



Qualification Specification

ESEC20 – VTCT (ITEC) Entry Level Certificate in ESOL
International (Entry 1) (A1)

603/6942/5

About VTCT (ITEC)

Market-leading specialists, ITEC & VTCT, provide international qualifications and assessments in over 40 countries.

Through the two organisations, qualifications are delivered via over 2,000 approved sites globally with an ever-expanding list of centres throughout the UK and Ireland and a growing international presence.

Awarding for over 50 years, both ITEC & VTCT offer high-quality, robust and regulated qualifications and assessments in a range of sectors, including beauty therapy, complementary therapy, hairdressing and barbering, sports, active health & fitness, hospitality, business & retail and learning & development. Offering smarter support for brighter futures, with award-winning resources including: ManageAssess, Pivot Point, Smart End Point Assessment and Cengage.

For more information visit us at www.itecworld.co.uk and www.vtct.org.uk, or contact our dedicated Customer Support Team via email; customersupport@vtct.org.uk or call +44 (0)23 8068 4500.

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1 Qualification at a glance

Qualification title	VTCT (ITEC) Entry Level Certificate in ESOL International (Entry 1) (A1)
Qualification number	603/6942/5
Product code	ESEC20
First registration date	01/01/2021
Age range	Centres must ensure the qualification they offer to their learners are suitable for their age, ability and needs.
Total Qualification Time (TQT)	90
Guided Learning (GL) hours	70
Assessment	To be awarded this qualification, learners must successfully achieve the following modes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Speaking • Listening • Writing • Reading • Use of English
Grading	Fail/Pass/Merit/Distinction
Entry requirements	There are no formal entry requirements for learners undertaking the qualifications. It is not necessary for learners to have achieved a qualification in English prior to entry for VTCT (ITEC) Entry Level Certificate in ESOL International (Entry 1) (A1).
Progression Opportunities	Learners may wish to use this qualification as a stepping-stone to a higher level ESOL International qualification.
Qualification Objectives	To achieve a nationally recognised qualification in English, referenced to the descriptions of language proficiency in the Common European Framework Reference for Languages (CEFR).
Qualification Features	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • On demand and flexible examination • Examination can be conducted at times that are suitable to Centres and learners, there are no ‘assessment windows’ • Learner-centred examination which bolsters confidence in learning and assessment and supports all learners to fulfil their confidence potential • Separate written and spoken examination • Online and paper-based format

2 About this qualification

2.1 Who is this qualification for?

The VTCT (ITEC) ESOL International qualifications are designed for learners who

- are not native speakers of English and wish to achieve a high quality internationally recognised qualification in English language that is available and recognised worldwide
- wish to study a new language
- need English language for everyday or work
- require an externally recognised certificate

The Qualifications are recognised in the UK and globally and are referenced to the descriptions of language proficiency in the Common European Framework Reference for Languages (CEFR).

CEFR available: <https://www.coe.int/en/web/common-european-framework-reference-languages>

There are six qualifications within VTCT (ITEC) ESOL International suite of qualifications offering learners a vertical progression route. From A1 for novices up to C2 for those who have mastered the language VTCT (ITEC) Entry Level Certificate in ESOL International (Entry 1) (A1) is the mid-level of the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR). The qualifications assess the learners' competency in all five skills: speaking, listening, reading, writing and use of English.

Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) Level	VTCT (ITEC) ESOL International qualifications	Equivalent UK Levels
Basic user	VTCT (ITEC) Entry Level Certificate in ESOL International (Entry 1) (A1)	Entry Level 1
Basic user	VTCT (ITEC) Entry Level Certificate in ESOL International (Entry 2) (A2)	Entry Level 2
Independent user	VTCT (ITEC) Entry Level Certificate in ESOL International (Entry 3) (B1)	Entry Level 3
Independent user	VTCT (ITEC) Level 1 Certificate in ESOL International (B2)	Level 1
Proficient user	VTCT (ITEC) Level 2 Certificate in ESOL International (C1)	Level 2
Proficient user	VTCT (ITEC) Level 3 Certificate in ESOL International (C2)	Level 3

2.2 The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR)

The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) is an international standard for describing language ability. It describes language ability on a six-point scale, from A1 for novices, up to C2 for those who have mastered the language. This makes it easy for anyone involved in language teaching, learning and testing, such as teachers or learners, to see the level of different qualifications. It also means that employers and educational institutions can easily compare our qualifications to other examinations in their country.

