Online Learning
English Test (OLET)

User Guide

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About OLET

The University of Edinburgh’s Online Learning English Test (OLET) is a new test that is part of the University’s ‘digital first’ ambitions. The University is already a significant player in offering digital education, distance learning, MOOCs and offers one of the broadest ranges of Masters degrees online. OLET is a test of English for those wanting to take online postgraduate courses. The purpose of OLET is to establish whether the English language level of prospective postgraduate students whose main language is not English is high enough to effectively take part in, and, potentially, complete a University of Edinburgh Online Learning (OL) course.

Information about the required English language level for specific programmes is available here. The target levels of English language ability for Edinburgh’s postgraduate courses are related to the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR).

Currently this test is only available to those applicants who have offers conditional on English language level. Applicants for online programmes do not need to verify their language level for UK visa purposes.

Overview of OLET

OLET has five separate test blocks. The first four blocks must be completed over the period of one week. Each block is accessed by clicking on a separate link. They can be done in any order. The final block is a Speaking test conducted online at a pre-determined time using a link to enter a conference call. It takes place after the first four blocks have been completed.

1. Block 1: Language Knowledge and Use. This block tests a candidate’s knowledge of how words frequently used in academic language work in relation to other words, whether a given word is grammatically correct, and how words might mean different things in different contexts (i.e. lexical, grammatical and semantic competence). This block lasts 35 minutes

2. Block 2: Reading. The test of Reading uses one text with two sets of questions:
   
   Part 1 is a test of skimming and scanning skills (15 minutes). Then, the same text is used in Part 2 to test careful reading (30 minutes) – 45 minutes in total.

3. Block 3: Listening. While listening to a 6 minute mini-lecture, the candidate is tested on their ability to distinguish between main points and detail/supporting evidence – 8 minutes (NB: Block 3 is currently under development)

4. Block 4: Writing. This block takes the form of an essay-writing task – 50 minutes + 10 minutes preparation time: 1 hour in total

5. Block 5: Speaking. After a two-minute introductory conversation, the test of Speaking centres on a six-minute presentation prepared and delivered by the candidate. This is followed by a four-minute discussion of points raised in the presentation – 12 minutes in total.
OLET Software

When you take OLET, you will use two different computer interfaces:

The first is Questionmark Perception (QMP) used for Block 1 – Block 4.

The second is Blackboard Collaborate Ultra used for the Block 5 interview. Make sure you have the browser Chrome installed on your computer. It is required because:

1. Chrome supports audio and video features in Collaborate at the highest quality.
2. The elements of QMP only operate fully with Chrome.

If you do not currently have Chrome, you can download it here: Download Chrome. You do not need to install Java to use Collaborate Ultra.

Use a laptop or a computer to take OLET as this will enable you to see all of the Reading texts properly. Do not use an iPad, tablet or smartphone.

QMP

QMP is a tool for creating and delivering assessments online. It offers a range of different question types. OLET uses the following different types of questions:

**Multiple Choice Questions** (MCQs) – where you choose the best answer from four options.

**Short Answer Questions** (SAQs) – where you respond to a question by typing up to three words in a small box.

**Fill in the Gap** – where you type one word in a box.

**Multiple Response** – where you choose four out of eight possible words.

**Matching** – where you match the headings (A-E) to the numbered sections (1-5).

**Ranking** – where you rearrange up to five choices in the correct order.

**Essay Questions** – where you type up to 450 words in a box.
When you start **Block 1** you will see a screen that introduces you to the test:

At the **top right** of the screen you will see a ‘Progress’ bar and a Timer. These tell you i) how much of the test you have completed and ii) how much time you have left.

Next to the progress bar and timer are two buttons. The first allows you to change the size of the font. The second allows you to add contrast to the screen if you need to see it more clearly.

The final button is the general ‘help’ button that QMP uses.

