

How does C1 Advanced assess language skills for higher education study?

Evidence from tasks, cognitive processes and assessment criteria

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Abstract

This paper examines the extent to which Cambridge C1 Advanced assesses the language skills, discourse competencies and cognitive processes required for successful participation in higher education. The study is guided by questions posed in the *English Language Good Practice Guide: Testing, Qualifications and English for Academic Purposes in Higher Education* (BALEAP & BUILA, 2026) concerning the relevance of admissions tests to the linguistic, communicative and cognitive demands of university study. It is further informed by the academic discourse competencies described in the BALEAP Can Do Framework (Brewer et al., 2013).

This dual analysis draws on evidence from the purpose and intended uses of the test, its task design, cognitive validity framework and assessment criteria across the four language skills of reading, listening, writing and speaking. The findings indicate that C1 Advanced assesses a broad range of competencies associated with academic readiness, including the ability to comprehend, analyse and evaluate complex information, construct and communicate arguments, participate effectively in discussion, and demonstrate control of the linguistic resources required for advanced academic communication. Overall, the evidence suggests that C1 Advanced provides a robust basis for inferences about candidates' capacity to meet the linguistic and communicative demands of higher education.

1. Introduction

English language qualifications used for university admissions are expected to provide valid evidence that prospective students possess the linguistic and communicative abilities required for successful participation in higher education. Recognising the importance of this issue, the British Association of Lecturers in English for Academic Purposes (BALEAP) and the British Universities' International Liaison Association (BUILA) recently published the *English Language Good Practice Guide: Testing, Qualifications and English for Academic Purposes in Higher Education* (BALEAP & BUILA, 2026) – henceforth referred to as the (BALEAP and BUILA) Good Practice Guide. The guide poses a number of important questions concerning, among other things, the extent to which admissions tests assess the types of language skills, communicative practices and cognitive demands that students encounter in academic study. In particular, it asks whether language assessments reflect the linguistic and communicative requirements of higher education and whether the tasks included in such assessments are representative of authentic academic activity. These questions have significant implications for the interpretation and use of English language qualifications for university admissions because they concern the validity of inferences about prospective students' ability to engage successfully in academic study.

The current paper addresses these questions in relation to Cambridge C1 Advanced, a qualification that is widely accepted by higher education institutions as evidence of English language proficiency for academic study. Specifically, the paper examines the extent to which C1 Advanced assesses the language skills and discourse competencies associated with successful participation in higher

education. It does so by drawing on evidence from the test's purpose and intended uses, task design, cognitive validity framework and assessment criteria across the four language skills of reading, listening, writing and speaking. The analysis is further informed by the academic discourse competencies specified in the BALEAP Can Do Framework (Brewer et al., 2013), which describes academic discourse and other types of competencies for English for Academic Purposes (EAP) syllabus design and assessment. Through this dual analysis, the paper evaluates the degree to which C1 Advanced assesses the linguistic and communicative demands of university study.

The paper is organised as follows. It first provides a detailed description of the content of C1 Advanced before evaluating how effectively the test reflects the principles and competencies described in the two documents outlined above. In particular, Section 2 opens with an overview of C1 Advanced, including its purpose, intended uses and target audience. Section 3 then describes the test construct in detail, examining the tasks, language functions, cognitive processes, relevant Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) descriptors and assessment criteria associated with each of the four language skills. Section 4 evaluates the extent to which the test aligns with the linguistic and communicative demands of academic contexts as set out in the BALEAP and BUILA Good Practice Guide and with the academic discourse competencies articulated in the BALEAP Can Do Framework (Brewer et al., 2013). Finally, Section 5 summarises the main findings and concludes by considering the extent to which C1 Advanced supports valid inferences about candidates' preparedness for higher education study.

¹ As the focus of this paper is on academically relevant language skills and their assessment in C1 Advanced, it considers only the four questions in the BALEAP and BUILA Good Practice Guide (BALEAP & BUILA, 2026) that pertain directly to academic language competencies. These questions are presented and discussed in Section 4.

2. Cambridge C1 Advanced overview

C1 Advanced is a test of English language proficiency that reports results at C1 level of the internationally recognised Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR; Council of Europe, 2020). C1 Advanced is developed by Cambridge University Press & Assessment and is recognised by universities, employers, governments and organisations in 130 countries around the world.

It assesses the four language skills and lexicogrammatical knowledge across four papers: Reading and Use of English, Listening, Writing, and Speaking. Each of the four test papers contributes to a profile which defines the candidate's overall communicative language ability.

C1 Advanced can be taken as a paper-based (PB) or digital test. Three of the test papers – Reading and Use of English, Listening, and Writing – are available to candidates in PB and digital versions. There is no digital version for Speaking, which is always administered face-to-face. The test format (task types and their evaluation criteria) is the same for both the PB and digital versions.

All C1 Advanced tasks are designed with reference to relevant CEFR descriptors for Level C1 and reflect cognitive processes depicted in models of language use and cognition. Such models include Weir's socio-cognitive framework – as operationalised in a series

of publications on the assessment of the four skills (Geranpayeh & Taylor, 2013; Khalifa & Weir, 2009; Shaw & Weir, 2007; Taylor, 2011) – as well as Kellogg's (1996) model on writing and Levelt's (1989) model on speaking. These models conceptualise language use as involving multiple interacting processes. A detailed account of how cognitive processes are conceptualised and operationalised in each of the four skills is provided in Appendix 1: Cognitive processing models for the four language skills.

Intended uses of C1 Advanced include measuring a candidate's level of English for study in higher education institutions and for work in professional settings. A C1 Advanced qualification demonstrates that the learner has reached an advanced level of English and they can:

- Follow an academic course at university level
- Communicate effectively at a managerial and professional level
- Participate with confidence in workplace meetings or academic tutorials and seminars
- Express themselves with a high level of fluency

The target candidature of C1 Advanced is English language learners over the age of 16 years.

3. What does the C1 Advanced test assess?

This section offers an in-depth description of the content of the four papers comprising the C1 Advanced test. In particular, it describes the types of tasks used in each of the four test papers, the language functions they elicit, the cognitive processes they tap into, the relevant C1-level CEFR descriptors they draw on, and the evaluation criteria with which they are assessed.

3.1 READING AND USE OF ENGLISH

3.1.1 Task format, skills, cognitive processes and relevant CEFR descriptors

The Reading and Use of English paper assesses a candidate's ability to understand and process written texts and to demonstrate control of grammar and vocabulary at C1 level. Test takers complete a variety of task types, including gap-filling, multiple-choice items and text-based matching tasks. These tasks require the integration of lexical knowledge, syntactic awareness and discourse-level comprehension. The input consists of authentic or semi-authentic

texts drawn from a range of academic and general contexts. Tasks are designed to reflect the types of reading and language use required for study in higher education.

Table 1 provides a comprehensive description of the Reading and Use of English test parts, including their functional foci, cognitive processes and CEFR descriptors of relevance. (A more detailed description of the reading cognitive processes is provided in Appendix 1: Cognitive processing models for the four language skills, while sample reading tasks can be found in the [C1 Advanced Handbook for Teachers](#).)

Table 2 presents an overview of the cognitive processes elicited across the tasks in the Reading and Use of English paper. While the cognitive process information presented is the same as that reported in Table 1, Table 2 offers a clearer visual representation of the relationship between individual tasks and the cognitive processes they engage. It also illustrates the increasing cognitive demands associated with progressively more complex tasks.

² While C1 Advanced also certifies performance at CEFR levels B2 and C2, the analysis presented in this paper is confined to C1-level language skills and competencies, which is both the target proficiency level of the test and the level achieved by most candidates.

Table 1: C1 Advanced Reading and Use of English test parts, functional foci, cognitive processes and CEFR descriptors of relevance

Part	Description	Functional foci	Cognitive processes	CEFR descriptors of relevance (C1)
1	Multiple-choice cloze text: A modified cloze containing eight gaps followed by eight 4-option multiple-choice items.	Vocabulary, e.g. idioms, collocations, fixed phrases, complementation, phrasal verbs, semantic precision.	Word recognition; lexical access; morphological processing; syntactic parsing; establishing propositional meaning.	Vocabulary range and control: Can select from several vocabulary options in almost all situations by exploiting synonyms of even words less commonly encountered. Uses less common vocabulary idiomatically and appropriately. Also: Grammatical accuracy, General linguistic range, Reading for information and argument, Coherence and cohesion and Reading for orientation.
2	Open cloze: A modified cloze text containing eight gaps. Candidates supply a single word to complete each gap.	Awareness and control of grammar with some focus on vocabulary.	Lexical access; morphological processing; syntactic parsing; establishing propositional meaning at sentence level.	Grammatical accuracy: Consistently maintains a high degree of grammatical accuracy. Also: Vocabulary range and control, General linguistic range, Reading for information and argument, Coherence and cohesion and Reading for orientation.
3	Word formation: A text containing eight gaps corresponding to a word. To complete each gap, candidates transform a base word to fit the context.	Vocabulary, in particular the use of affixation, internal changes and compounding in word formation.	Lexical access; morphological processing; syntactic parsing.	General linguistic range: Can select an appropriate formulation from a broad range of language to express themselves clearly, without having to restrict what they want to say. Also: Vocabulary range and control, Grammatical accuracy, General linguistic range, Reading for information and argument, Coherence and cohesion and Reading for orientation.
4	Key word transformation: Candidates rewrite sentences using a given word.	Grammar, vocabulary, collocation, paraphrasing, meaning equivalence.	Lexical access; morphological processing; syntactic parsing; establishing propositional meaning; inferencing; reformulation.	General linguistic range: Can select an appropriate formulation from a broad range of language to express themselves clearly, without having to restrict what they want to say. Also: Vocabulary range and control, Grammatical accuracy, Reading for information and argument, Coherence and cohesion and Reading for orientation.

Part	Description	Functional foci	Cognitive processes	CEFR descriptors of relevance (C1)
5	Multiple choice: Candidates select correct answers to six 4-option multiple choice questions based on a text.	Detail, opinion, attitude, tone, purpose, main idea, implication and text organisation features (exemplification, comparison, reference).	Lexical access; morphological processing; syntactic parsing; establishing propositional meaning; inferencing; building a mental model.	Reading for information and argument: 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. Also: Vocabulary range and control, Grammatical accuracy, General linguistic range, Coherence and cohesion and Reading for orientation.
6	Cross-text multiple matching: Candidates must read across four short texts to match a prompt to elements in the texts.	Understanding of opinion and attitude; comparing and contrasting of opinions and attitudes across texts.	Lexical access; morphological processing; syntactic parsing; establishing propositional meaning; inferencing; building a mental model; creating a text-level structure; creating an intertext representation.	
7	Gapped text: A text from which paragraphs have been removed and placed in jumbled order after the text. Candidates must decide from where in the text the paragraphs have been removed.	Cohesion, coherence, text structure, global meaning.	Lexical access; morphological processing; syntactic parsing; establishing propositional meaning; inferencing; creating a text-level structure; building a mental model.	Coherence and cohesion: Can produce well-organised, coherent text, using a variety of cohesive devices and organisational patterns. Also: Vocabulary range and control, Grammatical accuracy, General linguistic range, Reading for information and argument and Reading for orientation.
8	Multiple matching: A text or several short texts, preceded by multiple-matching questions. Candidates must match a prompt to elements in the text.	Detail, opinion, attitude, specific information.	Lexical access; morphological processing; syntactic parsing; establishing propositional meaning; inferencing; building a mental model; creating a text-level structure; creating an intertext representation.	Reading for orientation: Can scan quickly through several sources in parallel, in both their own field and in related fields, and can identify the relevance and usefulness of particular sections for the task at hand. Also: Vocabulary range and control, Grammatical accuracy, General linguistic range, Reading for information and argument and Coherence and cohesion.

