

**Aptis ESOL**

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# High-stakes delivery model supplement

October 2023



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# 1. Introduction

## 1.1 About this supplement

This supplement has been produced to complement the [Aptis General Technical Manual](#) (O’Sullivan, Dunlea, Spiby, Westbrook, & Dunn, 2020) and the [Aptis Advanced Technical Supplement](#) (2020) by providing information specific to the Aptis ESOL test variants, encompassing Aptis ESOL General, Aptis ESOL for Teachers and Aptis ESOL Advanced.

The main Technical Manual gives a complete overview of the Aptis test system, within which a number of variants have been developed for different test populations and uses. The Aptis test system was developed by the British Council, which works directly with organisations to provide tests of English as a Second Language / English as a Foreign Language / English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESL/EFL/ESOL) for a range of assessment needs. The Aptis test system has been used globally since its launch in 2012 with the first variant within the system, Aptis General. Aptis Advanced and Aptis for Teachers have been in operational use since 2015. Descriptions of the technical aspects of the Aptis test system which are common to all Aptis and Aptis ESOL variants are provided in the main Technical Manual. The Manual is of particular interest but not limited to researchers, language testing specialists and those responsible for making decisions about training and assessment in organisations. Readers should consult the manual for information on the following areas:

- The socio-cognitive model of test development and validation which underpin Aptis and have informed the design of the test and scoring systems.
- Overviews of the structure of the test components – Core (Grammar and Vocabulary), Listening, Reading, Speaking and Writing – together with detailed specifications for all test tasks.
- A description of the test production cycle, including the commissioning of items, the approach to item writing and the different quality assurance measures taken to standardise test content. All item writers are trained according to standardised procedures to ensure they are familiar with guidelines for good practice in the fields of testing and item writing, and with the specifications of the Aptis test system.
- The approach to pretesting and quality assurance for building live test versions. All items selected for use in live tests are pretested to ensure that live tests can be constructed to be comparable in empirical difficulty.
- The training and standardisation of human raters and measures for monitoring live marking. All raters are trained using a standardised system and are then expected to pass an accreditation test. Various features of quality control are integrated into the online rating system to ensure consistency of marking. Appendices include the rating scales used for Aptis General and Aptis for Teachers.

- How technical performance characteristics of tests within the system are evaluated and maintained to ensure they are in line with the standards expected of high-stakes tests. Technical measurement properties such as estimates of internal consistency and standard error of measurement are provided for the Core, Reading and Listening components. For Speaking and Writing components, estimates of rater reliability are given.
- Accommodations available to ensure the test is accessible for a diverse range of test takers. The British Council works with organisation to identify any specific needs of their test takers and maintain the ability of the test to derive fair and reliable results for all.
- Research and validation for tests in the Aptis test system. Validation research is conducted in two ways: directly or in collaboration with the British Council Assessment Research Group; and by independent, academic researchers supported through the Assessment Research Awards and Grants.

<https://www.britishcouncil.org/exam/aptis/research/grants-and-awards>

While the Aptis Technical Manual is the main reference for Aptis ESOL, other documents are available which provide information on specific aspects of the test system.

Readers interested specifically in Aptis Advanced should consult the [Aptis Advanced Technical Supplement](#), which focuses on information on the format of each of the five components (Grammar and Vocabulary, Listening, Reading, Speaking, Writing) and detailed information on task specifications and rating scales specific to the Aptis Advanced test.

Those wishing to gain a comprehensive overview of the mechanisms and technicalities of Aptis scoring should refer to the [Aptis Scoring System](#) technical manual (Dunn, 2020). The scoring manual describes the scoring and reporting processes in the Aptis suite of tests, as well as outlining the rigorous standards by which Aptis is constructed and aligned to the CEFR. It provides a detailed discussion of the use and interpretation of Aptis test scores, both as numerical scores and as CEFR grades.

For test takers or teachers and trainers preparing others to take the Aptis test, alternative materials may be more beneficial. Information on test preparation for these groups is provided separately in the form of Candidate Guides and other publicly available support materials, such as online practice tests (see <https://www.britishcouncil.org/exam/aptis/practice-materials>).

## 1.2 Aptis test system

The Aptis test system integrates test design, development, and delivery aspects within an integrated system to provide flexible English language assessment options to test users. The system combines a coherent theoretical approach to language test development and validation with an operational network for content creation and test delivery. Tests are developed within the Aptis system for various uses by different test users, but according to the same theoretical principles of language test validation and the same operational approach to quality assurance. Aptis test development is dynamic, not static, within the context of an ongoing, rigorous

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validation agenda, which includes the continuous collection of evidence to reinforce the validity of Aptis scores.

