

# CAEL CE Annual Report of 2019 Test Takers

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**CAEL<sup>®</sup>**

## 1 Description of the Test

### 1.1 General Description

The Canadian Academic English Language Computer Edition (CAEL CE) Test is a standardized test designed to measure the English language proficiency of students planning to study in Canadian post-secondary institutions. It is administered by Paragon Testing Enterprises Inc., a subsidiary of The University of British Columbia.

The CAEL CE Test provides an authentic representation of language use in a Canadian academic context. As would be expected in a first-year Canadian university or college classroom, test takers read articles, listen to a lecture, answer questions, and write an essay based on input from the reading and the lecture. Each test taker receives a score report showing their performance on each component as well as an overall score that is the average of the four individual component scores. CAEL CE scores are accepted by more than 180 academic institutions across Canada as proof of English language proficiency. A number of professional associations also recognize CAEL CE as proof of English language proficiency required for membership.

Paragon is committed to upholding the highest standards in educational measurement. All parts of the CAEL CE Test are written following specified guidelines, and results are closely monitored to ensure that they are accurate and informative. Paragon works closely with test centres to ensure that the CAEL CE Test is administered in a way that is fair, accessible, and secure, and that the scores issued are defensible.

### 1.2 Test Format

CAEL CE assesses test takers' English language proficiency in an academic context. Test scores are reported on four components—Speaking, Reading, Listening, and Writing. Test takers complete a range of tasks. Some of these tasks will require test takers to use what they have read and listened to in order to answer a question in speaking or writing. Table 1 describes the format and content of each test component.

**Table 1: Format and Content of CAEL CE**

Component	Time Allotted	Component Sections	Number of Tasks
Speaking	7-10 minutes	Two speaking tasks, each based on a short question One speaking task based on a graph/diagram/chart	3
Integrated Reading	35-50 minutes	One or two short reading passages with comprehension questions One or two long reading passages with comprehension questions One speaking question, answered using material from a long reading passage	15 - 26
Integrated Listening	25-35 minutes	One or two short listening passages with comprehension questions One or two long listening passages with comprehension questions One speaking question, answered using material from a long listening passage	15 - 26
Academic Unit A	60-70 minutes	One long reading passage with comprehension questions One long listening passage on the same topic, with comprehension questions One writing question requiring an extended response, using material from both the long reading passage and the long listening passage	23 - 31
Academic Unit B	40-45 minutes	One long reading passage with comprehension questions One long listening passage on the same topic, with comprehension questions One writing question requiring a short response, using material from the long reading passage or the long listening passage	23 - 31

Unscored Items: Each test contains unscored items used for test development. These unscored items can be found anywhere within each test and have the same format as the scored items.

## 2 Scoring and Reporting of Results

The multiple-choice items are scored by computer. Each correct answer contributes proportionately to the final score, and no points are deducted for wrong answers. The Speaking and Writing components are each evaluated by at least four certified raters according to a scale established by Paragon.

Test takers receive a score report including scores for the Speaking, Reading, Listening, and Writing, components, as well as an overall score. CAEL CE scores are reported on a 9-band scale from 10 to 90 with accompanying descriptors of what the performance represents. The overall score is calculated as an average of the four component scores rounded to the nearest band level. Table 2 presents descriptions of test taker proficiency at each band level.

**Table 2: Proposed Interpretation of Overall Band Scores**

CAEL CE Band	Descriptor
10	
20	Low Beginner: Communicates with limited ability
30	High Beginner: Expresses basic ideas about familiar topics in routine settings
40	Intermediate: Demonstrates some ability to comprehend and articulate complex ideas and arguments typical of academic or professional settings
50	High Intermediate: Exhibits some competence in academic or professional settings; communication may break down in places
60	Advanced: Displays competence in academic or professional settings
70	Adept: Uses generally accurate language in most settings; some limitations in flexibility are evident
80	Expert: Demonstrates a high level of competence, accuracy, and effectiveness in academic/professional settings
90	

For a more detailed review of CAEL score interpretation, please see Appendix A: CAEL CE Reporting Scale.

