

## B1, B2 OR C1?

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The Language Centre of Masaryk University (LC) in Brno provides LSP and LAP courses for all MU students. These courses target B1, B2 and C1 levels of the Common European Framework for Languages and are completed with pro-achievement, end-of-course tests at corresponding CEFR levels.

Relating these LC tests to an external standard resulted in their standardisation in two aspects: the implementation of good practice in test development and the harmonisation of key features of end-of-course tests across the LC departments.



## Assessing language skills of Masaryk University students

The harmonisation of key features of end-of-course tests consists of:

- incorporating all four skills and a grammatical-lexical subtest in every end-of-course test
- setting a number of points at 100
- equal weighting across languages at a given level and faculty department
- scoring listening, reading and grammatical-lexical test items right or wrong (0 or 1 point)
- assessing writing and speaking analytically

Good practice lies in applying a standard cycle of test development and includes:

- writing test specification
- item writing
- individual and group moderation
- piloting on target test population
- statistical analysis of pilot testing
- revision and re-moderation of test items and specifications
- going live

Specifics of testing situations of individual language departments are reflected in:

- the choice of task types
- weighting of individual subtests
- setting a minimum acceptable level of performance for productive skills at a given level
- setting a minimum cut-off score for receptive skills and grammatical-lexical subtest

### Weighting of subtests across LC departments in percentage terms

Faculty of	Level	Listening	Reading	Grammar and vocabulary	Writing	Speaking
Economics	C1	20	20	20	20	20
	B2	15	20	30	15	20
	B1	15	20	30	15	20
Social Studies / Arts	B2	15	20	20	20	25
Medicine	B2	10	26	24	10	30
Law	B2	15	20	20	15	30
	B1	10	20	20	20	30
Education	B2	14	12	30	14	30
	B1	15	15	30	15	25
Science	B2	15	20	25	10	30
	B1	15	20	25	10	30
Sports Studies	B2	10	20	30	15	25
	B1	15	15	30	15	25
Informatics	B2	15	20	35	10	20

# LISTENING



## Tested sub-skills:

a global and detailed comprehension of a specialised/academic spoken text

## Types of texts used:

- monologue
- dialogue
- interview
- short message
- news
- expert programme
- educational programme
- lecture

## Number of tasks:

B1	2 tasks
B2	1 or 2 tasks
C1	3 tasks

## Testing techniques:

- open-ended questions
- MCQs (4 options)
- T/F
- sentence completion
- gap-fill
- information transfer

## Example of a test task

B2 level, English, Faculty of Medicine

### Open-ended questions

**You will hear a recording about Dengue fever. Answer the questions below using 1-3 words.**

**You will hear the recording twice:**

What stage of development are the existing vaccines of Dengue fever in?

They are used for \_\_\_\_\_.

### Multiple-choice questions

**You will hear a radio programme about lymphomas. For each item below, choose the best answer (A, B, C or D). You will hear the recording twice:**

The main cause of lymphomas

A. are genetic factors.

B. has not been revealed yet.

C. was discovered in patients with mononucleosis or HIV.

D. is a weakened immune system and exposure to carcinogens.

## READING



### Tested sub-skills:

understanding gist and main points, looking for detail and specific information, comprehension of opinions and attitudes, deducing meaning

### Types of texts used:

- scientific text
- journal article
- paper abstract
- review
- informative text
- blurb
- flyer
- advert

### Number of tasks:

B1	2 tasks
B2	2 or 3 tasks
C1	3 tasks

### Testing techniques:

- multiple-choice questions and statements
- T/F, T/F/NM, T/F and justify
- gap-fill or MCQ gap-fill
- cloze
- matching

### Example of a test task

B2 level, English, Faculty of Arts & Faculty of Social Studies

**Complete each of the unfinished sentences in the text with the missing part from the list below. Fill in the letter in the text; do not rewrite the sentences. One of them will not be used. There is only one possible answer for each gap.**

We Americans have long thought of ourselves as unburdened by class distinctions. We have no hereditary aristocracy or landed gentry, and even the poorest among us feel (1.) \_\_\_\_\_. And yet social class remains a powerful force in American life.

In Class Matters, a team of New York Times reporters explores the ways in which class, defined as a combination of income, education, wealth, and occupation, influences destiny in a society that likes (2.) \_\_\_\_\_. We meet individuals in Kentucky and Chicago who have used education to lift themselves out of poverty and others in Virginia and Washington (3.) \_\_\_\_\_.