Basic user	A1	A1 – Can understand and use familiar everyday expressions and very basic phrases aimed at the satisfaction of needs of a concrete type. Can introduce him/herself and others and can ask and answer questions about personal details such as where he/she lives, people he/she knows and things he/she has. Can interact in a simple way provided the other person talks slowly and clearly and is prepared to help.
	A2	A2 – Can understand sentences and frequently used expressions related to areas of most immediate relevance (e.g. very basic personal and family information, shopping, local geography, employment). Can communicate in simple and routine tasks requiring a simple and direct exchange of information on familiar and routine matters. Can describe in simple terms aspects of his/her background, immediate environment and matters in areas of immediate need.
Independent user	B1	B1 – Can understand the main points of clear standard input on familiar matters regularly encountered in work, school, leisure, etc. Can deal with most situations likely to arise whilst travelling in an area where the language is spoken. Can produce simple connected text on topics which are familiar, or of personal interest. Can describe experiences and events, dreams, hopes & ambitions and briefly give reasons and explanations for opinions and plans.
	B2	B2 – Can understand the main ideas of complex text on both concrete and abstract topics, including technical discussions in his/her field of specialisation. Can interact with a degree of fluency and spontaneity that makes regular interaction with native speakers quite possible without strain on either party. Can produce clear, detailed text on a wide range of subjects and explain a viewpoint on a topical issue giving the advantages and disadvantages of various options
Proficient user	C1	C1 – Can understand a wide range of demanding, longer texts, and recognise implicit meaning. Can express him/herself 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 organisational patterns, connectors and cohesive devices.
	C2	C2 – Can understand with ease virtually everything heard or read. Can summarise information from different spoken and written sources, reconstructing arguments and accounts in a coherent presentation. Can express him/herself spontaneously, very fluently and precisely, differentiating finer shades of meaning even in more complex situations.

2.3 What does this qualification cover?

The qualification includes five mandatory modes which assess the learners' skills and competency in all five skills: speaking, listening, reading, writing and use of English.

Mode title	Level
Speaking	Entry 1
Listening	Entry 1
Reading	Entry 1
Writing	Entry 1
Use of English	Entry 1

2.4 What could this qualification lead to?

VTCT (ITEC) ESOL International qualifications are designed for learners who are not native speakers of English and who wish to achieve a high quality, internationally recognised qualification in English. VTCT (ITEC) ESOL International qualifications are suitable for learners wishing to improve their general English or for learners who wish to enter into higher education or professional employment in the UK or elsewhere. Learners can progress through VTCT's suite of ESOL international qualifications:

- VTCT (ITEC) Entry Level Certificate in ESOL International (Entry 1) (A1)
- VTCT (ITEC) Entry Level Certificate in ESOL International (Entry 2) (A2)
- VTCT (ITEC) Entry Level Certificate in ESOL International (Entry 3) (B1)
- VTCT (ITEC) Level 1 Certificate in ESOL International (B2)
- VTCT (ITEC) Level 2 Certificate in ESOL International (C1)
- VTCT (ITEC) Level 3 Certificate in ESOL International (C2)

3 Qualification structure

3.1 Qualification structure

To be awarded the VTCT (ITEC) Entry Level Certificate in ESOL International (Entry 1) (A1) learners must achieve an overall Pass grade from assessment modes as detailed in section 4.

Mandatory mode	Level
Listening	Entry 1
Reading	Entry 1
Writing	Entry 1
Use of English	Entry 1
Speaking	Entry 1

3.2 Total Qualification Time (TQT)

TQT is defined under the Ofqual General Conditions of Recognition, General Condition J1.8, as the number of notional hours which represents an estimate of the total amount of time that could reasonably be expected to be required in order for a learner to achieve and demonstrate achievement of the level of attainment necessary for the award of a qualification.

