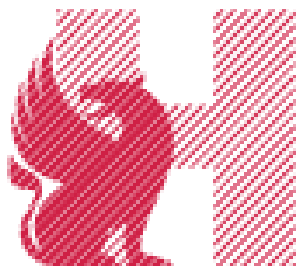




HOLMES LANGUAGE ASSESSMENT

UPDATED MARCH 2020



HOLMES
EDUCATION
GROUP



EXAM OVERVIEW

UPDATE

In order to meet the ever-growing demand, the Holmes Language Assessment has been updated and expanded to reflect the need for more clarity in standardisation. While still a succinct assessment conducted remotely, it has been refined to be more demonstrably measurable by making use of discreet point testing that can be more easily communicated and standardised.

Further, even though there has been a low pass rate, the assessment has not been simplified, indeed, responding to feedback from around the world, the test now contains longer and more direct tests of listening, reading and writing. These tasks have been designed to be completed by increasing numbers of university applicants and so have been specifically chosen to assess the candidate's ability to process language in an educational setting.

By making these changes, we hope to meet the standards some institutions have set for entry, make the assessment more transparent for candidates and assessors alike, while also meeting the demand for the large quantity of candidates applying through our platform.

HOLMES LANGUAGE ASSESSMENT

The Holmes Language Assessment aims to rate the English language competence of applicants to Holmes Institute programmes, whether Pathways programmes in the UK or Holmes' own Bachelors and Masters programmes, without requiring candidates to complete external testing. The procedure is not designed to produce a fine-grained profile of the candidate's language skills, but rather to enable raters to determine whether a candidate has language competence at or above B2/C1 on the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (henceforth CEFR) in her/his listening, speaking, reading and writing skills.

Assessors are selected from the senior teaching team at OHC London. All have substantial experience teaching English in a wide variety of contexts and hold Cambridge Delta or equivalent qualification. Assessors include examiners for London Trinity College spoken English, IELTS and Cambridge mainsuite examiners, teacher trainers on Cambridge CELTA and Delta courses and published ELT authors. In addition members of the senior academic team at OHC have been involved in identification and calibration of exponents and descriptors in CEFR projects led by Brian North for the British Council and Equals.

PROCEDURE

The Holmes Language Assessment takes place online over Zoom.

Instructions will be sent to the candidate before the allotted time to allow them to set up their equipment.

Before the exam begins, the interlocutor will speak to the candidate to ensure the connection is working and the exam can continue. The candidate will be informed when the recording will begin and the exam will start.

During the exam, the candidate will be asked to share their screen. Then, an email will be sent containing the reading text. The writing will be sent back to the examiner by email.



EXAM OVERVIEW

TASK	SKILL	TIME
STAGE 1: SPEAKING		
TASK 01 CONVERSATION	SPEAKING & LISTENING	5 MIN
TASK 02 EXTENDED SPEAKING	SPEAKING	1 MIN PLAN 1 MIN SPEAKING
FOLLOW-UP QUESTIONS	SPEAKING & LISTENING	3 MIN
STAGE 2: LISTENING		
TASK 03 LISTEN TO AN AUDIO RECORDING DESCRIBE THE TOPIC	LISTENING	3 MIN
TASK 04 REPORT THE DETAILS	LISTENING & SPEAKING	7 MIN
STAGE 3: READING		
TASK 05 READ A TEXT MULTIPLE MATCHING	READING	10 MIN
TASK 06 READING TO WRITING WRITE A SUMMARY	READING & WRITING	10 MIN
STAGE 4: WRITING		
TASK 07 WRITE AN ESSAY	WRITING	30 MIN

EXAM BREAKDOWN

STAGE 1: SPEAKING

The candidate joins the Zoom meeting and the assessor checks the connection. The assessor begins the recording and introduces themselves. The candidate is asked to show their passport and say their full name at the same time.

TASK	DETAIL
TASK 01 CONVERSATION	The assessor engages candidate in conversation on subjects of personal interest and daily life.
TASK 02 EXTENDED SPEAKING	The assessor will ask the candidate to speak on his/her own for about a minute on a subject they are given. The candidate has one minute to prepare.
FOLLOW-UP QUESTIONS	The assessor asks brief follow-up questions related to what candidate has said.