Table 2: Cognitive processes in C1 Advanced Reading and Use of English task types

		Cognitive processes										
Part	Description	Word recognition	Lexical access	Morphological processing	Syntactic parsing	Establishing propositional meaning	Inferencing	Building a mental model	Creating a text-level structure	Creating an intertext representation	Expeditious reading	Careful reading
1	Multiple-choice cloze text: A modified cloze containing eight gaps followed by eight 4-option multiple-choice items.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓						✓
2	Open cloze: A modified cloze test containing eight gaps. Candidates supply a single word to complete each gap.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓					✓	
3	Word formation: A text containing eight gaps corresponding to a word. To complete each gap, candidates transform a base word to fit the context.	✓	✓	✓	✓						✓	
4	Key word transformation: Candidates rewrite sentences using a given word.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓				✓	
5	Multiple choice: Candidates select correct answers to six 4-option multiple choice questions based on a text.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓
6	Cross-text multiple matching: Candidates must read across four short texts to match a prompt to elements in the texts.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
7	Gapped text: A text from which paragraphs have been removed and placed in jumbled order after the text. Candidates must decide from where in the text the paragraphs have been removed.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
8	Multiple matching: A text or several short texts, preceded by multiple-matching questions. Candidates must match a prompt to elements in the text.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

3.2 LISTENING

3.2.1 Task format, skills, cognitive processes and relevant CEFR descriptors

The Listening module assesses the ability to understand spoken English in a range of contexts, including lectures, conversations and broadcasts. Test takers listen to recorded material and respond to multiple-choice and sentence-completion tasks. The input includes a variety of accents and speaking styles reflecting real-world use. The tasks require candidates to process both explicit information and implied meaning under time constraints. Recordings are played twice, and candidates must manage their listening, note-taking and response strategies accordingly.

Table 3 provides a comprehensive description of the Listening test parts, including their functional foci, cognitive processes and CEFR descriptors of relevance. (A more detailed description of the listening cognitive processes is provided in Appendix 1: Cognitive processing models for the four language skills, while sample listening tasks can be found in the [C1 Advanced Handbook for Teachers](#).)

Table 3: C1 Advanced Listening test parts, functional foci, cognitive processes and CEFR descriptors of relevance

Part	Description	Functional foci	Cognitive processes	CEFR descriptors of relevance (C1)
1	Multiple choice: Three short extracts from exchanges between interacting speakers with two multiple-choice questions on each extract.	Feeling, attitude, opinion, purpose, function, agreement, course of action, gist, detail, etc.	Input decoding, lexical search, parsing and meaning construction. Discourse construction (item dependent).	Overall oral comprehension: Can give clear, detailed descriptions and presentations on complex subjects, integrating sub-themes, developing particular points and rounding off with an appropriate conclusion. Understanding conversation between other people: Can identify the attitude of each participant in an animated discussion characterised by overlapping turns, digressions and colloquialisms that is delivered at a natural speed in varieties that are familiar. Identifying cues and inferring: Is skilled at using contextual, grammatical and lexical cues to infer attitude, mood and intentions and anticipate what will come next.
2	Sentence completion: A monologue lasting approximately 3 minutes. Candidates are required to complete the sentences with information heard on the recording.	Specific information, stated opinion.	Input decoding, lexical search and parsing.	Overall oral comprehension: Can understand enough to follow extended discourse on abstract and complex topics beyond their own field, though they may need to relisten to confirm occasional details, especially if the variety is unfamiliar. Understanding as a member of a live audience: Can follow most lectures, discussions and debates with relative ease. Note-taking (lectures, seminars, meetings, etc.): Can select relevant, detailed information and arguments on complex, abstract topics from multiple oral sources (e.g. lectures, podcasts, formal discussions and debates, interviews), provided the delivery is at normal speed.

Part	Description	Functional foci	Cognitive processes	CEFR descriptors of relevance (C1)
3	Multiple choice: Candidates answer six multiple-choice questions, each with four options, based on a conversation between two or more speakers.	Attitude, opinion, agreement, gist, feeling, speaker purpose, function, detail.	Input decoding, lexical search, parsing and meaning construction. Discourse construction (item dependent).	Overall oral comprehension: Can follow extended discourse even when it is not clearly structured and when relationships are only implied and not signalled explicitly. Understanding conversation between other people: Can easily follow complex interactions between third parties in group discussion and debate, even on abstract, complex, unfamiliar topics. Identifying cues and inferring: Is skilled at using contextual, grammatical and lexical cues to infer attitude, mood and intentions and anticipate what will come next.
4	Multiple matching: Candidates match the correct option to five themed monologues, from a list of eight options.	Gist, attitude and opinion, main points, speaker purpose, feeling, interpreting context.	Input decoding, lexical search, parsing and meaning construction.	Overall oral comprehension: Can follow extended discourse even when it is not clearly structured and when relationships are only implied and not signalled explicitly. Understanding as a member of a live audience: Can follow most lectures, discussions and debates with relative ease. Identifying cues and inferring: Is skilled at using contextual, grammatical and lexical cues to infer attitude, mood and intentions and anticipate what will come next.

Table 4 presents an overview of the cognitive processes elicited across the tasks in the Listening paper. While the cognitive process information presented is the same as that reported in Table 3, Table 4 offers a clearer visual representation of the relationship between individual tasks and the cognitive processes they engage. All Listening task

types in C1 Advanced are designed to tap into input decoding, lexical search and parsing. In addition, the Part 1 multiple-choice task and the Part 4 multiple-matching task are designed to tap into meaning construction. Depending on the specific item, discourse construction may be activated by some of the items in these tasks.

Table 4: Cognitive processes in C1 Advanced Listening task types

Part	Description	Cognitive processes				
		Input decoding	Lexical search	Parsing	Meaning construction	Discourse construction
1	Multiple choice: Three short extracts from exchanges between interacting speakers with two multiple-choice questions on each extract.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
2	Sentence completion: A monologue lasting approximately 3 minutes. Candidates are required to complete the sentences with information heard on the recording.	✓	✓	✓		
3	Multiple choice: Candidates answer six multiple-choice questions, each with four options, based on a conversation between two or more speakers.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
4	Multiple matching: Candidates match the correct option to five themed monologues, from a list of eight options.	✓	✓	✓	✓	

3.3 WRITING

3.3.1 Task format, skills, cognitive processes and relevant CEFR descriptors

The Writing paper evaluates candidates' ability to produce clear, well-structured written texts suitable for an academic or professional context. Test takers complete two tasks, including a compulsory essay and one optional task (e.g. report, review or proposal). Input is provided in the form of written prompts and contextual information. Candidates are expected to organise ideas coherently, use an appropriate register, and demonstrate a range of grammatical structures and vocabulary consistent with C1

descriptors. Time management and planning are essential, as both tasks must be completed within the allocated time.

Table 5 provides a comprehensive description of the Writing test parts, including their functional foci, cognitive processes and CEFR descriptors of relevance. (A more detailed description of the writing cognitive processes is provided in Appendix 1: Cognitive processing models for the four language skills, while sample writing tasks can be found in the [C1 Advanced Handbook for Teachers](#).)

Table 5: C1 Advanced Writing test parts, functional foci, cognitive processes and CEFR descriptors of relevance

Part	Description	Functional foci	Cognitive processes	CEFR descriptors of relevance (C1)
1	Essay: Writing an essay with a discursive focus, based on two points given in the input text. Candidates will be asked to explain which of the two points is more important and to give reasons for their opinion.	- Presenting and developing an argument - Evaluating ideas and evidence - Expressing and supporting opinions - Synthesising the input material - Presenting a rational conclusion	The processes elicited by the Writing tasks can be summarised as follows: <i>Formulation</i> Generating and organising ideas. Encoding ideas into linguistic form (lexis, syntax). <i>Execution</i> Transcribing text (spelling, punctuation, typing/handwriting). <i>Monitoring</i> Evaluating and revising a text. Editing a text for accuracy, clarity and coherence. See Kellogg (1996, 1999).	Overall written production: Can produce clear, well-structured texts of complex subjects, underlining the relevant salient issues, expanding and supporting points of view at some length with subsidiary points, reasons and relevant examples, and rounding off with an appropriate conclusion. Also: Creative writing, Correspondence, Reports and essays, Overall written interaction, Thematic development and Coherence and cohesion.
2	Contextualised task: Writing one from a number of possible text types (letter/email, proposal, report or review). The tasks provide candidates with a stated context, topic, purpose and target reader for their writing	- Identifying the appropriate style and tone for different purposes and target readers - Planning an answer which addresses all the points required - Developing points and linking ideas effectively - Producing logical and coherent text	Overall written production: Can employ the structure and conventions of a variety of genres, varying the tone, style and register according to addressee, text type and theme. Also: Creative writing, Correspondence, Reports and essays, Overall written interaction, Thematic development and Coherence and cohesion.	

3.3.2 Evaluation criteria

Writing performance is assessed in terms of four criteria, which contribute equally to the candidate's result:

- **Content** focuses on how well the candidate has fulfilled all requirements of the task. Candidates are assessed in terms of how fully the target reader has been informed, the relevance of the content, and whether any key aspects have been omitted or misunderstood.
- **Communicative Achievement** assesses the ability to use knowledge of genre and socio-linguistic

conventions to communicate straightforward and complex ideas in ways that are appropriate to the intended audience.

- **Organisation** assesses the ability to use knowledge of organisational devices to create cohesive and coherent texts.
- **Language** assesses the ability to use knowledge of lexis and grammar to successfully convey meaning.

Responses are marked on each criterion, or subscale, from 0 to 5. Table 6 presents the full details of the C1 Advanced assessment criteria for Writing.

Table 6: Assessment criteria for C1 Advanced Writing (source: [C1 Advanced Handbook for Teachers](#).)

C1	Content	Communicative Achievement	Organisation	Language
5	All content is relevant to the task. Target reader is fully informed.	Uses the conventions of the communicative task with sufficient flexibility to communicate complex ideas in an effective way, holding the target reader's attention with ease, fulfilling all communicative purposes.	Text is a well-organised, coherent whole, using a variety of cohesive devices and organisational patterns with flexibility.	Uses a range of vocabulary, including less common lexis, effectively and precisely. Uses a wide range of simple and complex grammatical forms with full control, flexibility and sophistication. Errors, if present, are related to less common words and structures, or occur as slips.
4	<i>Performance shares features of Bands 3 and 5.</i>			
3	Minor irrelevances and/or omissions may be present. Target reader is on the whole informed.	Uses the conventions of the communicative task effectively to hold the target reader's attention and communicate straightforward and complex ideas, as appropriate.	Text is well organised and coherent, using a variety of cohesive devices and organisational patterns to generally good effect.	Uses a range of vocabulary, including less common lexis, appropriately. Uses a range of simple and complex grammatical forms with control and flexibility. Occasional errors may be present but do not impede communication.
2	<i>Performance shares features of Bands 1 and 3.</i>			
1	Irrelevances and misinterpretation of task may be present. Target reader is minimally informed.	Uses the conventions of the communicative task to hold the target reader's attention and communicate straightforward ideas.	Text is generally well organised and coherent, using a variety of linking words and cohesive devices.	Uses a range of everyday vocabulary appropriately, with occasional inappropriate use of less common lexis. Uses a range of simple and some complex grammatical forms with a good degree of control. Errors do not impede communication.
0	Content is totally irrelevant. Target reader is not informed.	<i>Performance below Band 1.</i>		

3.4 SPEAKING

3.4.1 Task format, skills, cognitive processes and relevant CEFR descriptors

The Speaking module evaluates candidates' ability to communicate effectively in spoken English through a face-to-face interaction with an interlocutor and one examiner, and either one or two other candidates. The test consists of several parts, including a short interview, an extended individual turn, a collaborative task and a discussion. Candidates respond to both spoken prompts and visual stimuli. They are expected to manage turn-taking, express and justify opinions,

and develop topics coherently. The tasks therefore aspire to elicit the normative interactional behaviours which are relevant in both academic and professional settings. Table 7 provides a comprehensive description of the Speaking test parts, including their functional foci, cognitive processes and CEFR descriptors of relevance. (A more detailed description of the speaking cognitive processes is provided in Appendix 1: Cognitive processing models for the four language skills, while sample speaking tasks can be found in the [C1 Advanced Handbook for Teachers](#).)