This is what the bars and buttons look like:
At the **bottom** of the screen you will see two buttons: ‘Next Question’ and ‘Assessment Navigator’. You need to click on the Next Question button to start the test. You will see the questions presented one at a time. Like this:

The ‘Assessment Navigator’ gives access to a small screen, which allows you to go forward or backwards through the test either to change the answer to questions you have already completed or to move forward to other questions. It looks like this:

There is a ‘Submit’ button in the **bottom right** hand corner of the screen. You click on this *only* at the very end of the test, when you are satisfied that you have answered the questions to the best of your ability. You will get a message asking you to confirm that you want to submit your answers. Please **remember** that if you do not finish all the questions in time, your answers will be automatically submitted once the time limit is up.
Block 2 is the Reading test, which is in **two parts**. When you start **Part 1**, you will see the questions for the first task. The screen will look like this:

Use the bar to scroll down to the text and up to the questions as necessary:
In Part 2 of the Reading test, the (same) text is presented first followed by the questions:

Use the bar to scroll down to the text and up to the questions as necessary:
**Block 3** is the Listening task where you listen to a six-minute audio and complete 10 Multiple Choice Questions. The initial screen looks like this:

![Sample OLET Listening Test](image)

**Block 4** is the Writing task, where you are asked to write a 450 word essay on a general topic for an educated audience. The screen looks like this. You need to type your answer in the box.

![OLET Sample Test Block 4 Writing](image)
Blackboard Collaborate Ultra

The second technology that you need to be familiar with is Blackboard Collaborate Ultra, which is the software that is used when you take your Speaking test. This video gives you an introduction to how it works:

![User Interface Tour](image)

You will be sent a login page and a time for your interview. Before you take your test you need to make sure your computer is ready. So, please follow these steps:

1. **Test ‘Collaborate’ on your system** at least a day before your Speaking test. NB: If your system supports Collaborate you will get a response with the following icon:

   ![This browser supports WebSocket.]

   If you do not receive this confirmation, check that you have downloaded Chrome.

2. In order for you to have a smooth, clear Speaking test, it is best that your system has a download speed of at least 50 Mbps and an upload speed of 5 Mbps. (If in doubt, ask your Internet provider for details). You may also check your internet speed by using any one of these Internet Speed Tests:

   - [Fast.com](https://checkfast.com)
   - [Cox Cable Internet Speed Test](https://www.cox.com/help/technical-support/internet/internet-speed-test)
   - [AT&T Internet Speed Test](https://www.att.com/)
   - [Comcast Cable / Xfinity Internet Speed Test](https://www.comcastcable.com/)


3. It is also best that you have a cable/wire link to the Internet rather than wireless. However, if you do not have a cable link, and you are using a wireless connection to use the Internet, please make sure that for the duration of the Speaking test any other devices are disconnected. This should ensure that your connection is better.

4. When you login to Collaborate for your Speaking test, you need to make sure that you give your browser permission to use audio and video. Use this link and this link to see how you can do this.

**Troubleshooting**

1. If you need help to log-in to take any of the question blocks, please email the University of Edinburgh Information Services: is.helpline@ed.ac.uk. Please make sure that you put ‘OLET Test Query’ in the subject line so that your query can be dealt with as quickly as possible.

2. QMP uses a 10 minute ‘save-as-you-go’ default. So, if you are disconnected, for example as a result of a power cut, you will be able to login again and complete the test; your previous answers will have been saved by the system. If you continue to have problems with logging-in, please contact Information Services: is.helpline@ed.ac.uk.
The Language Tested by OLET

The aim of OLET is to test your English language skills in relation to the requirements of an online learning (OL) programme at the University of Edinburgh. For this testing purpose, we define the four skills as follows:

**READING**
For OL test purposes, Reading is the identification of relationships between ideas, including:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Facts</th>
<th>Hypotheses</th>
<th>Deduction</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Opinions</td>
<td>Probability</td>
<td>Implicit/explicit information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evidence</td>
<td>Cause and effect</td>
<td>Sequences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implications</td>
<td>Main points and detail</td>
<td>Themes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**WRITING**
For OL test purposes, Writing involves the presentation, discussion and evaluation of perspectives, evidence, opinions, arguments and implications. This includes presenting/arguing/refuting a position. In order to do this effectively, there must be evidence of range and accuracy in grammar and vocabulary and of an appropriate academic style. The writing should be cohesive and coherent at sentence and paragraph level so that the argument can be followed easily.

**LISTENING**
Listening, in the OL context, is being able to distinguish between important/main/key information and supporting evidence/examples/detail. For this, it is essential to recognise signposting language, which clarifies the structure of a talk, for example, introducing a change of topic/subject or a contrasting idea or perspective. In contrast to a ‘live’ lecture delivered in a lecture hall, OL lectures will be prepared talks that are read aloud by OL course tutors and then delivered online. Therefore, they are likely to be highly condensed texts with complete or grammatically ‘correct’ clauses and few of the hesitations, reformulations or repetitions found in a typical longer lecture.