As noted above, the first variant released in the system was Aptis General, and this remains the baseline, or standard variant within the system. New variants are positioned in relation to Aptis General according to a model of localisation that provides a principled framework for developing variants for different test taker populations and uses (see the main Technical Manual for a description of localisation in the Aptis test system). Currently the main variants in the system are Aptis General, Aptis for Teachers, Aptis Advanced, and Aptis for Teens.

## 2. Aptis ESOL

### 2.1 Aptis ESOL test system

Aptis ESOL is a specific test model that combines Aptis test design and methodology with supervised test delivery. It is designed to serve test takers who need to certify English language level, primarily in situations where there is local recognition of Aptis.

Aptis ESOL is normally taken as a 'high-stakes test for local contexts' and is distinct from Aptis in the following ways:

- Aptis ESOL carries the guarantee that test delivery is always invigilated to British Council examinations delivery standards.
- If an institution or ministry recognises Aptis ESOL, test takers take the test directly with the British Council or in a third-party Network Member centre operating on the British Council's behalf.
- Aptis ESOL tests the four skills; Speaking, Listening, Reading, Writing, and Grammar and Vocabulary knowledge, to get a full profile of the language level.
- Aptis ESOL has specific guidelines regarding test supervision and invigilation, enhanced security at all stages of test delivery, arrangements for test takers with special needs, clear outline protocols for the management and reporting of malpractice and an enquiry on results service.
- Individuals can register for Aptis ESOL test dates directly with the British Council or through a third-party Network Member centre.
- Special arrangements and/or modified Aptis ESOL test versions are available for test takers with special needs who need to certify their level of English.
- Aptis ESOL offers an Enquiry on Results service for test takers requesting a test remark.

## 2.2 Aptis ESOL test purpose

Aptis ESOL is distinct from Aptis in the uses for which it is considered appropriate. Aptis ESOL uses include:

- certifying level where there is a national, regional or local framework of recognition of language qualifications in place
- certifying level for university and tertiary education entry and exit
- certifying level for public employment recruitment, for example teacher recruitment on bi-lingual or multilingual education programmes
- assessing and certifying level for professional employment
- assessing and certifying level of non-compulsory education school age students aged 16 years and above.

## 2.3 Aptis ESOL test delivery

Aptis ESOL test takers take all five components on computers in an appropriately equipped computer test facility, laid out according to British Council examination delivery standards. The British Council always oversees Aptis ESOL test delivery, either directly or through an approved third-party Network Member centre, which includes standard requirements and standards for delivery, as set out in the Aptis ESOL Administrator Handbook. Table 1 below details all stages of Aptis ESOL test delivery outlined in the Administrator Handbook.

All Aptis ESOL test sessions are supervised and invigilated by test day venue staff directly employed by the British Council. All test day venue staff go through a programme of regular training and monitoring to ensure that Aptis ESOL is delivered to British Council examination delivery standards, as set out in the Aptis ESOL Invigilator Handbook. The handbook outlines the procedures that all Aptis ESOL test day venue staff must adhere to at all stages of an Aptis ESOL test session as well as the technical guidelines to follow when using the test platform.

**Table 1: Administrator Handbook contents**

1. Test planning and organisation	Aptis ESOL Administrator responsibilities, recruitment and training, test room preparation.
2. Test day administration	Test taker identity checking pre-test entry procedures, test-delivery regulations, emergency procedures and complaint management.
3. Post-test administration	Results, verification, enquiries on results, appeals.
4. Policies and procedures	Cancellation and transfers, third party policy, minors, transgender test takers, special arrangements, data retention.
5. Annexes	Checklists, invigilator instructions and script, forms and templates.

## 2.4 Aptis ESOL third-party Network Member centres

Aptis ESOL can be delivered by third-party Network Members, who enter into a formal agreement with the British Council to deliver Aptis ESOL after an application is received and reviewed. Third-party members may include universities, other tertiary education institutions, schools and further education colleges, private language academies, and training and examination centres.

Third-party Network Members are monitored and audited regularly to ensure that Aptis ESOL test delivery is carried out to British Council examination delivery and Ofqual standards.