Table 7: C1 Advanced Speaking test parts, functional foci, cognitive processes and CEFR descriptors of relevance

Part	Description	Functional foci	Cognitive processes	CEFR descriptors of relevance (C1)
1	Conversation: A short conversation between the interlocutor and each candidate in turn.	- General language - Interactional language - Social language	The processes elicited by the Speaking tasks can be summarised as follows: <i>Conceptualisation</i> Planning the message (macro- and micro-planning). <i>Grammatical encoding</i>	Overall oral interaction: Can express themselves fluently and spontaneously, almost effortlessly. 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. Also: Vocabulary range, Grammatical accuracy and Phonological control.
2	Long turn: An individual 'long turn' for each candidate with a response from the second candidate. Each candidate is given three photographs and asked to choose two to talk about.	- Organising a larger unit of discourse - Comparing - Describing - Expressing opinions and speculating	Constructing syntactic structure and selecting lexis. <i>Phonological encoding</i> Retrieving and organising sound forms. <i>Phonetic encoding</i> Preparing articulatory realisation. <i>Articulation</i> Producing speech.	Fluency: Can express themselves fluently and spontaneously, almost effortlessly. Only a conceptually difficult subject can hinder a natural, smooth flow of language. Sustained monologue: putting a case: Can argue a case on a complex issue, formulating points precisely and employing emphasis effectively. Overall oral production: Can give clear, detailed descriptions and presentations on complex subjects, integrating sub-themes, developing particular points and rounding off with an appropriate conclusion. Also: Vocabulary range, Grammatical accuracy and Phonological control.

Part	Description	Functional foci	Cognitive processes	CEFR descriptors of relevance (C1)
3	Conversation: A two-way conversation between the candidates. The candidates are given spoken instructions with written stimuli, which are used in a discussion and a decision-making task.	• Sustaining an interaction • Exchanging ideas • Expressing and justifying opinions • Agreeing and/or disagreeing • Suggesting • Speculating • Evaluating • Reaching a decision through negotiation, etc.	<i>Self-monitoring</i> Evaluating and adjusting the output produced (and, by extension, monitoring the talk produced by others). See Levelt (1989), Field (2011) and Glasson (2026).	Overall oral interaction: Can express themselves fluently and spontaneously, almost effortlessly. 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. Also: Vocabulary range, Grammatical accuracy and Phonological control.
4	Discussion: A discussion on topics related to the collaborative task in Part 3.	• Expressing and justifying opinions • Agreeing and/or disagreeing • Speculating		

3.4.2 Evaluation criteria

Throughout the test, the candidates are assessed on their own individual performance and not in relation to each other. They are awarded marks by two examiners: the assessor and the interlocutor. The interlocutor awards a mark for Global Achievement using a Global Achievement Scale (Table 8).

Table 8: Global Achievement Scale for C1 Advanced Speaking (source: [C1 Advanced Handbook for Teachers](#))

C1	Global Achievement
5	Handles communication on a wide range of topics, including unfamiliar and abstract ones, with very little hesitation. Uses accurate and appropriate linguistic resources to express complex ideas and concepts and produce extended discourse that is coherent and easy to follow.
4	<i>Performance shares features of Bands 3 and 5.</i>
3	Handles communication on a range of familiar and unfamiliar topics, with very little hesitation. Uses accurate and appropriate linguistic resources to express ideas and produce extended discourse that is generally coherent.
2	<i>Performance shares features of Bands 1 and 3</i>
1	Handles communication on familiar topics, despite some hesitation. Organises extended discourse but occasionally produces utterances that lack coherence, and some inaccuracies and inappropriate usage occur.
0	<i>Performance below Band 1.</i>

The assessor awards marks by applying performance descriptors from five analytic criteria, which contribute equally to the candidate's result:

- **Grammatical Resource** assesses the range and accuracy of grammatical structures the candidate uses. It looks at how well they control simple and complex forms to express meaning clearly and appropriately.
- **Lexical Resource** evaluates the range, precision and appropriacy of vocabulary used in different contexts. It focuses on how effectively the candidate selects and uses words to express ideas on both familiar and unfamiliar topics.
- **Discourse Management** considers how well the candidate organises and develops their ideas over extended speech. It includes coherence, relevance, fluency, and the effective use of linking devices and discourse markers.
- **Pronunciation** assesses how clear and intelligible a candidate's speech is to a listener. It also evaluates the effective use of features such as stress, intonation and individual sounds to support meaning.
- **Interactive Communication** assesses how well a candidate participates in and manages interaction with others. It focuses on their ability to initiate, respond, maintain and develop the conversation towards a shared outcome.

Responses are marked on each criterion, or subscale, from 0 to 5. Table 9 presents the full details of the C1 Advanced assessment criteria for Speaking.

Table 9: Assessment criteria for C1 Advanced Speaking (source: [C1 Advanced Handbook for Teachers](#))

C1	Grammatical Resource	Lexical Resource	Discourse Management	Pronunciation	Interactive Communication
5	Maintains control of a wide range of grammatical forms.	Uses a wide range of appropriate vocabulary to give and exchange views on familiar and unfamiliar topics.	Produces extended stretches of language with ease and with very little hesitation. Contributions are relevant, coherent and varied. Uses a wide range of cohesive devices and discourse markers.	Is intelligible. Phonological features are used effectively to convey and enhance meaning.	Interacts with ease, linking contributions to those of other speakers. Widens the scope of the interaction and negotiates towards an outcome.
4	<i>Performance shares features of Bands 3 and 5.</i>				
3	Shows a good degree of control of a range of simple and some complex grammatical forms.	Uses a range of appropriate vocabulary to give and exchange views on familiar and unfamiliar topics.	Produces extended stretches of language with very little hesitation. Contributions are relevant and there is a clear organisation of ideas. Uses a range of cohesive devices and discourse markers.	Is intelligible. Intonation is appropriate. Sentence and word stress is accurately placed. Individual sounds are articulated clearly.	Initiates and responds appropriately, linking contributions to those of other speakers. Maintains and develops the interaction and negotiates towards an outcome.
2	<i>Performance shares features of Bands 1 and 3.</i>				
1	Shows a good degree of control of simple grammatical forms, and attempts some complex grammatical forms.	Uses appropriate vocabulary to give and exchange views, but only when talking about familiar topics.	Produces extended stretches of language despite some hesitation. Contributions are relevant and there is very little repetition. Uses a range of cohesive devices.	Is intelligible. Intonation is generally appropriate. Sentence and word stress is generally accurately placed. Individual sounds are generally articulated clearly.	Initiates and responds appropriately. Maintains and develops the interaction and negotiates towards an outcome with very little support.
0	<i>Performance below Band 1.</i>				

4. How does C1 Advanced assess language skills for higher education study?

This section examines how C1 Advanced assesses the language skills required for successful participation in higher education (HE). It does so with reference to two key publications which describe academic language competencies.

First, it addresses four questions derived from the Good Practice Guide published by BALEAP, the British Association of Lecturers in English for Academic Purposes in the UK, and BUILA, the British Universities' International Liaison Association (BALEAP & BUILA, 2026). The guide identifies key academic skills that language assessments used for university admissions should evaluate.

Second, the section considers how C1 Advanced tasks and assessment criteria elicit and evaluate the academic discourse competencies described in the BALEAP Can Do Framework (Brewer et al., 2013). Through these analyses, we examine how C1 Advanced provides evidence of candidates' readiness to meet the linguistic and communicative demands of higher education study.

4.1 WITH REFERENCE TO THE BALEAP AND BUILA GOOD PRACTICE GUIDE

A joint publication by BALEAP and BUILA, the *English Language Good Practice Guide: Testing, Qualifications and English for Academic Purposes in Higher Education* (BALEAP & BUILA, 2026) poses a number of questions for evaluating the relevance and validity of English language tests for university admission purposes. Here we discuss the following four questions that focus on the linguistic and communicative demands of academic or professional contexts. The discussion draws on descriptions of the language functions and cognitive processes elicited by C1 Advanced tasks and assessed through its evaluation criteria (see Table 1 to Table 9) as well as on relevant literature.

Q1. Does the test or qualification content reflect the linguistic and communicative demands of academic or professional contexts, rather than general or everyday English?

Q2. Are the tasks representative of real-life academic or professional communication that students will encounter?

C1 Advanced reflects the linguistic and communicative demands of academic and professional contexts through both its overall construct (see Cambridge C1 Advanced overview) and the design of its tasks, which target transferable C1-level language skills useful for academic study. The qualification is explicitly intended to support uses of language in higher education and

professional contexts, and its content was revised in 2015 to strengthen this alignment by incorporating tasks and texts with a clearer academic orientation (Zeronis & Geranpayeh, 2015).

Within the exam, candidates engage with extended reading texts that require interpretation of attitude, argument and discourse organisation, and complete writing tasks such as essays and reports that involve evaluating ideas, justifying opinions and structuring arguments – communicative purposes widely recognised as central to academic and professional discourse (Vidaković et al., 2015). For example, the Reading and Use of English paper includes tasks such as multiple matching of information within a longer text or across short texts (Part 8), where candidates must compare viewpoints and integrate information, while the Writing paper requires production of discursive essays (Part 1) and proposals (Part 2), mirroring typical academic genres.

In terms of target language domain representation, the C1 Advanced tasks are designed to capture core cognitive and discourse processes underlying real-world communication. Research underpinning the 2015 revisions shows that tasks were selected to reflect the kinds of reasoning required in university study, such as comparing perspectives across multiple sources and evaluating arguments. These skills are operationalised, for example, in Listening Part 3, where candidates are required to comprehend different or similar attitudes and opinions of two or more speakers, both explicitly stated and implied, during longer discussions or interviews (Elliott & Chisholm, 2015). Similarly, speaking tasks such as collaborative decision-making and extended discussion (Part 3) require candidates to negotiate meaning, express and justify viewpoints, and engage in sustained interaction, reflecting communicative practices in seminars and professional contexts ([C1 Advanced Handbook for Teachers](#)).

Overall, the 2015 revision of C1 Advanced, together with stakeholder feedback, highlighted the need for content and task types that reflect the demands of study, work and general purposes, and that provide a representative sample of the communicative activities, genres and cognitive demands associated

with academic and professional English use (Zeronis & Geranpayeh, 2015). Following these modifications, the current C1 Advanced exam better supports valid inferences about candidates' readiness to operate in these contexts.

Q3. Is there a sufficient range of cognitive processes across the tasks, not just surface-level comprehension or recall?

Q4. Do the tasks require the types of cognitive operations (e.g. analysis, synthesis, critical thinking) expected in UK academic settings?

C1 Advanced incorporates a broad range of cognitive processes across tasks, rather than focusing narrowly on recall or simple comprehension. The Reading and Use of English paper, for instance, combines tasks that activate both lower-level reading processes (e.g. lexical and grammatical processing at word and sentence level) and higher-level reading processes (e.g. inference, meaning integration across paragraphs and interpretation of multiple texts), reflecting established models of reading cognition (Khalifa & Weir, 2009, discussed in Vidaković et al., 2015). This deliberate spread ensures that the test samples performance across a continuum of cognitive demand (see the cognitive processes listed in Table 1 to Table 6).