### **3 Interpreting CAEL CE Results**

CAEL CE has been designed to assess the English language ability of test takers in academic contexts. Table 2 (previous section) describes the interpretation of each band score.

When interpreting a CAEL CE score report, it is important to remember that CAEL CE estimates test takers' true proficiency by approximating the kinds of tasks that they may encounter in the course of their study or academic work. There are, inevitably, small mismatches between the tasks test takers completed as part of the test and the tasks that they need to perform in a specific context. Also, temporary factors unrelated to test takers' true proficiencies, such as fatigue, anxiety, or illness, may affect their CAEL CE results.

It is also important to remember that test performance reflects only one aspect that impacts how well the candidate will perform in an academic context. Communicative language ability consists of both knowledge of language and knowledge of the world. In an academic context, the ability to function effectively involves not only knowledge of English but also knowledge of the context, subject matter expertise, and the ability to integrate information from multiple sources.

### **4 Test-Taking Population**

This section presents an overview of the purposes for which test takers took the CAEL CE Test in 2019 and provides age group descriptions for the test population.

Figure 1 shows that the majority of CAEL CE test takers registered with the intent to use their test score as proof of English language proficiency for post-secondary applications.

Figure 1: Distribution (in %) of CAEL CE Test Takers by Purpose

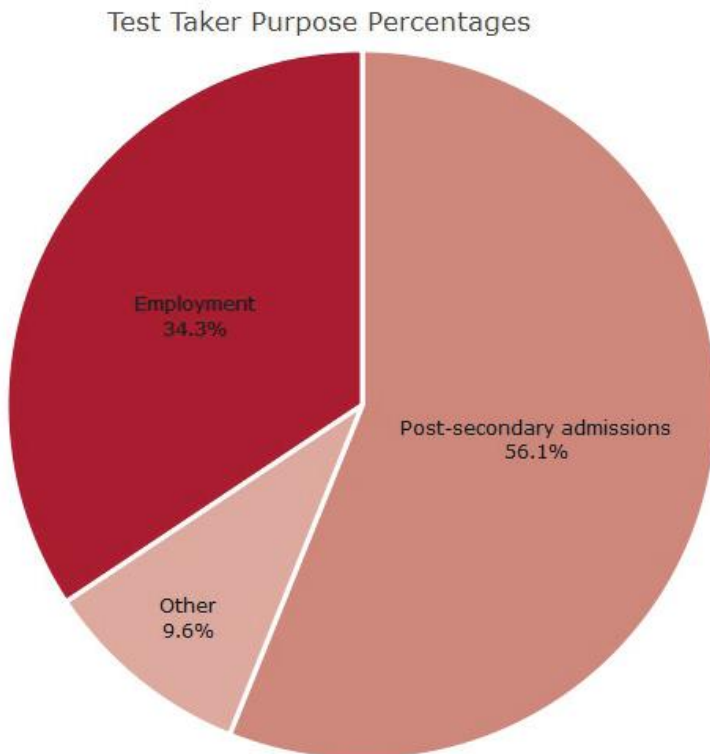


Table 3 shows that the test taker population represents a wide range of age groups. The two largest age groups are those from 31 to 35 and 26 to 30. Together, these two groups represent 34.56% of all test takers in 2019.

Table 3: Distribution of CAEL CE Test Takers by Age

Age Group	% of Total Test Population
<= 20	13.93
21-25	11.52
26-30	16.60
31-35	17.96
36-40	14.08
41-45	10.42
46-50	8.48
> 50	7.02

## 5 Score Distributions

This section presents a summary of the score distributions on each component and overall band levels. Tables 5 presents the mean score and standard deviation for each component of CAEL CE. Table 6 shows the percentage of test takers at each band level.