EXAM BREAKDOWN

STAGE 2: LISTENING

The assessor will share their screen with the candidate so they can hear the audio. A short talk will be played **twice** and the candidate will be given two tasks.

TASK	DETAIL
TASK 03 DESCRIBE THE TOPIC	The assessor explains the topic and asks the candidate to listen for the first time and tell them what the talk is generally about.
TASK 04 REPORT THE DETAILS	The assessor asks the candidate a specific information question. This will be to explain the two sides of the argument presented in the talk. The candidate is encouraged to take notes while listening. The candidate details the two sides according to what they heard.

EXAM BREAKDOWN

STAGE 3: READING

The assessor will ask the candidate to share their screen. The candidate will then be emailed a reading text for task 5. When the time is up, the candidate will send their answers as a reply to the email. Then the text for task 6 will be emailed and the candidate will send their summary as reply to the email.

TASK	DETAIL
TASK 05 MULTIPLE MATCHING	The assessor explains that the candidate will have ten minutes to read the text and answer the five questions. These could be matching headings or matching specific information to paragraphs.
TASK 06 READING TO WRITING WRITE A SUMMARY	The assessor emails a shorter text, candidate is asked to read the text and summarise it in one sentence. The candidate must use their own words as far as is possible.

EXAM BREAKDOWN

STAGE 4: WRITING

The assessor will email an essay topic to the candidate. The candidate is expected to produce a piece of extended writing. This will be sent to the assessor as a reply to the email.

TASK	DETAIL
TASK 07 ESSAY	Assessor emails the candidate for the final time with an essay question related to the text just summarized. Candidate has thirty minutes to plan and write an essay as a reply to the email. Minimum of 300 words

END OF THE TEST

HOW THE EXAM IS ASSESSED

THE INTERLOCUTOR IS THE PERSON WHO SPEAKS TO THE CANDIDATE DURING THE EXAM. THEY WILL ASSESS THE EXAM THEMSELVES AND A SECOND EXAMINER WILL USE THIS TO PROVIDE THEIR FINAL ASSESSMENT BASED ON THE VIDEO OF THE EXAM.

STAGE 1: SPEAKING

TASK 01

CONVERSATION

CONTENT

Exchanging personal information/ social interaction

B2 SPEAKING COMPETENCES

Can interact with a degree of fluency and spontaneity that makes regular interaction, and sustained relationships with native speakers quite possible without imposing strain on either party; Can convey degrees of emotion and highlight the personal significance of events and experiences.

B2+ SPEAKING COMPETENCES

Can communicate spontaneously, often showing remarkable fluency and ease of expression in even longer complex stretches of speech. Can use the language fluently, accurately and effectively on a wide range of general, academic, vocational or leisure topics, marking clearly the relationships between ideas. Can communicate spontaneously with good grammatical control without much sign of having to restrict what he/she wants to say, adopting a level of formality appropriate to the circumstances.

C1 SPEAKING COMPETENCES

Can use language flexibly and effectively for social purposes, including emotional, allusive and joking usage; Has a good command of a broad lexical repertoire allowing gaps to be readily overcome with circumlocutions. There is little obvious searching for expressions or avoidance strategies; only a conceptually difficult subject can hinder a natural, smooth flow of language.

B2 LISTENING COMPETENCES

Can understand in detail what is said to him/her in the standard spoken language

B2+ LISTENING COMPETENCES

Can understand standard dialect likely to be encountered in social, professional or academic life and identify speaker viewpoints and attitudes as well as the information content.

C1 LISTENING COMPETENCES

Can understand enough to follow extended speech on abstract and complex topics beyond his/her own field, though he/she may need to confirm occasional details, especially if the accent is unfamiliar. Can recognise a wide range of idiomatic expressions and colloquialisms, appreciating register shifts.

TASK 02

EXTENDED SPEAKING

FOLLOW-UP QUESTIONS

CONTENT

Longer turn – candidate talks uninterrupted for 1-2 mins on a subject supplied by assessor

B2 SPEAKING COMPETENCES

Can give clear, detailed descriptions and presentations on a wide range of subjects related to his/her field of interest, expanding and supporting ideas with subsidiary points and relevant examples; Can take a series of follow up questions with a degree of fluency and spontaneity which poses no strain for either him/herself or the audience; Can correct slips and errors if he/she becomes conscious of them or if they have led to misunderstandings.