TQT is comprised of the following two elements:

- the number of hours which an awarding organisation has assigned to a qualification for Guided Learning, and
- an estimate of the number of hours a learner will reasonably be likely to spend in preparation, study or any other form of participation in education or training, including assessment, which takes place as directed – but, unlike Guided Learning, not under the immediate guidance or supervision of – a lecturer, supervisor, tutor or other appropriate provider of education or training.

4 Guidance on assessment

4.1 Summary of assessment methods

The VTCT (ITEC) Entry Level Certificate in ESOL International (Entry 1) (A1), listening, reading, use of English and writing modes of assessment are assessed by either a paper based or online examination which are externally set and quality assured by VTCT (ITEC). Learners are required to take all five assessment modes in order to receive an overall grade and be eligible for certification. The speaking mode of the qualification is internally assessed by the centre's speech assessor and interlocutor and externally quality assured by VTCT.

Mode of Assessment (Paper-based or online)	Assessment Method	Examination Conditions	Speaking Assessment – Controlled
Use of English	Written Examination	✓	
Listening		✓	
Reading		✓	
Writing		✓	
Speaking	Practical Oral Examination (Face to Face)		✓

4.2 Examination

The theory examination is closed book and consists of one paper. The paper includes a range of tasks including multiple-choice, true and false questions as well as a writing task. Learners must sit the examination for listening, reading, writing and use of English in one session. The speaking mode of the assessment can be scheduled by the centre on the same day as the examination or on a different day.

Mode of Assessment	Assessment Type	Total Timing	Weighting
Listening	Written Examination – completed in one session	15 minutes	20%
Use of English		90 minutes	20%
Reading			20%
Writing			20%
Speaking	Practical Oral Examination (Face to Face) – taken independently of the written paper	7 minutes	20%

Learners must achieve a minimum of 50% aggregate score across all modes of assessment in order to pass the VTCT (ITEC) Entry Level Certificate in ESOL International (Entry 1) (A1) qualification. The qualification is graded Fail/Pass/Merit/Distinction.

Qualification	Fail	Pass	Merit	Distinction
VTCT (ITEC) Entry Level Certificate in ESOL International (Entry 1) (A1)	Below 50%	50% - 64%	65% - 79%	80% and above

Examinations must be taken under examination conditions in accordance with VTCT (ITEC) Certificate in ESOL International policies and procedures for conducting ESOL International assessments. The pertinent documentation can be found on the VTCT website (www.vtct.org.uk).

4.2.1 Retaking Examinations

Learners who fail to achieve the required Pass mark are permitted to re-sit after having sufficient teaching and additional study time. There is no limit to the number of retakes a learner can attempt.

4.2.2 Reasonable adjustments and special considerations

A reasonable adjustment is an adjustment made to an assessment for a qualification that is approved or set in place before an assessment activity takes place; it constitutes an arrangement to give the learner access to the qualification.

Information on the reasonable adjustments and special considerations allowed for the external theory examination within this qualification can be found on the VTCT website (www.vtct.org.uk).

4.3 Spot Checking

In addition to the scheduled examination, targeted and unannounced spot checks of centres delivering this qualification will be undertaken as part of the awarding organisation's formal quality assurance process.

5 Support and guidance

A VTCT (ITEC) ESOL International guidance document is available to support qualification delivery and assessment.

For more information, visit the VTCT website (www.vtct.org.uk).