A key part of the agreement for third-party Network Members is that as an Aptis ESOL centre they are subject to audit. All relevant Aptis ESOL delivery processes and requirements are described in a Network Member agreement, which makes specific reference to this status and additional obligations.

## 2.5 Aptis ESOL test security

All test takers must take Aptis ESOL in a safe, secure test environment and their test results must report an accurate profile of their English level across the four skills and grammar and vocabulary knowledge tested. Where technical and operational incidents occur at any stage of test delivery, and which may impact on test security, there is an incident reporting and escalation model in place to ensure incident monitoring and resolution.

Protocols and policies for management and prevention of malpractice are contained in the Aptis ESOL Malpractice Guide. The Guide outlines procedures for identifying, responding to and following up test taker malpractice at all Aptis ESOL sessions invigilated by the British Council.

## 2.6 Aptis ESOL Ofqual recognition and regulation

Aptis ESOL is recognised and regulated by the Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation ([Ofqual](#)) as a qualification for the certification of English for speakers of other Languages:

- |                                    |  |
|------------------------------------|--|
| • Qualification Title:             | Aptis ESOL International Certificate   |
| • Qualification Number: 603/7819/0 | Qualification Number: 603/7819/0   |
| • Qualification Type               | English For Speakers of Other Languages  |
| • Regulation Start Date            | 24-Aug-2021  |
| • Qualification Level              | <a href="#">UK Level 3</a><br><a href="#">European Qualification Framework Level 4</a> |

Ofqual is a non-ministerial department of the United Kingdom Government, which regulates qualifications, examinations and assessments in England. It is responsible for making sure that

regulated qualifications reliably indicate the knowledge, skills and understanding test takers have demonstrated and sets out the rules and guidance for all regulated qualifications in the [Ofqual handbook](#). The Ofqual handbook contains Ofqual's General Conditions of Recognition and associated requirements - the rules set for all Ofqual regulated qualifications – as well as guidance on compliance in the ten sections listed in the following table.

**Table 2. Ofqual Handbook: description of rules in each section**

Section	Rules covered
A Governance	Governance of awarding organisations, including management of conflicts of interest, risks, incidents and malpractice.
B Awarding organisation and Ofqual	The relationship between awarding organisations and Ofqual, including in relation to Responsible Officers, reporting of information and the use of the Ofqual logo.
C Third parties	Arrangements with third parties, including Centres.
D General requirements for regulated qualifications	General; including qualification fitness for purpose and accessibility, reviewing approach, enquiries and complaints, withdrawing qualifications and information for teachers.
E Design and development of qualifications	Qualification design and development, including titling, specifications, credit, and qualification size and level.
F Providing qualifications to purchasers	Provision of information on qualification fees and features, packaging qualifications with other products or services, and invoicing.
G Setting and delivering the assessment	Setting and delivering assessments, including the language of assessments, maintaining confidentiality, reasonable adjustments and special consideration.
H Marking and issuing results	Marking, Centre Assessments Standards Scrutiny (including Moderation), setting specified levels of attainment and results
I Appeals and certificates	Appeals, complaints and certificate content, design and issue.
J Interpretation and definitions	How to interpret Ofqual rules, including defined terms.

## 2.7 Aptis recognition

Aptis is currently recognised by over 150 ministries, government departments, universities, and other public entities in more than 30 countries around the world, including the Ministries of Education in Colombia (Aptis), Malaysia (Aptis), Poland (Aptis), Uzbekistan (Aptis) and Vietnam (Aptis ESOL).



3. Aptis ESOL certificate



Aptis ESOL

International Certificate

DEMO CUSTOMER

Test taker name

06.02.2023

Test date

ESOL~0000483

Enrolment ID

British Council  
Vietnam  
Hanoi

Test centre

Aptis ESOL  
General

Qualification

BC100000029

Certificate number

Passport

ID type

12345

ID number

Overall CEFR level: B2

Scale score

Skill name	Skill score
Listening	26/50
Reading	40/50
Speaking	38/50
Writing	38/50
Final Scale Score	142/200
Grammar and Vocabulary	31/50

CEFR skill profile

CEFR grade
C
B2
B1
A2
A1
A0





07.02.2023

Professor Barry O'Sullivan OBE

Centre stamp and date

The results report verifies the person named above achieved the stated score under conditions supervised by the British Council.

Please turn over for CEFR skill descriptors.

<https://credentials.britishcouncil.org/241a5a3d-afbb-4593-9099-d336452ca891>

www.britishcouncil.org

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