Importantly, the construct was refined during the 2015 revision to address gaps in higher-order cognitive processing. For example, the Reading Part 6 cross-text multiple matching requires candidates to read and comprehend meaning across texts. Similarly, the Reading Part 7 gapped text hinges upon candidates being able to comprehend input within and across paragraphs and also across a whole text (see Vidaković et al., 2015).

In practical terms, in the Reading paper, for instance, the C1 Advanced test taker needs to be able to deal with an increasingly higher level of nuance in text and options. Texts may be more complex to orient to; for instance, the cue for the correct response might actually be 'buried' within the paragraph and more subtle (e.g. 'surprise' expressed as 'far more than you might think'). Getting the item right may rely on

understanding subtle or implied meanings (in both the key option and the distractor options) across a paragraph. Such task aims reflect the assumed purpose of academic study, where learners at the C1 level are expected to identify 'finer points of detail, including attitudes and both implied and explicitly stated opinions' (Council of Europe, 2020, p.56).

At the same time, the wide range of higher-order cognitive operations elicited by C1 Advanced tasks are characteristic of UK academic and professional contexts. Following the test's 2015 revision, tasks are designed to engage candidates in processes such as interpreting viewpoints, evaluating arguments and integrating information across texts (Vidaković et al., 2015), rather than relying on surface-level comprehension. For example, reading tasks target understanding of attitude, opinion, implication and discourse organisation, requiring candidates to process meaning beyond the sentence level and construct coherent representations of texts. In particular, the introduction of the cross-text multiple-matching task (Part 6) reflects a deliberate attempt to elicit synthesis and critical comparison across sources, a key academic skill associated with undergraduate study (Vidaković et al., 2015).

Similarly, writing tasks (e.g. essays, reports) require candidates to organise ideas, evaluate perspectives and justify arguments (see Lim, 2015), while speaking tasks involve extended discussion and collaborative decision-making, engaging processes such as reasoning, negotiation and evaluation (see Galaczi & Glasson, 2015).

In summary, C1 Advanced not only requires appropriate academic cognitive operations, including analysis, synthesis and evaluation, but also operationalises these across a sufficiently wide range of task types, supporting robust inferences about candidates' readiness for cognitively demanding language use that is typically required for study at a higher education level.

4.2 WITH REFERENCE TO THE BALEAP CAN DO FRAMEWORK

BALEAP also created a *Can Do Framework for EAP syllabus design and assessment* (Brewer et al. 2013). The framework outlines key academic language and study competencies required for successful participation in higher education. It is intended to support EAP assessment – in addition to syllabus design and curriculum development – by providing transparent learning outcomes and competency descriptors.

Importantly, for our purposes, the BALEAP framework defines general and language-specific competencies for academic discourse across the four skills that university students are expected to demonstrate in order to function effectively within academic study contexts. Table 10 (Appendix 2: How C1 Advanced assesses the BALEAP academic discourse competencies) lists these competencies and shows how the C1 Advanced tasks and evaluation criteria elicit and evaluate them. For the receptive skills tasks we also bring supporting evidence from relevant research and C1 Advanced item writer guidelines. (Note that the focus here is on the *language-specific* competencies as C1 Advanced is a language assessment after all. However, we also discuss some of the *general competencies* wherever there is a good overlap with the language ones or wherever C1 Advanced tasks directly assess them.)

As Table 10 (Appendix 2) shows, there is a strong alignment between the BALEAP academic discourse competencies and the skills elicited and assessed by C1 Advanced. Across the four skills, C1 Advanced tasks require candidates to demonstrate key academic discourse abilities, including analysing and synthesising information, evaluating viewpoints, constructing coherent arguments, participating in extended discussions, and managing language and discourse expected in an academic study context. Furthermore, the Writing and Speaking assessment criteria explicitly reward many of the discourse features emphasised in the BALEAP framework, providing a robust basis for evaluating readiness for the communicative demands of higher education.

5. Summary

This paper examined the extent to which Cambridge C1 Advanced assesses the language skills, discourse competencies and cognitive processes required for successful participation in higher education. More specifically, the paper considered C1 Advanced in relation to questions posed by the BALEAP and BUILA Good Practice Guide and the academic discourse competencies articulated in the BALEAP Can Do Framework (Brewer et al., 2013). The findings suggest a substantial degree of alignment between the academic language competencies identified in these frameworks and the skills elicited and assessed by C1 Advanced.

Drawing on descriptions of the test construct, task design, cognitive validity framework and assessment criteria, the analysis demonstrated that C1 Advanced samples a broad range of receptive and productive language abilities that are relevant to academic study. Across the four skills, candidates are required to engage with complex texts and spoken discourse, interpret explicit and implicit meaning, evaluate

and synthesise information, construct coherent arguments and participate effectively in extended interaction. The analysis also showed that the test is underpinned by established socio-cognitive models of language use and incorporates cognitive processes that extend beyond surface-level comprehension to include higher-order operations such as inferencing, evaluation, integration of information and collaborative meaning-making. These features support the claim that C1 Advanced elicits language use that is consistent with many of the linguistic and communicative demands encountered in higher education contexts. While no single language assessment can capture every aspect of university study, the evidence reviewed in this paper indicates that C1 Advanced assesses a wide range of competencies associated with academic readiness, and provides a robust basis for inferences about candidates' capacity to meet the linguistic and communicative demands of higher education.

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Appendices

APPENDIX 1: COGNITIVE PROCESSING MODELS FOR THE FOUR LANGUAGE SKILLS

C1 Advanced Reading

Our conceptualisation of cognitive processing in reading is captured in the model proposed by Weir and Khalifa (2008; see also Khalifa & Weir, 2009), which draws on the socio-cognitive framework of test validation originally proposed by Weir (2005). This model is reproduced in Figure 1.

The model portrays reading as a set of metacognitive activities (e.g. deciding the purpose of reading, and whether it needs to be local or global, careful or expeditious) that trigger and monitor the cognitive processes needed to complete a reading task. Various forms of knowledge (e.g. lexical, syntactic, etc.) feed into the cognitive processes to enable successful reading comprehension. The model consists of bottom-up processes (also termed lower-level cognitive processes), such as word recognition and lexical search, and top-down processes (higher-level cognitive processes), such as text-level representation and building a mental model of the text. As the reader builds up a model of the content and purpose of the text, they engage in monitoring, checking and remediation in terms of their understanding of the text so far. Depending on the level of ability of the learner, and the difficulty of the text, some of the higher-level cognitive processes may not be engaged in, for example if the learner is struggling with syntactic and lexical aspects of the text.

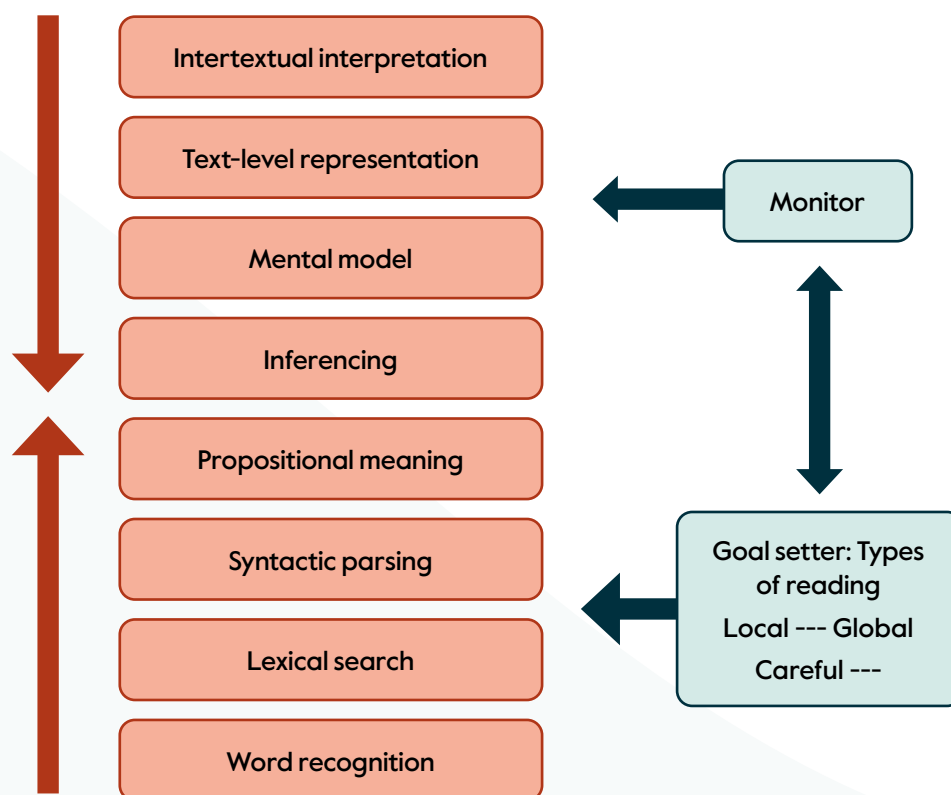


Figure 1: A model of cognitive processes during reading, adapted from Weir and Khalifa (2008) and Khalifa and Weir (2009)

There are a number of task types in use for C1 Advanced Reading, which link to the types of reading activities (global, local, careful and expeditious) and cognitive processes (lexical access, syntactic parsing, etc.) listed in the model. For example, readers engage in careful, local reading to understand sentence-level meaning, whereas careful global reading is required to understand the overall text. Scanning for specific information requires expeditious local reading, whereas searching for important details and skimming for gist require expeditious global reading (see Tables 1 and 2 for more details).

C1 Advanced Listening

Our approach to cognitive processing in listening is summarised in the model put forward by Field (2013), which is itself based on the socio-cognitive framework (Weir, 2005). This model is summarised in Figure 2.

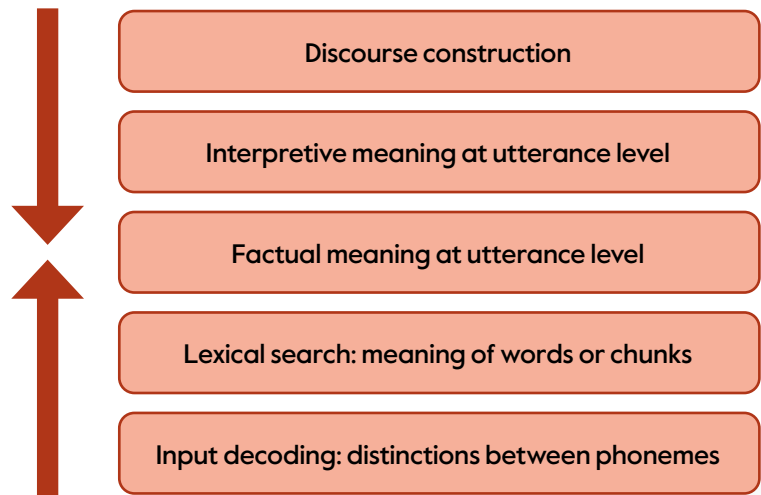


Figure 2: A model of cognitive processes during listening summarised from Field (2013)

There are five major levels of processing in this model. The first level is decoding, which involves converting the incoming acoustic sounds into phonemes and syllables using one’s phonological knowledge of the target language. This includes identifying which syllables carry stress, as this feeds into the next level, lexical search. As listeners decode the input, they begin to search their mental lexicon for the best word match. Listeners also begin to consider what sense or meaning of the words is being used. The next level is parsing, which involves imposing a syntactic structure onto the words to identify the literal meaning of an utterance. These are all bottom-up strategies. At the same time, the listener employs top-down strategies and pragmatic knowledge to identify the intended meaning and purpose of the utterance, and to build a mental model to decide on the overall main message, putting the utterances into a larger discourse structure. This top-down approach supports the other stages of the model.