**Table 5: Descriptive Statistics for the CAEL CE Test**

Component	Mean	Standard Deviation
Listening	65.95	15.93
Reading	61.55	18.68
Speaking	63.49	10.95
Writing	56.08	10.64
Overall	63.08	12.33

**Table 6: Distribution (in %) of Test Takers at each Band Score**

Band	Listening	Reading	Speaking	Writing	Overall
10	0.84	1.73	0.10	1.15	0.16
20	0.84	1.67	0.31	0.58	0.94
30	1.41	1.88	1.52	1.57	1.15
40	5.86	15.59	3.35	7.43	4.45
50	15.28	14.97	13.61	26.27	15.75
60	18.73	21.14	29.57	51.07	30.51
70	26.90	15.86	42.65	9.37	31.71
80	19.00	14.65	7.80	2.41	14.23
90	11.15	12.51	1.10	0.16	1.10

For most universities that accept CAEL CE as proof of English language proficiency, the minimum required score is an Overall 60. As Table 6 indicates, 77.55% of test takers achieve an Overall score of 60 or above, thus meeting the requirements for most university admissions.

## 6 Measurement Consistency

In statistics and psychometrics, measurement consistency is often referred to as reliability. It is an important component when evaluating the quality of a test. A reliable test gives us the same result consistently, assuming there is no change in the individual's ability. For example, if a test is designed to measure English language proficiency and has been administered to the same individual multiple times, the test scores should be approximately the same if the test taker has not significantly improved their English proficiency during the period of the time. In contrast, an unreliable test produces inconsistent results every time, which greatly limits the value of the test scores.

Notably, even when the test conditions are carefully controlled, a small amount of measurement error is expected. An individual's performance on a set of test items will vary from one administration to another due to variability in individual circumstances, or due to variation in the items across different versions of the same test (this source of variation is mitigated through IRT form equating). High reliability of the test scores also indicates that the measurement error is kept at a minimum level.

Reliability can be estimated in several different ways. A higher value suggests greater reliability of the test scores. According to the literature and industry standards, a reliability figure of 0.80 and above is expected and acceptable for standardized examinations such as the CAEL CE Test.

## 6.1 Internal Consistency for the Listening and Reading Components

Internal consistency is a measure of whether test items intended to measure the same construct produce similar results. It is suitable for quantifying the reliability of tests that consist of many items, such as the Listening and Reading components on the CAEL CE Test. To measure internal consistency, Cronbach’s alpha is calculated for each CAEL CE Listening and Reading form in 2019. The mean and the standard deviation of the reliabilities for each of the forms are presented in Table 7.

**Table 7: Internal Reliability Estimates for the Multiple-Choice Forms on the CAEL CE Test**

Component	Average Reliability	Standard Deviation of Reliabilities
Listening	0.80	0.04
Reading	0.83	0.04

Table 7 shows that in 2019, the mean reliability estimate for the Listening forms was 0.8 and the mean reliability estimate for the Reading forms was 0.83. These values suggest good internal consistency for the CAEL CE Listening and Reading test forms. The standard deviation figures (0.04 for both components) indicate that all the forms used in 2019 perform similarly in terms of the reliability of the test.

Overall, the reliability of the Listening and Reading forms administered in 2019 were within the acceptable range. These values suggest good consistency of measurement both within and between each CAEL CE Listening and Reading form.

## 6.2 Rater Agreement for the Writing and Listening Components

The raters for the Speaking and Writing components of the CAEL CE Test are highly proficient in English and are fully trained and certified by Paragon. Each of the test takers’ speaking and writing tasks are rated independently by two accredited raters. If the scores awarded by the two raters are in disagreement, the task is evaluated by a third rater. Since the evaluation process for the Writing and Speaking components relies on human judgements and the interpretation and application of a rating scale, variations in judgements are to be expected.

