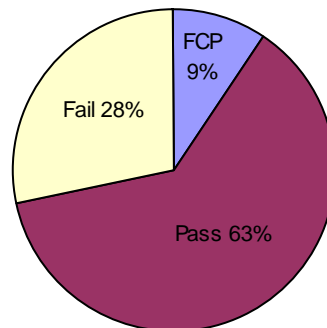


# 8985 International Spoken ESOL – Expert

## General Observations

The results here, while having a good overall pass rate, are disappointing when compared with last year in that the Fail rate has almost doubled and the rate of First Class Passes dropped significantly. It has been noted by some markers that pronunciation in some cases makes it extremely difficult to assess performance and this could be one of the major contributory factors to a poor result.

ISESOL Expert - C1



## Areas of good performance

Part 1 is usually handled well – candidates appear familiar with many of the topics and so feel confident with their responses. Some excellent performances have been noted in Part 3 where candidates confidently challenge the interlocutor and express ‘finer shades of meaning’. In Part 4 too, a natural delivery of the talk is sometimes achieved and, if candidates have been unsure of something, they have been rewarded by checking with the interlocutor before talking off topic.

## Areas for development

As mentioned, pronunciation is crucial especially where a marker has to rely on the production of a disembodied voice on a recording. While accent is in no way a problem, intelligibility is a minimum requirement. In Part 1, weaker candidates rely on the interlocutor to draw out the information rather than expanding on a response. In Part 2, inappropriate register is sometimes evident where the candidate has missed the opportunity to show an awareness of a range of formality and style. Part 3 reflects a weaker performance if the candidate is reluctant to engage fully with the interlocutor and if necessary, agree and challenge.

## Recommendations

Candidates need exposure to a wide range of language in a variety of situations. They should practise greater degrees of formality as well as informal, colloquial style. Not just familiar, everyday topics should be covered but controversial themes, current affairs and matters of social and global significance. Candidates need to interact fully with the interlocutor and make the full use of every opportunity to show their linguistic range.

## Tips

- Role-play with students, the teacher playing the 'reluctant conversationalist'. The candidate needs to draw the teacher out, who should play 'devil's advocate' by giving very brief responses to questions and failing to initiate. Once students experience what it's like having to draw someone out, they should be able to compensate when it comes to the exam.
- Ask students to do an internet search for what is currently in the news or under debate. They should prepare for a classroom debate, having several points of view and arguments ready to present.
- Encourage candidates to take time in the exam to think about what is required in each part and get their thoughts together. The interlocutor tells the candidate how long they have to think about things before the discussion gets underway but some candidates launch in without making use of this valuable time.

## Additional comments

It would seem that some centres may still be entering candidates at this level who are really not up to it. The weaker candidates are those who produce minimal responses or language well below C1, with weak grammatical accuracy and limited fluency. At C1, the CEFR describes the ability to 'express him/herself fluently and spontaneously ... [and] use language flexibly and effectively for social, academic and professional purposes...formulate ideas and opinions with precision and relate [the] contribution skilfully to those of other speakers'. The exam provides candidates with the opportunity to demonstrate all this – candidates need to avail themselves of it fully.