The language proficiency level of learners has an impact on the cognitive processing they can carry out effectively. For example, lower-level learners may need to spend more time on decoding sounds and searching at a lexical level. This makes it more difficult for them to activate top-down strategies such as identifying the overall meaning or purpose of what they are listening to. C1 Advanced tasks are designed to take the level of the learner into consideration. There are a number of task types in use for C1 Advanced Listening, which link to these different cognitive processes (input decoding, lexical search, parsing, meaning construction, discourse construction) listed in the model (see Tables 3 and 4 for more details).

C1 Advanced Writing

The C1 Advanced Writing paper is designed to elicit a range of cognitive processes associated with written language production (see [C1 Advanced Handbook for Teachers](#)) conceptualised within a socio-cognitive framework of language use (Weir, 2005). These processes reflect the interaction between linguistic knowledge, discourse organisation and metacognitive control, and are broadly consistent with established models of writing which describe performance as the outcome of dynamically interacting stages of planning, formulation and monitoring (Kellogg, 1996; Shaw & Weir, 2007 – see example in Figure 3 below).

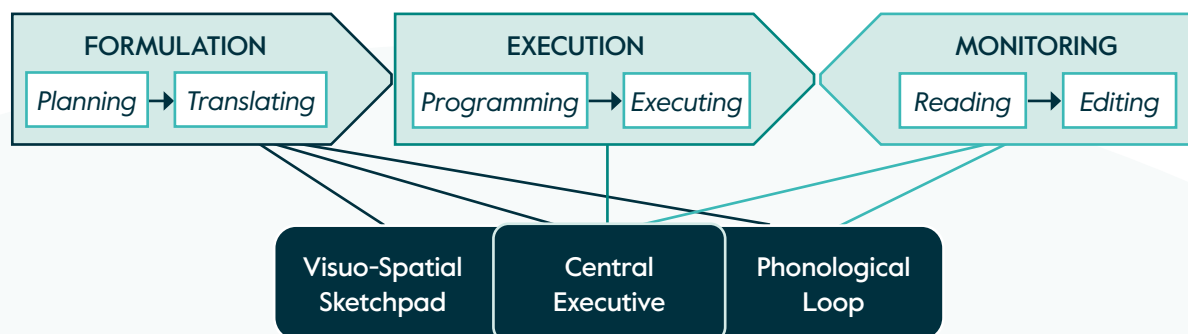


Figure 3: Kellogg's model of writing processes and working memory (adapted from Kellogg, 1996)

Across these cognitive models, writing begins at the level of *linguistic encoding*, where candidates engage in processes which enable the realisation of meaning in written form. These include lexical retrieval and selection, through which writers access and deploy appropriate vocabulary, as well as morphological and syntactic processing, through which lexical items are shaped and organised into grammatically well-formed structures. These processes are accompanied by orthographic encoding, involving the accurate representation of language in written form, including spelling and punctuation. Although such processes are relatively automatised at advanced levels of proficiency, they continue to require attentional resources, particularly in extended writing, where cognitive load is sustained.

Alongside these lower-level processes, writing tasks elicit a set of higher-level cognitive operations concerned with the construction and organisation of meaning across extended discourse. Central to these is *planning*, which operates at both macro and micro levels. Macro-planning involves generating ideas and organising them in accordance with the communicative purpose, genre and audience of the task, while micro-planning involves structuring and sequencing ideas locally, ensuring coherence within and between sentences and paragraphs. These processes underpin the development of a coherent text structure and support the construction of propositional meaning at sentence level and beyond.

At C1 level, writing is not simply a matter of generating content but involves the transformation of ideas in response to rhetorical goals. Candidates must evaluate, organise and reframe content to construct arguments, compare perspectives, or present evaluations, depending on task demands. This reflects a shift from *knowledge-telling* to *knowledge-transforming* processes, in which content generation is shaped by discourse-level and rhetorical considerations rather than produced as a linear sequence of ideas (Bereiter et al., 1988; Shaw & Weir, 2007). As a result, writing tasks place significant demands on discourse processing, including the construction of a text-level representation that is coherent, cohesive and appropriate to the communicative context.

In addition to these production processes, writing involves continuous *monitoring* and control. Writers evaluate the developing text in relation to linguistic accuracy, clarity of expression and overall communicative effectiveness, making revisions where necessary. This monitoring operates at multiple levels, from local adjustments (e.g. word choice or grammatical accuracy) to global restructuring (e.g. reorganisation of argumentation), and is closely linked to the management of communicative goals. As such, writing is best understood as a recursive process, in which planning, formulation and monitoring interact throughout task performance rather than occurring as discrete stages.

Overall, the *C1 Advanced* Writing paper elicits a co-ordinated set of cognitive processes in which lower-level linguistic encoding supports higher-level discourse construction and rhetorical control, under ongoing metacognitive regulation. These processes reflect the demands of writing in academic and professional contexts, where extended, coherent and purposeful communication is required (see Table 5 for more details).

C1 Advanced Speaking

The *C1 Advanced* Speaking paper elicits cognitive processes associated with spoken language use in interaction, conceptualised within a socio-cognitive framework (Weir, 2005). In contrast to receptive skills and written production, speaking, particularly interactive speaking, is not adequately described in terms of discrete or hierarchical levels of processing. Instead, it involves a tightly integrated system in which production, comprehension and interactional management operate simultaneously and in co ordination with other participants in real time.

At the level of the individual speaker, speaking draws on processes described in psycholinguistic models of speech production. These include conceptualisation, in which speakers generate communicative intentions and organise message content, including both macro-planning of overall discourse goals and micro-planning of upcoming utterances. These intentions are subsequently realised through grammatical encoding, in which lexical items are selected and structured into syntactic patterns, followed by phonological encoding and articulation, through which linguistic forms are produced as speech. Alongside these processes, speakers engage in self-monitoring, evaluating their output in relation to communicative goals and adjusting where necessary (Field, 2011; Levelt, 1989 – as shown in Figure 4 below).

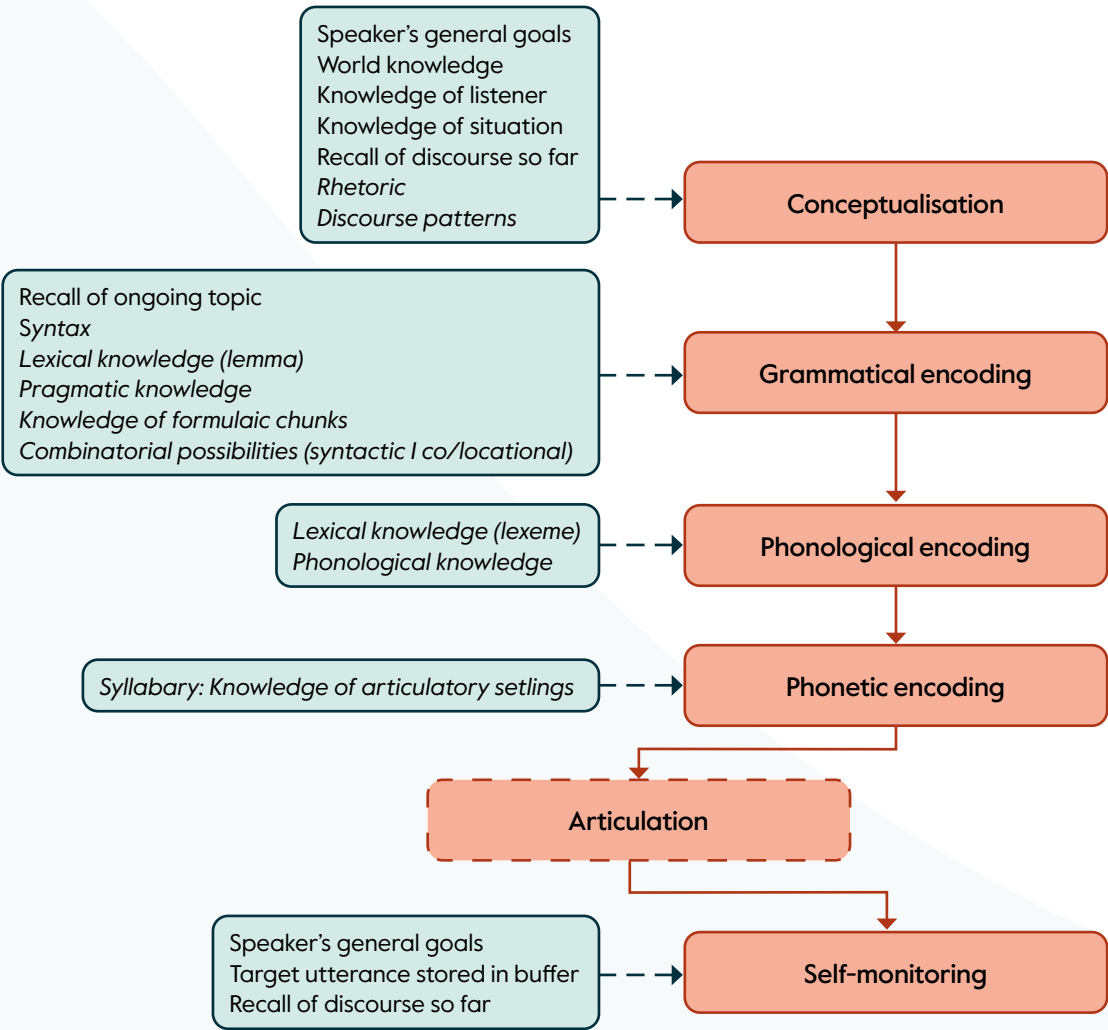


Figure 4: A model of cognitive processes in speech production (adapted from Levelt (1989) and Field (2011); cited in Glasson, 2026)

However, such models account only partially for the demands of speaking in interaction. In naturally occurring communication, production processes are inseparable from comprehension processes. Speakers must continuously interpret incoming speech while simultaneously planning and producing their own contributions. Evidence from studies of conversational timing suggests that this co-ordination requires speakers to begin planning responses before an interlocutor's turn is complete, with comprehension and production processes overlapping in time to achieve rapid turn-taking (Levinson, 2016).

Recent research has emphasised the central role of predictive processing in managing this co-ordination. Rather than responding only to completed utterances, speakers actively project the likely trajectory of an interlocutor's turn, enabling timely and appropriate responses. This predictive competence underlies key features of interaction such as minimal gaps between turns, rapid speaker transitions, and the ability to enter the conversational floor at appropriate moments (De Jong, 2023; Pickering & Garrod, 2013). It is also closely linked to the achievement of intersubjectivity, whereby participants demonstrate shared understanding, and to progressivity, or the forward movement of the interaction towards communicative goals (Levinson, 2020; Stivers & Robinson, 2006).

From this perspective, speaking is best understood as a form of joint cognitive activity in which processing is distributed across participants. Speakers operate as speaker-hearers, continuously shifting between the roles of producing and interpreting language, and contributing to a shared interactional space. This involves not only self-monitoring but also the monitoring of others' contributions, enabling alignment, repair and the co-construction of meaning within the interaction (Pickering & Garrod, 2021). The resulting system is characterised by continuous cycles of prediction, evaluation and adjustment, in which speakers compare expected and actual contributions and modify their behaviour accordingly.

Because a large part of the C1 Advanced Speaking paper involves spoken interaction, its cognitive demands therefore include the real-time co-ordination of conceptualisation, formulation and articulation; the simultaneous processing of incoming and outgoing language; the anticipation and projection of interlocutors' contributions; and the management of interaction through turn-taking, alignment and repair. These processes operate simultaneously rather than sequentially, reflecting the temporal and social constraints of spoken communication.

Overall, the C1 Advanced Speaking paper elicits cognitive processing that closely reflects the demands of real-world interaction, where meaning is co-constructed through the rapid, co-ordinated activity of multiple participants, and where successful communication depends on the integration of both *individual* and *interactional* processing (for details see Table 7).