**SPEAKING**
Speaking, in the OL context, involves introducing, explaining and clarifying a topic, distinguishing between main and subsidiary points, and using critical thinking to evaluate the broader significance of the topic before rounding off with an appropriate conclusion. Speaking also includes the ability to interact with an audience on a semi-formal academic level, to be able to handle questioning in an open dialogue, and to respond fluently and spontaneously.
Test Structure in Detail

BLOCK 1 – LANGUAGE KNOWLEDGE AND USE

There are 40 separate items that test your understanding of how words are used, your knowledge of grammar, and the meanings of words. It is divided into four sub-sections. Here are examples of question types from each sub-section:

1. Multiple response for Lexical Collocations items (10 items)
   Example: Look at the eight words listed below. Select the four that go best with the word innovation. They can go either before or after it.

   - country
   - designate
   - major
   - product
   - regulation
   - scientific
   - standard
   - technological

   The correct four answers are: ‘major’, ‘product’, ‘scientific’ and ‘technological’.

2. Text Match for Register/Range of Meanings questions (10 items)
   Example: The same word can be used to fill all three gaps in each group of three sentences. Write this word in each gap.

   1. He dived into the river and swam over to the opposite __________.
   2. I'll put some of the money in the __________ and spend the rest.
   3. The research results were added to the data __________.

   The correct answer is the word ‘bank’.

3. Multiple Choice for Grammar Editing Tasks (10 items)
   Example: There are four underlined sections in the text below. Select the one which is wrong from the drop-down list below each question.

   ‘Everybody, holds hands! This is the energy that will get you through the evening. We're going to be a winning team. Let's make it the best shift we've ever had. Go for it, guys!’

   A) holds hands
   B) get you
   C) Let's
   D) for it

   The answer is A. It should be: 'Everybody, hold hands!' and not 'Everybody, holds hands!' (It is an instruction not a description.)
4. Grammar Collocation items (10 items)

Example: Choose the correct answer, A, B, C or D to fill the gap in each sentence.

1. __________ the eighteenth century, domestic exports accounted for around 7-8 per cent of national output.

   A) In the beginning of  
   B) By the beginning in  
   C) At the beginning of  
   D) In the beginning at

The correct answer is C.

BLOCK 2 - READING (45 minutes)

Each reading test comprises one single text of 2,500-2,700 words, which is used to test

i. Scan reading skills  
ii. Close reading skills.

SKIM AND SCAN READING (15 minutes)

This means that you will be expected to read through the text very quickly and answer questions rapidly. The aim is to test your ability to skim a text to understand the gist (or overall sense) and also to scan to find specific information very quickly. There are two tasks for this stage:

SKIM AND SCAN READING TASK 1 (Skimming): Match five headings to the five different sections of the text.

Example:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question mark</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Task 1</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quickly read the text and use the drop down lists to match the headings to the numbered sections in the text (1-5).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Same basic school for all</strong> Section 3 ✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sustainable leadership</strong> Section 2 ✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Well-trained teachers</strong> Section 5 ✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Culture of trust</strong> Section 1 ✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Intelligent accountability</strong> Section 4 ✓</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
SKIM AND SCAN READING TASK 2 (Scanning): Quickly read the text to find the answers to the following multiple choice questions. For each question choose the correct answer. The questions come in order of the text.

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Finnish education today is the result of how many decades of policy development?

- Five  
- Three  
- Two  
- Four

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CLOSE READING – using same text (30 minutes)

In careful reading you are tested on your ability to understand a text at a deeper level. The questions are designed to test a candidate’s ability to infer, or deduce, the meaning of parts of the text in relation to other parts of the text. You will also be tested on your ability to understand how a text coheres, or fits together. There are two tasks for this stage:

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CLOSE READING TASK 1: Twelve Short Answer Questions (SAQs) on the same text as was used in Reading Task 1 (skim and scan). The questions are similar to the ones below:

Read the text and then answer the following questions using no more than THREE words for each answer.

NB: Your three words need to show you have understood the text. They do not need to be a grammatically accurate answer.

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What aspect of Finnish culture has arguably slowed down educational reform along market-orientated lines?
CLOSE READING TASK 2: You will be given the final paragraph of the text, which was omitted from the original text used in the previous sections. The sentences are in the wrong order. Your task is to re-order them. It is worth five (5) marks.

Here is an example:

BLOCK 3 - LISTENING (8 minutes)
You will listen to a six-minute academic talk on a non-specialist subject. You will hear the talk once only. The task is to answer 10 MCQs, which will test your ability to distinguish between main points and detail/supporting evidence.

