about 60 words on the opposite page.

Part Two

In Part 2, the candidates have a choice between two tasks.

Task A

The senior management of your company has decided not to allow smoking at your place of work. As the company's Health and Safety representative, you have been asked to write a letter to all company employees.

Write the **letter**, informing staff of the decision and explaining why it has been taken. Write about *health issues, the feelings of staff who don't smoke, possible fire risks*, and any other points which you think are important.

OR

Task B

Your company is deciding whether it needs new office equipment. You have been asked to write a report on the office equipment in your department and suggest any changes that need to be made.

Write the **report** describing the office equipment in your department. Write about *how important those types of equipment are, how well they work now, what changes you would like to see*, and any other points which you think are important.

Write about 180 - 200 words on the following pages.

5 The Computer Test

What is in the Computer Test?

The BULATS Computer Test assesses your ability to use the foreign language by presenting questions via a computer. Questions appear on a screen and you answer them by clicking on a particular option or by typing in words or phrases.

There are eight types of question and they assess listening, reading and grammar/vocabulary skills.

Listening Tasks

(i) Listen and Select	Candidates listen to a short recording and answer a short multiple choice question.
(ii) Listen and Select (Graphic)	The same as above, but the choice is between three pictures or images.
(iii) Extended Listening	Candidates listen to a longer recording and answer a series of multiple choice questions based on it. The questions are presented in the same order as the information in the text.

You can hear the listening recordings twice.

Reading Tasks

(i) Read and Select	Candidates are presented with a notice, diagram, label, memo or letter containing a short text. They choose a phrase that most closely matches the meaning of that text.
(ii) Extended Reading	Candidates read a longer text and answer a series of multiple choice questions based on it. The questions are presented in the same order as the information in the text.

Vocabulary/Grammar Tasks

(i) Multiple Choice gap-fill	Candidates choose the best word or phrase to fill gaps in a text. Four choices for each gap.
(ii) Open gap-fill	Candidates complete blanks in a text by typing in the missing word.
(iii) Gapped sentences	Candidates complete gaps in a sentence by choosing the correct word or phrase. Four choices for each gap.

The listening, reading and grammar/vocabulary questions come in a mixed up order - for example, you may get two listening questions to begin with, then a reading question, then two grammar questions, then another reading question, etc.

The Computer Test is *adaptive*. This means that it adapts to your level. If you get questions right, it will give you more difficult ones. If you get questions wrong, it will give you easier ones.

NB You can change your mind and change an answer you have selected. However, once you move on to the next task, you can't go back to a previous one.

How are the results reported?

The Computer Test produces a report with the candidate's overall score (on a scale of 0-100) and level (on the ALTE level system of 0-5), and their score on each section.

How should you prepare for the Computer Test?

The skills tested in the Computer Test are the same as in the Standard Test, and so you should read the advice given in the section on the Standard Test.

In addition, you should familiarise yourself with the format of the Computer Test and the way you need to answer questions. A demo version of the Computer Test is available on the BULATS website: www.bulats.org. If you do not have access to this, you should ask your language trainer to obtain a Demo CD for the BULATS Computer Test, which also contains a demo test for you to try out.

What should you do during the Test?

- Relax - the test is designed to be easy to use. Some candidates lose marks because they misread instructions in their nervousness.
- Read the instructions carefully.
- Do not hurry - answer questions carefully. However, do not spend too long on a question - generally, the first answer a candidate produces is the best one. Reading tasks do not require you to understand every single word in the text.
- Keep an eye on the progress indicator which shows how far through the test you are.

Sample Questions

There are no sample questions in this booklet. Please visit the website (www.bulats.org) or view our BULATS Demo CD for sample questions.

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