APPENDIX 2: HOW C1 ADVANCED ASSESSES THE BALEAP ACADEMIC DISCOURSE COMPETENCIES

Table 10: The BALEAP competencies for academic discourse (Brewer et al., 2013) against C1 Advanced tasks and evaluation criteria

BALEAP competencies for academic discourse	C1 Advanced tasks	C1 Advanced evaluation criteria
WRITING		
WRITING <i>General</i>		
W2.1.1 Plan written tasks effectively, especially essays	Both Writing parts reflect the cognitive demands of higher education writing, including planning, organisation, monitoring, revision and the transformation of knowledge through evaluation and problem-solving rather than simple reproduction of information (Lim, 2015, based on Scardamalia & Bereiter, 1987; Shaw & Weir, 2007).	The ability to plan writing effectively is implicitly recognised in the C1 Advanced Writing assessment criteria. For example, the Organisation criterion refers (at Band 3) to texts being 'well organised and coherent, using a variety of cohesive devices and organisational patterns to generally good effect' (C1 Advanced Handbook for Teachers , p.35).
W2.1.2 Build and depart from model/sample structure (e.g. essay templates)	Models and structures of writing, particularly in academia, are often determined by genre conventions. While C1 Advanced Writing strives to provide a range of genres in Part 2, it is arguably the Part 1 essay which provides the greatest domain relevance for academia. Essays are among the most widely used forms of academic writing. Warburton (2020) observes that essay writing is a near-universal requirement in higher education, and Gardner and Nesi (2013) identify it as the most prevalent genre across disciplines. Although realised differently in different subject areas, essays generally follow recognisable organisational conventions while requiring writers to develop and adapt these structures in order to construct a coherent argument and demonstrate critical evaluation (Gardner & Nesi, 2013).	W2.1.2 is reflected most clearly in the Communicative Achievement descriptor ('uses the conventions of the communicative task effectively'), which assesses candidates' ability to use and adapt genre-specific conventions, including format, register and communicative function, to meet task demands.
W2.1.3 Organise written texts	Lim (2015) identifies organisation as a key feature of successful C1 Advanced Writing, requiring candidates to produce coherent texts through the effective use of organisational patterns. He argues that this depends on knowledge transformation, as writers must select, structure and develop ideas to meet communicative goals, mirroring processes associated with academic writing.	W2.1.3 is most clearly reflected in the Organisation descriptor, where Band 3 performance requires texts to be 'well organised and coherent' and to use 'a variety of cohesive devices and organisational patterns to generally good effect'.

W2.1.4 Produce a critical or analytical response	As Lim (2015) observed at the time of the C1 Advanced revision: 'Asking candidates to select the more important of two or three considerations allows them to take a <i>point of view</i>/to demonstrate ability to <i>underline relevant salient issues</i>' (Lim, 2015, p.32). In this way, the Part 1 essay task can be seen to elicit a critical or analytical response via knowledge transformation. More broadly, candidates are expected to evince awareness of the structure and conventions of a variety of genres, varying the tone, style and register according to the addressee, text type and theme – for example in a relatively detailed review or critical appraisal in both the Part 1 essay and some Part 2 genres (e.g. Review).	While not explicitly referenced in the assessment criteria, it bears mentioning that in order to perform successfully in both parts of C1 Advanced Writing the texts must follow genre conventions and 'hold the target reader's attention'. Hence, in genres where a critical appraisal is required (e.g. essays, reports and reviews), and generically expected, this aspect underpins assessment across Communicative Achievement in particular.
W2.1.5 Understand complexity and express this in writing	The C1 Advanced essay is designed around abstract and conceptual topics in order to elicit writing about complex subjects. Candidates are expected to identify salient issues and support viewpoints with reasons and examples, reflecting the ability to understand and express complexity in writing (Lim, 2015).	This emphasis on complexity is also reflected in the Communicative Achievement scale, where Band 3 performance requires candidates to communicate both 'straightforward and complex ideas' effectively.
W2.1.6 Communicate relevant information concisely	As noted above, the C1 Advanced essay requires candidates to identify salient issues and select the most relevant points for development (Lim, 2015). The task therefore encourages concise communication through the prioritisation of relevant information rather than exhaustive coverage of a topic.	This is reflected indirectly in the Content scale, where candidates are rewarded for producing relevant content that informs the target reader, and penalised for irrelevance or omission.
W2.1.7 Connect content fluently	Lim (2015) argues that success in C1 Advanced Writing requires candidates to produce coherent texts through the effective organisation and development of ideas. Drawing on Shaw and Weir's model of writing (2007), he highlights organisation as a key cognitive process involved in writing performance. The ability to connect ideas effectively is therefore central to successful task completion, enabling candidates to communicate complex content in a coherent and accessible way.	This competency is reflected directly in the Organisation scale, where Band 3 performance requires texts to be 'well organised and coherent' and to use 'a variety of cohesive devices and organisational patterns to generally good effect'.

W2.1.8 Comment on sources	While C1 Advanced Writing does elicit critical appraisals (see W2.1.4) there are practical limits to what can be achieved in a summative assessment. As such, sources are limited to the views expressed in the Part 1 essay (i.e. they are not sources per se but arguably do elicit some of the same skills of critical appraisal appropriate to the C1 level).	See comment on left.
W2.1.9 Apply appropriate style and language register	As noted above, Lim (2015) makes the point that C1 Advanced requires candidates to write across a range of genres, including essays, reports, reviews and letters. Successful performance therefore depends on selecting an appropriate style and register for the communicative purpose and target audience.	This competency is reflected directly in the Communicative Achievement scale, where Band 3 candidates are expected to 'use the conventions of the communicative task effectively' to communicate ideas to the target reader. The C1 Advanced Handbook for Teachers further explains that these conventions include aspects such as genre, register and communicative purpose.
WRITING <i>Language specific</i>		
W2.2.1 Write clearly without meaning being obscured	Successful C1 Advanced writers must communicate ideas effectively to a target reader while demonstrating control of language and text organisation (Lim, 2015). The ability to communicate both straightforward and complex ideas clearly is therefore integral to successful task completion and to demonstrating readiness for academic and professional contexts.	This competency is reflected in the Language Assessment criterion, where Band 3 performance permits occasional errors provided that they do not impede communication, as well as in the Communicative Achievement scale, which requires candidates to communicate ideas effectively to the target reader.
W2.2.2 Demonstrate language knowledge and control/accuracy (word choice, syntax, punctuation, spelling)	Lim (2015) argues that successful C1 Advanced performance requires the use of complex language forms with control and flexibility. In practical terms, for example, the C1 Advanced candidate is expected to be able to show a good level of coherence, accuracy and clarity of expression when composing formal letters (i.e. of application – <i>Not only will I ... but the college ...</i>) However, language proficiency in writing extends beyond the accurate deployment of grammatical and lexical resources. Glasson and Kitney (2025) argue, among others, that skilled writing involves the ability to construct meaning through contextually appropriate linguistic choices, and that writing quality depends not only on linguistic complexity but also on the effective construal of ideas and arguments.	This broader interpretation is consistent with the Language criterion, which assesses how successfully grammatical and lexical resources are used to convey meaning. As Glasson and Kitney (2025) note, writing constructs should be understood not merely in terms of linguistic resources, but in terms of the design choices through which writers deploy those resources to create meaning in context.

	From this perspective, language knowledge encompasses both control of lexico-grammatical resources and the ability to deploy them in ways that create appropriate, coherent and academically valued meanings. This suggests that C1 Advanced Writing, via its design and construct coverage, allows for such features to be assessed alongside more limited notions of linguistic resource.	
W2.2.3 Understand subtleties/nuances of language	While the C1 Advanced assessment criteria explicitly refer to nuance, successful performance requires candidates to use language with control, flexibility and appropriacy. This implies an ability to make effective linguistic choices according to context and communicative purpose. Glasson and Kitney (2025) argue that proficient writers use lexical and grammatical resources to construe meanings in contextually appropriate ways. The ability to select among alternative linguistic resources to express particular meanings suggests an emerging sensitivity to nuance in written communication.	Understanding nuances is reflected indirectly in the Language and Communicative Achievement criteria, which reward appropriate lexical choices, flexibility of expression and effective communication, although subtle distinctions of meaning are not assessed explicitly.
W2.2.4 Use appropriate style	Lim (2015) notes that the revised C1 Advanced Writing paper requires candidates to write across a range of genres, each with its own communicative purpose and audience. Successful performance therefore depends on the ability to adapt style and register appropriately to different writing contexts.	This competency is reflected directly in the Communicative Achievement descriptors, where Band 3 candidates must 'use the conventions of the communicative task effectively' to communicate ideas to the target reader. (See C1 Advanced Handbook for Teachers for further details.)
W2.2.5 Demonstrate language fluency (automaticity)	The production of extended texts under examination conditions may provide some evidence of writing fluency, but automaticity itself is not explicitly assessed, as the rating scales focus on features of the completed text rather than underlying writing processes.	See comment on left.

BALEAP competencies for academic discourse	C1 Advanced tasks	C1 Advanced evaluation criteria
SPEAKING		
SPEAKING <i>General and Language specific</i>		
S2.1.1 Ask for clarification	Although asking for clarification is not explicitly required by the C1 Advanced Speaking task rubrics or rating scales, it could generally be evidenced when communication difficulties arise because C1 Advanced candidates are expected to maintain interaction, deal with unpredictable contributions and use interactional strategies to support communication.	
S2.1.2 Ask questions/ respond to questions [seminar/lecture situations]	The C1 Advanced Speaking construct includes responding to examiner questions, engaging with a partner's contributions, participating in collaborative discussion and dealing with unpredictable questions. The Can Do statements (see -C1 Advanced Handbook for Teachers , p.6) also refer to following up questions for more detail and contributing effectively to meetings and seminars. These aspects suggest that question management forms part of the broader interaction construct, although there is no task requiring candidates to formulate seminar-style questions in a systematic way.	The assessment criteria reward successful interaction, development of discussion and effective management of communication. Candidates may choose to ask questions in order to involve a partner, seek views or advance the discussion, but question-asking is not itself an explicit rating criterion. Marks are awarded for Interactive Communication and communicative effectiveness rather than for the production of questions per se.
S2.1.3 Show disagreement	The Speaking construct includes expressing and justifying opinions, negotiating outcomes, evaluating alternatives and participating in collaborative discussion. The C1 Can Do statements explicitly refer to making critical remarks and expressing disagreement without causing offence, and the revised Part 3 and Part 4 tasks were designed to elicit discussion of alternative views and negotiated decisions.	Disagreement is not identified as a separate scoring category. However, the ability to disagree appropriately may contribute to higher performance under Interactive Communication because it demonstrates engagement with a partner's ideas, development of discussion and effective management of interaction. Marks are awarded for the quality of the interaction rather than for disagreement itself.