TASK: First, you have one minute to read the following 10 multiple choice questions. Then, as you listen, choose your answers, A, B, C or D. It will last approximately six minutes. After the talk you will have one minute to check your answers.

BLOCK 4 - WRITING (50 minutes + 10 minutes preparation)
A 400-450 word essay-type question on a non-technical subject.

Write 400-450 words on the following topic in an appropriate academic style. In your answer you should provide background, explanation and evaluation. You will be assessed on your ability to write a clear, well-organised, coherent and cohesive text rounded off with an appropriate conclusion. The accuracy and range of grammar and vocabulary will also be assessed.

You have 10 minutes to plan and prepare and then 50 minutes to write your answer. Remember to leave time to read through your text and check for errors.
**BLOCK 5 - SPEAKING (12 minutes)**

The Speaking test is in three parts and will take 12 minutes. The three parts are as follows:

1. Two-minute introductory conversation
2. Six-minute prepared presentation by candidate (no slideshows, e.g. PowerPoint)
3. Four-minute discussion of points raised in the presentation

The first part is a two-minute conversation during which the examiners will introduce themselves, ask you to confirm your identity and introduce yourself.

The examiner will then ask you to deliver your six-minute presentation. They will only interrupt you if there is a technical issue with the connection.

Then, in the final section, there will be a four-minute discussion on points raised in the presentation. The aim will be to exchange and develop ideas at a greater depth.

**NB:** The Speaking test topics are sent to test-takers at the very beginning of the whole testing process as part of the overall test instructions.

During the week in which the cohort/candidates take the online test, they should also prepare their six-minute presentation.
How OLET is Scored

Scores for each test block are gathered and analysed with reference to the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR). Then an overall pass or fail result is sent to the School.

NB: You will not be given your actual grade or mark after you complete your test.

All questions, apart from Writing and Speaking, are marked automatically through QMP, drawing from a database of answers created during the design of the test.

The writing test is double-marked by trained assessors who rate scripts according to strict criteria. This is to ensure fairness, consistency and accuracy of marking. The assessors’ task is to decide the extent to which a candidate has:

**Completed the task**
Has the candidate understood the task and completed it according to the instructions? Is the text of the required length? Is the text all relevant?

**Used an appropriate range of vocabulary**
Has the candidate shown that they can use a wide range of vocabulary appropriately? Does the text have an appropriate level of formality and choice of words? Are the words spelt correctly?

**Use grammar accurately and appropriately**
How well can the candidate use grammatically complex language appropriately?

**Produced a coherent and cohesive text**
Is the text well-organised at sentence and paragraph level? Does the text ‘flow’? Are the points made logically sequenced and linked?

The speaking test is conducted by two trained assessors. The candidate’s grade is agreed by the assessors with reference to strict assessment criteria. The assessors decide the level of a candidate’s:

**Communication Skills**
How well-organised is the candidate’s talk? Is it convincing and persuasive? How well can the candidate handle questions? Are the answers fluent and spontaneous?

**Language Skills**
Is the speech clear and well-structured with appropriate language and grammar? Can the message be followed easily? Is there appropriate stress and intonation to help the listener understand better what is being said?
Taking OLET

If you have a conditional offer subject to English language proficiency and wish to take the OLET test, contact the admissions team in the School or College to which you are applying for your online learning programme.

In the week prior to testing, you will receive an email from the COL Teaching Office with your test login details, interview slot and topic for your speaking test.

The test takes place over two weeks.

During the first week, you will complete the four blocks of online tests.

During the second week, you will be given a time slot for your speaking interview.

Sample/Practice Tests

Here are links to sample tests of the different OLET Blocks. The tests are for information and practice purposes only. They do not generate a mark.

TEST BLOCK 1 Grammar and Vocabulary

TEST BLOCK 2 Reading Part 1 and Reading Part 2

TEST BLOCK 3 Listening: Currently being re-designed

TEST BLOCK 4 Writing

TEST BLOCK 5 Speaking – Please see page 16 (above) for a description of the Speaking test

You should be able to follow the link and access the assessment blocks without any need for login credentials. Please remember that if you need help to log-in to take any of the question blocks, email the University of Edinburgh Information Services: is.helpline@ed.ac.uk. Please make sure that you put ‘OLET Test Query’ in the subject line so that your query can be dealt with as quickly as possible.