6 Glossary

Product code	The code allocated by the awarding organisation. This should be used when communicating directly with the awarding organisation.
Title	Reflects the content of the qualification.
Level	This represents the level of achievement and is aligned to the Common European Framework Reference for Languages (CEFR).
Guided Learning (GL) hours	The qualification has GL assigned to them. This is the time a learner spends: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • being taught or given instruction by a lecturer, tutor, supervisor or other appropriate provider of education or training.
Learning outcomes	Specify what a learner will know and understand as a result of completing the qualification. These are covered in the qualification handbook.
Assessment criteria	Assessment criteria specify the minimum standard required by the learner to achieve the relevant grade. Learners must provide sufficient and valid evidence to achieve the grade. These are covered in the qualification handbook.
Indicative content	Provides the basis for the teaching, learning and assessment of each learning outcome. Teachers and tutors should ensure that the full breadth of qualification content is delivered.
Assessment requirements	Details the assessments that must be completed and achieved to be awarded the qualification. For more information on assessment methods see Section 4 of this specification.
The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR)	The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEF or CEFR) devised by the Council of Europe as a way of standardising the levels of language competencies. The CEFR organises language proficiency in six levels, A1 to C2, which can be regrouped into three broad levels: Basic User, Independent User and Proficient User. The levels are defined through 'can-do' descriptors.
Mode	ESOL International qualifications assess the five modes of (listening, speaking, reading and writing plus the use of English).

Appendix - Common Reference Levels

1. Global scale

Proficient user	C2	Can understand with ease virtually everything heard or read. Can summarise information from different spoken and written sources, reconstructing arguments and accounts in a coherent presentation. Can express him/herself spontaneously, very fluently and precisely, differentiating finer shades of meaning even in more complex situations.
	C1	Can understand a wide range of demanding, longer texts, and recognise implicit meaning. Can express him/herself 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 organisational patterns, connectors and cohesive devices.
Independent user	B2	Can understand the main ideas of complex text on both concrete and abstract topics, including technical discussions in his/her field of specialisation. Can interact with a degree of fluency and spontaneity that makes regular interaction with native speakers quite possible without strain for either party. Can produce clear, detailed text on a wide range of subjects and explain a viewpoint on a topical issue giving the advantages and disadvantages of various options.
	B1	Can understand the main points of clear standard input on familiar matters regularly encountered in work, school, leisure, etc. Can deal with most situations likely to arise whilst travelling in an area where the language is spoken. Can produce simple connected text on topics, which are familiar, or of personal interest. Can describe experiences and events, dreams, hopes & ambitions and briefly give reasons and explanations for opinions and plans.
Basic user	A2	Can understand sentences and frequently used expressions related to areas of most immediate relevance (e.g. very basic personal and family information, shopping, local geography, employment). Can communicate in simple and routine tasks requiring a simple and direct exchange of information on familiar and routine matters. Can describe in simple terms aspects of his/her background, immediate environment and matters in areas of immediate need.
	A1	Can understand and use familiar everyday expressions and very basic phrases aimed at the satisfaction of needs of a concrete type. Can introduce him/herself and others and can ask and answer questions about personal details such as where he/she lives, people he/she knows and things he/she has. Can interact in a simple way provided the other person talks slowly and clearly and is prepared to help.