HOW THE EXAM IS ASSESSED

B2+ SPEAKING COMPETENCES

Can give clear, systematically developed descriptions and presentations, with appropriate highlighting of significant points, and relevant supporting detail. Can depart spontaneously from a prepared text and follow up interesting points raised by members of the audience, often showing remarkable fluency and ease of expression. Good grammatical control; occasional 'slips' or non-systematic errors and minor flaws in sentence structure may still occur, but they are rare and can often be corrected in retrospect.

C1 SPEAKING COMPETENCES

Can give clear, detailed descriptions and presentations on complex subjects, integrating sub themes, developing particular points and rounding off with an appropriate conclusion; Can give clear, detailed descriptions of complex subjects. Can give elaborate descriptions and narratives, integrating sub themes, developing particular points and rounding off with an appropriate conclusion.

B2 LISTENING COMPETENCES

Can understand announcements and messages on concrete and abstract topics spoken in standard dialect at normal speed.

STAGE 2: LISTENING

TASK 03

DESCRIBE THE TOPIC

CONTENT

Listening for gist

B2 LISTENING COMPETENCES

Can understand in detail what is said to him/her in the standard spoken language.

B2+ LISTENING COMPETENCES

Can understand standard dialect likely to be encountered in social, professional or academic life and identify speaker viewpoints and attitudes as well as the information content.

C1 LISTENING COMPETENCES

Can understand enough to follow extended speech on abstract and complex topics beyond his/her own field, though he/she may need to confirm occasional details, especially if the accent is unfamiliar. Can recognise a wide range of idiomatic expressions and colloquialisms, appreciating register shifts.

TASK 04

REPORT THE DETAILS

CONTENT

Listening for specific information and detail

B2 LISTENING COMPETENCES

Can understand the main topics of propositionally and linguistically complex speech on both concrete and abstract topics delivered in a standard dialect, including technical discussions in his/ her field of specialisation. Can follow extended speech and complex lines of argument provided the topic is reasonably familiar, and the direction of the talk is signposted by explicit markers.

B2+ LISTENING COMPETENCES

Can understand standard spoken language, live or broadcast, on both familiar and unfamiliar topics normally encountered in personal, social, academic or vocational life. Only extreme background noise, inadequate discourse structure and/or idiomatic usage influences the ability to understand.

C1 LISTENING COMPETENCES

Can understand standard spoken language, live or broadcast, on both familiar and unfamiliar topics normally encountered in personal, social, academic or vocational life. Only extreme background noise, inadequate discourse structure and/or idiomatic usage influences the ability to understand.

HOW THE EXAM IS ASSESSED

STAGE 3: READING

TASK 05

MULTIPLE MATCHING

CONTENT

Reading for specific information and detail

B2 READING COMPETENCES

Can quickly identify the content and relevance of news items, articles and reports on a wide range of professional topics, deciding whether closer study is worthwhile; Can understand articles and reports concerned with contemporary problems in which the writers adopt particular stances or viewpoints.

B2+ READING COMPETENCES

Can obtain information, ideas and opinions from highly specialised sources within his/her field. Can understand specialised articles outside his/her field, provided he/she can use a dictionary occasionally to confirm his/her interpretation of terminology.

C1 READING COMPETENCES

Can understand in detail lengthy, complex texts, whether or not they relate to his/her own area of speciality, provided he/she can reread difficult sections; 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.

TASK 06

READING TO WRITING

CONTENT

Write a summary

B2 READING COMPETENCES

Can quickly identify the content and relevance of news items, articles and reports on a wide range of professional topics, deciding whether closer study is worthwhile; Can understand articles and reports concerned with contemporary problems in which the writers adopt particular stances or viewpoints;

B2+ READING COMPETENCES

Can obtain information, ideas and opinions from highly specialised sources within his/her field. Can understand specialised articles outside his/her field, provided he/she can use a dictionary occasionally to confirm his/her interpretation of terminology.

C1 READING COMPETENCES

Can understand in detail lengthy, complex texts, whether or not they relate to his/her own area of speciality, provided he/she can reread difficult sections; 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.