S2.1.4 Tell other people when they are wrong	See notes above. Candidates may challenge, question or reject a partner's viewpoint during collaborative discussion, particularly when comparing alternatives or negotiating a decision. However, the construct focuses on exchanging and evaluating opinions rather than explicitly identifying that another speaker is incorrect. The emphasis is on negotiation and discussion rather than correction. C1 candidates have shown that higher-level interaction is characterised by critical engagement with partner contributions and the joint construction of meaning, although explicit correction of other speakers is not a feature of the construct (see Galaczi, 2014).	The assessment criteria reward successful interaction, contribution to discussion and communicative effectiveness. Candidates are not expected to correct other speakers, and no marks are awarded specifically for identifying errors or telling another participant that they are wrong.
S2.1.5 Communicate effectively: e.g. asking for things; giving orders; selling a product	Effective communication is central to the C1 Advanced Speaking construct. Candidates are expected to express and justify opinions, negotiate, evaluate alternatives, reach decisions collaboratively and participate effectively in discussions. The exam is intended to demonstrate that candidates can communicate confidently in academic and professional settings. However, the specific <i>transactional</i> functions exemplified by BALEAP (e.g. requesting goods or services, giving instructions, selling a product) are not explicitly targeted by the Speaking tasks.	Communicative effectiveness is assessed directly through Global Achievement and Interactive Communication criteria, where candidates are rewarded for developing interaction, communicating ideas clearly, maintaining discussion and fulfilling communicative purposes. However, there are no criteria that specifically assess the ability to perform transactional functions such as giving orders, making requests or persuading someone to buy something.
SPEAKING Group competencies		
S2.2.6 Contribute to discussion in seminars	Contributing effectively to discussion is reflected through the ability to initiate and develop topics, support the contributions of others and manage participation through effective turn-taking (Galaczi, 2014).	Interactive Communication explicitly rewards candidates who 'initiate and respond appropriately, linking contributions to those of other speakers' and who 'maintain and develop the interaction and negotiate towards an outcome'. These behaviours align closely with effective contribution to seminar-style discussion, as they require candidates to engage with others' ideas rather than simply produce individual contributions.

S2.2.7 Engage fully in discussion rather than providing superficial contribution	As Galaczi (2014) notes, higher-level interaction (i.e. at C1 level) is characterised by sustained topic development, active engagement with others' contributions and the co construction of discussion, rather than brief or isolated contributions. The revision of Part 3 was motivated in part by a concern that picture prompts encouraged candidates to focus on describing visual content, whereas text-based prompts encouraged discussion of broader themes and concepts. The revised task was therefore intended to create opportunities for more sustained and substantive interaction (see Galaczi & Glasson, 2015).	See comments above regarding the assessment of meaningful development of interactions (rather than talking 'in parallel').
S2.2.8 Take part in group discussion	Group discussion is a central component of the Speaking construct. Part 3 requires candidates to engage in collaborative discussion and decision-making, while Part 4 extends this into a broader discussion of related issues. Candidates are expected to exchange ideas, respond to one another, evaluate alternatives, negotiate positions and maintain discussion jointly. The 2015 revision of Part 3 further strengthened this focus by encouraging more discussion-oriented interaction through text-based prompts and deeper topic development (see Galaczi & Glasson, 2015).	In line with the above, Interactive Communication is where this aspect is more clearly reflected in assessment criteria. More broadly, Galaczi's (2014) study of interaction across proficiency levels illustrates how stronger performances are characterised by: • Extending others' topics • Providing listener support • Managing turn-taking effectively • Creating mutuality • Co-constructing discourse All of these are implicitly reflected in the assessment criteria. It is worth noting in this regard that the criteria were the result of empirical studies on differentiating factors across CEFR levels (see Lazaraton & Davis, 2008).

BALEAP competencies for academic discourse	C1 Advanced tasks	Supporting evidence from research and C1 Advanced item writer guidelines
READING		
READING <i>General</i>		
R2.1.1 Scan texts and identify key points/ sections	In Part 6 (cross-text multiple matching), candidates read four short texts on the same topic and identify which text corresponds to a particular statement or viewpoint. Part 8 is a multiple-matching task in which candidates locate information relevant to a series of questions within a longer text.	These tasks require candidates to locate and identify relevant information efficiently within and across texts. Part 6 draws on higher-level cognitive processes associated with intertextual reading, requiring readers to move between multiple sources and identify relevant viewpoints and points of comparison. Such skills are characteristic of academic reading, where students are often required to consult several sources, compare and contrast perspectives, and integrate information from different texts. Part 8 requires candidates to employ expeditious reading processes (see Khalifa & Weir, 2009), including skimming and scanning, in order to locate specific information and identify relevant opinions, attitudes or ideas within a text. This ability to navigate texts selectively and efficiently is an important component of successful academic reading.

R2.1.2 Go beyond superficial understanding of texts and demonstrate deep comprehension	In Part 5, candidates read a complex extended text and answer four-option multiple-choice questions. In Part 6, candidates read multiple texts and identify which text corresponds to a stated opinion or viewpoint.	These tasks require candidates to move beyond surface-level understanding and engage in deeper comprehension of both textual content and organisation. Part 5 targets understanding of detail, opinion, attitude, writer's purpose, main idea and implication, requiring readers to interpret explicit and implicit meanings and construct a coherent understanding of the text as a whole. Questions targeting text organisation also require recognition of discourse features such as exemplification, comparison and reference, reflecting the ability to understand how ideas are developed and connected within a text. Part 6 extends this processing remit by requiring candidates to compare viewpoints across texts and identify relationships between perspectives, demonstrating the deeper comprehension and critical engagement associated with advanced academic reading. These tasks are examples, but it should be noted that the same 'deeper' reading of texts is required elsewhere in C1 Advanced, e.g. in Part 7 gapped texts where candidates are required to place missing paragraphs into a longer text. This activity hinges upon the kind of higher cognitive processing illustrated in the socio-cognitive framework for reading (Khalifa & Weir, 2009).
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R2.1.3 Synthesise information	In Part 6 (cross-text multiple matching), candidates read four short texts on the same topic and identify similarities and differences between writers' viewpoints, attitudes and opinions. To answer successfully, candidates must compare information across texts and determine how particular perspectives relate to one another. Part 7 (gapped text) requires candidates to integrate information across an extended text in order to reconstruct its overall meaning and organisation. Candidates must understand how ideas develop and connect throughout the text in order to identify the correct location for missing paragraphs. Part 8 (multiple matching) requires candidates to synthesise information distributed across a text by locating, integrating and evaluating relevant ideas in relation to a number of questions or statements.	Khalifa and Weir (2009) argue that advanced readers need to construct representations across texts rather than within a single text, requiring the comparison, integration and synthesis of ideas from multiple sources. Vidaković et al. (2015) identify this as a key academic reading skill associated with higher education study, where students are expected to engage critically with several texts on the same topic. The Part 6 cross-text multiple-matching task, where candidates are required to integrate information across multiple texts and evaluate relationships between different viewpoints, was introduced specifically to assess this aspect of intertextual reading. More broadly, the tasks adopted in C1 Advanced (e.g. Parts 7 and 8) both require similarly high-level cognitive processing of building a text-level representation indicative of reading at the academic level (see Khalifa & Weir, 2009).
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READING

Language specific

R2.2.1 Demonstrate sufficient language knowledge and control (wide, active vocabulary; syntactical knowledge)

The Reading tasks (Parts 5–8) require candidates to process complex C1-level texts and understand meaning conveyed through sophisticated vocabulary, grammatical structures and discourse organisation. In Part 5, successful performance depends on understanding opinion, attitude, implication, writer's purpose and text organisation, while Parts 6–8 require accurate interpretation of meaning across texts and text sections.

The Use of English tasks provide more direct evidence of language knowledge and control. Part 1 assesses vocabulary knowledge, including idioms, collocations, fixed phrases, complementation, phrasal verbs and semantic precision.

Part 2 assesses control of grammatical and lexico-grammatical resources. Part 3 requires manipulation of word forms through affixation, compounding and internal change, while Part 4 assesses flexible control of grammar, vocabulary and collocation through paraphrase and meaning transformation. Together, these tasks require candidates to demonstrate a broad and operational command of the lexical and syntactic resources associated with C1-level language use.

The C1 level represents the level of a proficient independent user who can understand and use a wide range of complex language with a high degree of accuracy, flexibility and appropriacy. Academic reading depends not only on comprehension strategies but also on sufficient lexical and grammatical knowledge to support the construction of meaning from complex texts.

Khalifa and Weir (2009) argue that lower-level linguistic processing, including rapid lexical access and syntactic parsing, underpins higher-level comprehension processes. Readers must be able to recognise vocabulary, interpret grammatical relationships and process discourse efficiently to construct coherent text-level representations. The lexical, grammatical and phraseological demands of the Reading and Use of English paper therefore reflect the language knowledge and control needed for successful engagement with academic texts.

The emphasis on collocation, semantic precision, word formation, grammatical control and flexibility of expression is also emphasised in Vidaković et al. (2015), who identify advanced vocabulary knowledge and control of complex language resources as important foundations for academic study and participation in higher education.

R2.2.2 Understand subtleties/nuances of language	Part 5 (multiple-choice) requires candidates to understand detailed meaning, including opinions, attitudes and implied meanings expressed in a complex text. Candidates need to distinguish between apparently similar viewpoints, outcomes or reasons, deduce meaning from context, and interpret the text for inference and style. Questions may focus on text organisation features such as exemplification, comparison and lexical reference, or require interpretation of the writer's purpose, attitude or opinion across the text as a whole. Part 6 (cross-text multiple matching) further requires candidates to compare viewpoints across texts and identify similarities and differences in writers' attitudes and perspectives, even where these are expressed using different language.	Candidates need to demonstrate the ability to interpret both explicit and implicit meaning in complex texts. This includes understanding opinions, attitudes and writer stance, distinguishing between apparently similar viewpoints or explanations, and recognising subtle differences in emphasis or perspective. Successful performance requires readers to deduce meaning from context, interpret inference and style, and understand how textual features such as exemplification, comparison and lexical reference contribute to meaning. Such processing reflects higher-level reading comprehension and is particularly important in academic contexts, where readers are frequently required to understand nuanced arguments, evaluate authorial stance and interpret meanings that are not stated directly.
R2.2.3 Access non-literal interpretation of texts (metaphor, collocation, formulaic language)	Part 1 (multiple-choice cloze) requires candidates to select appropriate lexical items on the basis of collocation, fixed expressions, idiomatic usage, phrasal verbs, complementation patterns and semantic precision. Part 4 (key word transformations) requires candidates to manipulate language while maintaining meaning, often drawing on knowledge of idiomatic and formulaic expressions, paraphrase and less direct ways of expressing ideas. Part 5 (multiple-choice reading) requires candidates to interpret meaning in context, including implication, attitude, opinion and writer purpose. Successful performance may depend on understanding figurative or non-literal uses of language and recognising how lexical choices contribute to meaning, tone and style.	Candidates need to demonstrate the ability to interpret meaning beyond the literal meaning of individual words. This includes understanding collocations, idiomatic expressions, formulaic language, phrasal verbs and other forms of conventionalised lexical usage, as well as recognising how writers use language to convey evaluation, attitude and implied meanings. Successful performance requires sensitivity to context and an ability to derive meaning from linguistic cues rather than relying solely on dictionary definitions of individual lexical items. Academic texts can frequently contain metaphorical language, discipline-specific phraseology, evaluative expressions and other forms of non-literal meaning. Readers therefore need to combine lexical knowledge with inferential processing in order to construct an appropriate interpretation of a text. The lexical and inferential demands of Parts 1, 4 and 5 provide evidence of the sophisticated language knowledge and interpretative skills associated with reading proficiency at C1 level.