2. Self-assessment grid

	Reception		Interaction		Production	
	Listening	Reading	Spoken interaction	Written interaction	Spoken production	Written production
C2	I have no difficulty in understanding any kind of spoken language, whether live or broadcast, even when delivered at fast native speed, provided I have some time to get familiar with the accent.	I can read with ease virtually all forms of the written language, including abstract, structurally or linguistically complex texts such as manuals, specialised articles and literary works.	I can take part effortlessly in any conversation or discussion and have a good familiarity with idiomatic expressions and colloquialisms. I can express myself fluently and convey finer shades of meaning precisely. If I do have a problem I can backtrack and restructure around the difficulty so smoothly that other people are hardly aware of it.	I can express myself with clarity and precision, relating to the addressee flexibly and effectively in an assured, personal, style.	I can present a clear, smoothly-flowing description or argument in a style appropriate to the context and with an effective logical structure which helps the recipient to notice and remember significant points.	I can write clear, smoothly flowing text in an appropriate style. I can write complex letters, reports or articles, which present a case with an effective logical structure, which helps the recipient to notice and remember significant points. I can write summaries and reviews of professional or literary works.
C1	I can understand extended speech even when it is not clearly structured and when relationships are only implied and not signalled explicitly. I can understand television programmes and films without too much effort.	I can understand long and complex factual and literary texts, appreciating distinctions of style. I can understand specialised articles and longer technical instructions, even when they do not relate to my field.	I can express myself fluently and spontaneously without much obvious searching for expressions. I can use language flexibly and effectively for social and professional purposes. I can formulate ideas and opinions with precision and relate my contribution skilfully to those of other speakers.		I can present clear, detailed descriptions of complex subjects integrating sub-themes, developing particular points and rounding off with an appropriate conclusion.	I can express myself in clear, well-structured text, expressing points of view at some length. I can write detailed expositions of complex subjects in an essay or a report, underlining what I consider to be the salient issues. I can write different kinds of texts in a style appropriate to the reader in mind.
B2	I can understand extended speech and lectures and follow even complex lines of argument provided the topic is reasonably familiar. I can understand most TV news and current affairs programmes. I can understand the majority of films in standard dialect.	I can read articles and reports concerned with contemporary problems in which the writers adopt particular stances or viewpoints. I can understand contemporary literary prose.	I can interact with a degree of fluency and spontaneity that makes regular interaction with native speakers quite possible. I can take an active part in discussion in familiar contexts, accounting for and sustaining my views.	I can write letters highlighting the personal significance of events and experiences.	I can present clear, detailed descriptions on a wide range of subjects related to my field of interest. I can explain a viewpoint on a topical issue giving the advantages and disadvantages of various options.	I can write clear, detailed text on a wide range of subjects related to my interests. I can write an essay or report, passing on information or giving reasons in support of or against a particular point of view.

	Reception		Interaction		Production	
	Listening	Reading	Spoken interaction	Written interaction	Spoken production	Written production
B1	I can understand the main points of clear standard speech on familiar matters regularly encountered in work, school, leisure, etc. I can understand the main point of many radio or TV programmes on current affairs or topics of personal or professional interest when the delivery is relatively slow and clear.	I can understand texts that consist mainly of high frequency every day or job-related language. I can understand the description of events, feelings and wishes in personal letters.	I can deal with most situations likely to arise whilst travelling in an area where the language is spoken. I can enter unprepared into conversation on topics that are familiar, of personal interest or pertinent to everyday life (e.g. family, hobbies, work, travel and current events).	I can write personal letters describing experiences and impressions.	I can connect phrases in a simple way in order to describe experiences and events, my dreams, hopes & ambitions. I can briefly give reasons and explanations for opinions and plans. I can narrate a story or relate the plot of a book or film and describe my reactions.	I can write straightforward connected text on topics, which are familiar, or of personal interest.
A2	I can understand phrases and the highest frequency vocabulary related to areas of most immediate personal relevance (e.g. very basic personal and family information, shopping, local geography, employment). I can catch the main point in short, clear, simple messages and announcements.	I can read very short, simple texts. I can find specific, predictable information in simple everyday material such as advertisements, prospectuses, menus and timetables and I can understand short simple personal letters.	I can communicate in simple and routine tasks requiring a simple and direct exchange of information on familiar topics and activities. I can handle very short social exchanges, even though I can't usually understand enough to keep the conversation going myself.	I can write short, simple notes and messages relating to matters in areas of immediate need. I can write a very simple personal letter, for example thanking someone for something.	I can use a series of phrases and sentences to describe in simple terms my family and other people, living conditions, my educational background and my present or most recent job.	I can write a series of simple phrases and sentences linked with simple connectors like, "and", "but" and "because".
A1	I can recognise familiar words and very basic phrases concerning myself, my family and immediate concrete surroundings when people speak slowly and clearly.	I can understand familiar names, words and very simple sentences, for example on notices and posters or in catalogues.	I can interact in a simple way provided the other person is prepared to repeat or rephrase things at a slower rate of speech and help me formulate what I'm trying to say. I can ask and answer simple questions in areas of immediate need or on very familiar topics.	I can write a short, simple postcard, for example sending holiday greetings. I can fill in forms with personal details, for example entering my name, nationality and address on a hotel registration form.	I can use simple phrases and sentences to describe where I live and people I know.	I can write simple isolated phrases and sentences.