B2 WRITING COMPETENCES

Can summarise a wide range of factual and imaginative texts, commenting on and discussing contrasting points of view and the main themes; Spelling and punctuation are reasonably accurate but may show signs of mother tongue influence; Can use a limited number of cohesive devices to link his/her utterances into clear, coherent discourse, though there may be some 'jumpiness' in a long contribution. Can pass on detailed information reliably

B2+ WRITING COMPETENCES

Can summarise extracts from news items, interviews or documentaries containing opinions, argument and discussion; Can use a variety of linking words efficiently to mark clearly the relationships between ideas

C1 WRITING COMPETENCES

Can write clear, well-structured texts of complex subjects, underlining the relevant salient issues; Can summarise long, demanding texts;

HOW THE EXAM IS ASSESSED

STAGE 4: WRITING

TASK 07

WRITING

CONTENT

Write an essay

B2 WRITING COMPETENCES

Can write clear, detailed texts on a variety of subjects related to his field of interest, synthesising and evaluating information and arguments from a number of sources; Can write 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 summarise a wide range of factual and imaginative texts, commenting on and discussing contrasting points of view and the main themes; Can produce clearly intelligible continuous writing, which follows standard layout and paragraphing conventions; Spelling and punctuation are reasonably accurate but may show signs of mother tongue influence; Can pass on detailed information reliably.

B2+ WRITING COMPETENCES

Can write an essay or report which develops an argument systematically with appropriate highlighting of significant points and relevant supporting detail. Can summarise extracts from news items, interviews or documentaries containing opinions, argument and discussion; Can evaluate different ideas or solutions to a problem. Can use a variety of linking words efficiently to mark clearly the relationships between ideas

C1 WRITING COMPETENCES

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.

USING ZOOM

Sign up for Zoom using this link:



You will need to join a meeting and share your screen.
Watch the videos below.



EXAM DAY

On the day of your exam, you will receive an email inviting you to a zoom meeting.

You **must** have your passport with you and ready to show the assessor during the exam.

When you first connect to the meeting, there may be a delay or some audio issues. The assessor will speak to you and check that you can hear them. They will also ask if you can hear them clearly.

Once the technical details have been checked, the assessor will explain that they are about to start the exam and will begin recording. They will explain that the exam will start when they say 'hello'.

You will then take the exam, following the instructions of the assessor.

You will have a short conversation on general topics. Then, you will be given one minute to plan a short speech on a familiar topic. You will then deliver your speech for at least one minute. Do not worry if the assessor interrupts you. The assessor will then ask you some follow-up questions on the topic and about what you said.

Following this, the assessor will share their screen with you and introduce the topic of a short audio recording. You will hear the recording twice. First, you will be asked to say what the talk was generally about. Then, you will be asked to listen again and note the details of the two sides of an argument. After listening, you will report your findings to the assessor.

You will now be asked to share your screen by pressing the green button at the bottom of the screen on Zoom. You will then be emailed a reading text with five questions that must be matched to parts of the text. The answers to which you will email back to the assessor. They will then email you another text that you will be asked to summarise in one long sentence.

To end the assessment, you will be asked to write an essay on a topic related to the text you just summarised. This will be a longer form of writing and you will write it as a reply to them question that has been emailed to you.

That is the end of the exam. The assessor will thank you and sign off.

EXAM DAY TIPS

- sign up for Zoom before the day of your exam and test your equipment, then you will be sure everything is going to work
- have a pad of paper with you- making notes is encouraged during the exam
- when planning your extended speaking, make sure you note down what the assessor says carefully and address all points
- you are not assessed on the quality of your ideas but you are assessed on how logically they link together
- do not be afraid to ask for the assessor to repeat what they said, you will not be marked down for this
- the summary you write should not plagiarise whole sentences from the reading text but you can use keywords from the text in your own writing
- ensure your summary covers the general meaning of the whole text
- you must use your own words when writing the summary and essay
- do not use any outside sources during the exam, you are asked to share your screen and if you translate or copy and paste you will be disqualified
- paragraphing, punctuation and structure are vital parts of your essay
- take notes when you read to help you at any time during the exam
- try to give detailed interesting answers that are not too short
- try to relax and engage with the assessor

Good luck!