R2.2.4 Read sufficiently quickly for course demands	Part 6 (cross-text multiple matching) requires candidates to read across four texts in order to locate relevant opinions, attitudes and viewpoints efficiently while comparing information from multiple sources. Part 8 (multiple matching) requires candidates to identify and retrieve specific information from different sections of a text in response to a number of questions. Successful performance depends on the ability to navigate a text selectively and efficiently, using scanning and search-reading strategies before engaging in more detailed comprehension where required.	Candidates are required to employ both careful and expeditious reading processes in response to different reading purposes. Khalifa and Weir (2009) identify expeditious reading as a key component of proficient reading and distinguish processes such as scanning, skimming and search reading from more careful forms of comprehension. Parts 6 and 8 require candidates to locate relevant information rapidly and selectively within and across texts, demonstrating an ability to adjust reading behaviour according to task demands. Such flexible and efficient reading is particularly important in higher education contexts, where students are frequently required to identify, evaluate and synthesise information from substantial amounts of reading within limited timeframes.
READING <i>Approaching and completing academic reading tasks</i>		
R1.1.10 Recognise converging and/or contradicting opinions in reading and different approaches to issues/problems	Part 6 (cross-text multiple matching) requires candidates to read four texts on the same topic and identify similarities and differences in the opinions, attitudes and viewpoints expressed by different writers. Candidates must recognise where writers agree, disagree or take distinct positions on an issue and match statements to the appropriate text. Part 8 (multiple matching) requires candidates to locate and compare information, opinions and attitudes within a text. Successful performance may depend on recognising different approaches to a topic or identifying sections that express contrasting or complementary viewpoints.	Candidates need to identify relationships between viewpoints, including agreement, disagreement and differences in emphasis or perspective. Part 6 requires readers to compare and evaluate ideas expressed across multiple texts, while Part 8 may require comparison of opinions and attitudes presented in different sections of a text. Such processing involves the construction of intertextual and text-level representations through which readers identify converging and contrasting positions on a topic. Higher education readers are frequently required to engage critically with multiple sources, evaluating similarities and differences in arguments before synthesising evidence and forming their own conclusions. These skills are therefore central to academic reading and are consistent with the higher-level cognitive processes described by Khalifa and Weir (2009).

R1.1.12 Access non-literal interpretation of texts (inferring meaning)	Part 5 (multiple-choice) requires candidates to infer meaning that is not explicitly stated in the text. Questions may target implication, attitude, opinion, writer purpose and style, requiring readers to deduce meaning from contextual and textual cues. Successful performance depends on interpreting both explicit and implicit meaning and constructing a coherent understanding of the text beyond its surface content.	Candidates are required to move beyond the literal meaning of a text in order to interpret implication, attitude, writer stance and authorial intention. Such inferential processing is recognised by Khalifa and Weir (2009) as a core component of higher-level reading comprehension and academic reading, enabling readers to construct meaning that is implied rather than explicitly stated. See also R2.1.2 (deep comprehension) and R2.2.2 (understanding subtleties and nuances of language).
R1.2.1 Scan texts (books in particular) in order to make decisions on selection of materials and exploitation of contents	Part 7 (gapped text) requires candidates to reconstruct an extended text by identifying where missing paragraphs belong. Successful performance depends on understanding how ideas are developed across the text, recognising links between paragraphs, and identifying sections that are relevant to the surrounding context. Part 8 (multiple matching) additionally requires candidates to locate specific information efficiently within a text and identify sections that are relevant to a particular question or purpose.	While C1 Advanced does not contain a task that explicitly requires candidates to select texts for future use, Parts 7 and 8 assess a number of related skills. Part 7 requires readers to construct a text-level representation through recognition of cohesion, coherence, discourse structure and global meaning, while Part 8 requires efficient location of relevant information within a longer text. Together, these tasks require readers to identify where information is located, understand how different sections contribute to the overall meaning of a text, and determine the relevance of particular sections to a given purpose. Such skills support academic reading, where students frequently need to navigate extended texts, identify useful sections and decide how information may be exploited for study purposes.

R1.2.3 Analyse source materials and ideas effectively	Part 5 (multiple-choice) requires candidates to analyse complex texts in order to understand detail, opinion, attitude, writer's purpose, implication and main ideas. Successful performance depends on recognising how arguments are developed and supported, as well as understanding text organisation features such as exemplification, comparison and reference. Part 7 (gapped text) requires candidates to analyse relationships between ideas across paragraphs and identify how textual cohesion and coherence contribute to the development of the text as a whole.	Candidates are required to analyse both the content of a text and the way in which that content is organised and developed. In Part 5, this includes examining opinions, arguments, supporting evidence, attitudes and implied meanings, while Part 7 requires analysis of the relationships between propositions across a text. Such processing involves constructing a coherent text-level representation and recognising how writers use discourse features such as exemplification, comparison, reference and paragraph development to communicate meaning. According to Khalifa and Weir (2009), these higher-level reading processes are characteristic of advanced readers who must move beyond information retrieval to analyse how ideas are structured and related within a text. These analytical skills are central to academic reading, where students are expected to engage critically with source materials and evaluate the development of arguments and ideas.
R1.2.4 Evaluate source materials and ideas	As described under R1.1.10 and R2.1.3, Part 6 (cross-text multiple matching) requires candidates to compare viewpoints and attitudes across multiple texts. Candidates must identify relationships between perspectives, including agreement, disagreement and differences in emphasis. Part 5 (multiple-choice) additionally requires interpretation of writer attitude, opinion and purpose.	As evidenced in R1.1.10 and R2.1.3, candidates are required to compare, interpret and judge competing viewpoints presented within and across texts. This involves evaluating the positions adopted by writers, identifying similarities and differences in argumentation, and recognising how attitudes and opinions are communicated. Such critical engagement with source materials is a key component of academic reading and supports the evaluation of evidence and ideas encountered in higher education contexts.

R1.2.5 Abstract main issues from reading	As described under R2.1.2 and R1.2.3, Part 5 (multiple-choice) includes questions targeting main ideas, writer purpose and global meaning. Part 7 (gapped text) requires candidates to understand the overall development of a text and the relationships between its constituent ideas, while Part 6 requires identification of broader viewpoints across multiple texts.	As evidenced in R2.1.2 and R1.2.3, candidates are required to move beyond individual details in order to construct a coherent understanding of the text as a whole. This includes identifying main ideas, overarching themes and writer purpose, as well as distinguishing central arguments from supporting information. Khalifa and Weir (2009) describe this as the construction of a text-level representation in which readers identify the macro-structure of a text and establish relationships between major and subordinate ideas. Such processing underpins the ability to abstract key issues from reading and is fundamental to successful academic study.
BALEAP competencies for academic discourse	C1 Advanced tasks	Supporting evidence from research and C1 Advanced item writer guidelines
LISTENING		
LISTENING General		
L2.1.1 Understand rapid, colloquial 'lecture' speech	Part 2 requires candidates to listen to an extended monologue and complete notes using information from the recording. The monologue is typically delivered by a speaker discussing a topic within their area of expertise and requires candidates to follow the development of ideas across an extended stretch of spoken discourse. Candidates must identify both key points and relevant supporting information while processing naturally delivered speech.	Although Part 2 is not presented as a formal academic lecture, it shares many characteristics with lecture-style listening, including extended monologic speech, exposition of ideas and a largely linear development of information. The C1 Advanced Handbook for Teachers notes that candidates are expected to process naturally paced spoken language and understand both main points and specific information. From a cognitive validity perspective, successful performance requires listeners to decode acoustic input, construct propositional meaning and develop an evolving discourse representation across an extended text (Field, 2013). The revision of the C1 Advanced Listening paper also sought to increase the focus on cognitively demanding listening processes characteristic of authentic language use, including following extended discourse and extracting relevant information from naturally occurring spoken texts (Elliott & Chisholm, 2015).

L2.1.9 Cope with concurrent note-taking and listening	Part 2 requires candidates to listen to an extended monologue while simultaneously completing notes based on the spoken input. Candidates must identify relevant information, retain it in working memory and record an appropriate response while continuing to process incoming information.	This task requires candidates to divide attention between listening and note completion while maintaining comprehension of the speaker's overall message. The ability to select and record relevant information while continuing to process ongoing speech reflects an important academic listening skill, particularly in lecture and seminar contexts. Research on the cognitive validity of listening highlights the importance of working memory, lexical access, meaning construction and discourse processing operating simultaneously during successful listening (Field, 2013). Elliott and Chisholm (2015) further note that the revised Listening tasks were designed to place greater emphasis on understanding and processing meaning rather than simply recognising isolated words or phrases.
L2.1.11 Identify 'big' ideas; dismiss less relevant detail	Part 4 (multiple matching) requires candidates to listen to five short monologues and identify information relating to a specified focus, typically involving attitude, opinion, feeling, purpose or main point. Candidates must distinguish key messages from supporting or less relevant information in order to identify the option that best represents the speaker's viewpoint.	A central feature of advanced listening is the ability to construct an overall representation of a speaker's intended message and distinguish main ideas from subordinate detail. As noted in the C1 Advanced Handbook for Teachers, Part 4 focuses on gist, opinion and attitude rather than factual recall. This requires candidates to identify the main communicative purpose of each extract while disregarding information that is not relevant to the task focus. Elliott and Chisholm (2015) note that the revised C1 Advanced Listening test placed increased emphasis on candidates' ability to interpret speakers' attitudes, opinions and main messages, reflecting the importance of higher-level listening processes beyond the identification of discrete factual information. The listening construct literature similarly emphasises discourse-level processing and the construction of a coherent discourse representation as key features of successful listening (Field, 2013).

L2.1.12 Take notes sufficiently quickly to record appropriate detail L2.1.13 Take notes without being impeded by poor spelling	Part 2 requires candidates to complete a set of notes based on information presented in an extended monologue. Candidates must identify and record relevant details using a word or short phrase taken from the spoken input while continuing to follow the development of the text.	See L2.1.9. Part 2 provides direct evidence of candidates' ability to identify, retain and record relevant information from extended spoken discourse. Successful completion requires candidates to capture appropriate detail efficiently using a word or short phrase, demonstrating comprehension of the relevant section of the text rather than simple recognition of isolated lexical items. The task therefore reflects an important component of note-taking in academic listening contexts.
LISTENING <i>Language specific</i>		
L2.2.1 Understand (rapid) colloquial speech	Part 1 and Part 3 require candidates to listen to conversations, interviews and discussions delivered at a natural pace, while Part 4 requires candidates to interpret speakers' opinions, attitudes and feelings across a series of short monologues. Successful performance depends upon understanding naturally occurring spoken language, including informal and colloquial features where these contribute to the communicative meaning of the text.	The C1 level of the CEFR is associated with the ability to understand extended speech delivered at natural speed and to recognise a wide range of idiomatic expressions and colloquialisms. Candidates are required to interpret speakers' attitudes, opinions and intentions as expressed through naturally occurring spoken language. The Listening construct underpinning C1 Advanced places particular emphasis on meaning construction and discourse-level interpretation rather than the identification of isolated linguistic forms (Field, 2013). The revision of the C1 Advanced Listening test also sought to increase the focus on authentic spoken communication and the interpretation of speakers' intended meanings in realistic listening contexts (Elliott & Chisholm, 2015).
L2.2.2 Interpret vernacular expressions correctly	As described under L2.2.1, Parts 1, 3 and 4 require candidates to interpret speakers' viewpoints, attitudes and intentions in naturally occurring spoken discourse. Successful performance <i>may</i> depend on understanding informal, idiomatic or colloquial expressions whose meaning is conveyed through context rather than through a literal interpretation of individual words.	Candidates are required to interpret meaning as it is communicated in context, including language that may be informal, colloquial or culturally embedded. Understanding such expressions requires listeners to move beyond lexical recognition and draw upon contextual, pragmatic and discourse-level cues in order to infer speaker meaning. This reflects the type of higher-level meaning construction and inferencing described in the listening construct literature (Field, 2013) and supports successful comprehension of authentic spoken communication.

L2.2.3 Interpret idioms correctly	Please refer to L2.2.1 and L2.2.2.	The CEFR notes that C1 users should be able to recognise a wide range of idiomatic expressions and colloquialisms. Interpreting such language requires listeners to move beyond literal word meanings and construct an interpretation based on the wider communicative context. Listening research has highlighted the additional cognitive demands associated with processing figurative and idiomatic language, which require listeners to integrate linguistic, contextual and pragmatic information in order to establish speaker meaning (Field, 2013). Such interpretative skills support effective participation in academic and professional settings, where speakers frequently communicate attitudes and evaluations indirectly.
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