- A. that they can become rich through education or hard work
- B. with a deep understanding of our nation's past
- C. whose lack of education holds them back
- D. to think of itself as a land of opportunity

# GRAMMAR AND VOCABULARY



Represents the achievement part of the pro-achievement test battery:

- correspondence with curricula and course syllabi
- tested also within assessing productive skills

## Types of texts used:

- text-based items
- de-contextualized items

## Most frequent testing techniques:

- MCQ
- gap-fill
- sentence transformation
- word formation

## Less frequent testing techniques:

- open cloze
- matching
- question formation
- translation of isolated lexical items

## Example of a test task

B2 level, English, Faculty of Informatics

### Sentence transformations

**Complete the second sentence so that it has a similar meaning as the first sentence. Use the word given and do not change it. Use between 2-5 words, including the word given. Contractions count as separate words.**

1. I still find it difficult to back up my data regularly. **USED**  
I still haven't \_\_\_\_\_ my data regularly.
2. I can't wait to watch gaming tournaments. **FORWARD**  
I'm really \_\_\_\_\_ gaming tournaments.
3. "Do not open any attachments from an unknown source!" he said. **ADVISED**  
He \_\_\_\_\_ any attachments from an unknown source.
4. Although I can make calls, I have difficulty sending text messages. **ABLE**  
Despite \_\_\_\_\_ calls, I have difficulty sending text messages.
5. Interrupt me only if it is important. **DISTURB**  
Don't \_\_\_\_\_ it is important.



1. got used to backing up
2. looking forward to watching
3. advised us/me not to open
4. being able to make
5. disturb me unless

# WRITING



## Tested sub-skills:

- B1** the ability to ask, explain, describe events, apologise, arrange a consultation or accommodation
- B2** the ability to express student's opinions and thoughts, to describe experience; the ability to explain a viewpoint on a topical issue giving advantages and disadvantages of various issues; the ability to write a formal letter using formal language and appropriate phrases; the ability to describe information given in graphical form
- C1** the ability to describe trends and projections; the ability to describe advantages and disadvantages of a proposed solution and to give recommendations; the ability to write clear, well-structured texts on topics related to social sciences and economy; the ability to express opinions giving arguments for and against and examples

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## Genre:

- B1 formal email, reaction to a question
- B2 report, formal letter, argumentative essay, specialised written discourse
- C1 graph description, argumentative essay, problem-solution essay

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## Register:

- B1 semi-formal
- B2 formal
- C1 formal

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## Word limit per task:

- B1 170 words maximum
- B2 250 words maximum
- C1 300 words maximum

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## Assessment:

- analytic rating scales
- criteria: task completion, text organisation, vocabulary, grammar

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## Example of a test task

B2 level, English, Faculty of Education

**Express your view in 160 - 180 words.**

“What areas of classroom management do you consider most challenging for inexperienced teachers - time management, discipline, lesson planning or any other? Why?”

**Structure your thoughts appropriately and apply the question to your fields of study, if possible.**

# SPEAKING



## Tested sub-skills:

- ability to present a specific topic
- involvement in a discussion
- fluency of discourse
- coherence of speech
- language functions of description, argumentation, comparison, evaluation, persuasion, analysis, synthesis

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## Formats used:

- monologic discourse
- teacher-student interview pattern
- peer-to-peer discussion
- presentation of a specific topic

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## Roles of examiners:

- interlocutor-assessor in one person testing one student
- the role of rater and interlocutor split, two teachers – two students format
- interlocutor-rater in one person testing paired students

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## Assessment:

- analytic rating scales
- assessment criteria: task completion, grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation

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## Example of a test task

C1 level, English, Faculty of Economics and Administration

**Choose ONE of the following questions and answer it. You have 2 minutes to prepare before you start. To fulfil the task, you are supposed to talk for 2 minutes:**

1. The importance of diversifying investment
2. Ways of raising capital for further growth

**Role-play the following situation using the guidelines below. You have 2 minutes to prepare before you start. The length of your role-play should be 3 - 4 minutes:**

A company is considering investing a percentage of last year's net profit in order to generate returns for future expansion. Discuss the situation with your partner and decide

- where the company should invest the money
- what returns might be expected
- the risk involved in the selected options

# MASARYK UNIVERSITY LANGUAGE CENTRE WHO WE ARE



A university-wide institute providing education in foreign languages and testing language proficiency at all individual faculties of Masaryk University

- founded in 1971
- the biggest university language centre in the Czech Republic
- branches at nine faculties of Masaryk University
- 9,000 students per semester
- 100 employees
- own research activities and educational projects
- seven languages:



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