3. Qualitative aspects of spoken language use

	Range	Accuracy	Fluency	Interaction	Coherence
C2	Shows great flexibility reformulating ideas in differing linguistic forms to convey finer shades of meaning precisely, to give emphasis, to differentiate and to eliminate ambiguity. Also has a good command of idiomatic expressions and colloquialisms.	Maintains consistent grammatical control of complex language, even while attention is otherwise engaged (e.g. in forward planning, in monitoring others' reactions).	Can express him/herself spontaneously at length with a natural colloquial flow, avoiding or backtracking around any difficulty so smoothly that the interlocutor is hardly aware of it.	Can interact with ease and skill, picking up and using non-verbal and intentional cues effortlessly. Can interweave his/her contribution into the joint discourse with fully natural turn taking, referencing, allusion making etc.	Can create coherent and cohesive discourse making full and appropriate use of a variety of organisational patterns and a wide range of connectors and other cohesive devices.
C1	Has a good command of a broad range of language allowing him/her to select a formulation to express him/ herself clearly in an appropriate style on a wide range of general, academic, professional or leisure topics without having to restrict what he/she wants to say.	Consistently maintains a high degree of grammatical accuracy; errors are rare, difficult to spot and generally corrected when they do occur.	Can express him/herself fluently and spontaneously, almost effortlessly. Only a conceptually difficult subject can hinder a natural, smooth flow of language.	Can select a suitable phrase from a readily available range of discourse functions to preface his remarks in order to get or to keep the floor and to relate his/her own contributions skilfully to those of other speakers.	Can produce clear, smoothly flowing, well-structured speech, showing controlled use of organisational patterns, connectors and cohesive devices.
B2	Has a sufficient range of language to be able to give clear descriptions, express viewpoints on most general topics, without much conspicuous searching for words, using some complex sentence forms to do so.	Shows a relatively high degree of grammatical control. Does not make errors that cause misunderstanding, and can correct most of his/her mistakes.	Can produce stretches of language with a fairly even tempo; although he/she can be hesitant as he or she searches for patterns and expressions, there are few noticeably long pauses.	Can initiate discourse, take his/her turn when appropriate and end conversation when he / she needs to, though he /she may not always do this elegantly. Can help the discussion along on familiar ground confirming comprehension, inviting others in, etc.	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.
B1	Has enough language to get by, with sufficient vocabulary to express him/herself with some hesitation and circumlocutions on topics such as family, hobbies and interests, work, travel, and current events.	Uses reasonably accurately a repertoire of frequently used "routines" and patterns associated with more predictable situations.	Can keep going comprehensibly, even though pausing for grammatical and lexical planning and repair is very evident, especially in longer stretches of free production.	Can initiate, maintain and close simple face-to-face conversation on topics that are familiar or of personal interest. Can repeat back part of what someone has said to confirm mutual understanding.	Can link a series of shorter, discrete simple elements into a connected, linear sequence of points.

	Range	Accuracy	Fluency	Interaction	Coherence
A2	Uses basic sentence patterns with memorised phrases, groups of a few words and formulae in order to communicate limited information in simple everyday situations.	Uses some simple structures correctly, but still systematically makes basic mistakes.	Can make him/herself understood in very short utterances, even though pauses, false starts and reformulation are very evident.	Can answer questions and respond to simple statements. Can indicate when he/she is following but is rarely able to understand enough to keep conversation going of his/her own accord.	Can link groups of words with simple connectors like "and", "but" and "because".
A1	Has a very basic repertoire of words and simple phrases related to personal details and particular concrete situations.	Shows only limited control of a few simple grammatical structures and sentence patterns in a memorised repertoire.	Can manage very short, isolated, mainly pre-packaged utterances, with much pausing to search for expressions, to articulate less familiar words, and to repair communication.	Can ask and answer questions about personal details. Can interact in a simple way but communication is totally dependent on repetition, rephrasing and repair.	Can link words or groups of words with very basic linear connectors like "and" or "then".

Document History

Version	Issue Date	Changes	Role
V1.0	08/06/2022	First published	Product and Regulation Coordinator