Paragon regularly monitors the reliability of the Speaking and Writing scores of the CAEL CE Test through rater agreement—the percentage of ratings that are in agreement. Table 8 shows the rater agreement for the Writing and Speaking components in 2019. Overall, the results (90.5% agreement in Speaking, 88.3% agreement in Writing) indicate high consistency of judgement between raters. As mentioned earlier, to ensure fairness and accuracy of all test taker scores, additional raters are brought in when the initial ratings do not agree.

**Table 8: Rater Agreement for Writing and Speaking**

Component	Speaking	Writing
Rater Agreement	90.5%	88.3%

## 7 Closing Remarks

The CAEL CE Test is one of the best tools for identifying students with the right English skills for academic success. It provides an authentic representation of language use in a Canadian academic context. Testing is fully computer-delivered and available at over 40 locations across Canada and internationally, with test dates available every month. Paragon offers a range of test preparation materials, both for free and for purchase, to help you prepare for your test. For more information about test registration and preparation, visit the CAEL website at [www.cael.ca](http://www.cael.ca).

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## Appendices

### Appendix A: CAEL CE Reporting Scale

Band Score	Reading Performance	Listening Performance	Writing Performance	Speaking Performance
80-90 Expert - Fluent	Reads academic texts with ease demonstrating comprehension equal to that of experienced academic readers.	Comprehends lectures as well as an experienced academic listener.	Writes with authority and style demonstrating mastery of appropriate, concise and persuasive academic writing.	Speaks with authority on a variety of topics. Demonstrates flexibility, controls nuance and speaks with spontaneity and comprehensibility.
70 Adept	Reads and comprehends academic texts with ease. Can interpret information with flexibility.	Understands lectures with apparent ease.	Readily responds to the demands of the topic and presents information clearly and logically.	Speaks with ease presenting information clearly and logically.
60 Advanced	Understands main ideas and is able to identify most relevant details. Can interpret information with some flexibility.	Understands information regarding both main ideas and supporting details. May lack some flexibility and miss some information.	Can develop a thesis using a range of support and uses language that is generally accurate.	Speaks fluently, flexibly and with a degree of ease. Compensates strategically for limitations but communicates most required information clearly.
50 High Intermediate	Understands main ideas but may misinterpret information. Can identify some relevant details but reads slowly and with greater effort than most academic readers.	Processes most of the lecture for general ideas but may miss or misinterpret details. Overall understanding is still somewhat restricted.	Addresses the topic to a degree but with limited clarity and cohesiveness.	Speaks with some fluency and flexibility but speaks unevenly; at times there is a natural easy quality to the response but at other times the response breaks down.
40 Intermediate	Understands main ideas but is restricted by limited vocabulary and a lack of familiarity with textual conventions.	Identifies the meaning of some unfamiliar terms but overall understanding is restricted and uneven.	Makes links among ideas and addresses the topic but writing lacks clarity and cohesiveness.	Can speak with some fluency but without flexibility and with noticeable effort.
30 High Beginner	Understands some of the main ideas but is unable to identify specific, relevant ideas; reads with limited accuracy and fluency.	Makes some sense of sections of lectures by guessing but overall understanding is limited.	Writes something related to the topic but writing is not predictable and language is restricted.	Can speak but with false starts, hesitations and some mispronounced words. Provides studied and careful responses.
10-20 Low Beginner	Understands the main idea at times but misses almost all supporting detail.	Takes some meaning from individual words but overall understanding is sketchy and random.	Uses words randomly but language is very restricted and/or ungrammatical.	Communicates some information but mispronounces many words and speaks with great difficulty and many long pauses.

### Appendix B: CAEL CE Scores by Purpose

Test Purpose	Listening		Reading		Writing		Speaking		Overall	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Employment	62.72	17.80	58.10	20.13	53.67	11.86	62.22	12.40	60.82	13.64
For post-secondary admissions	67.21	16.53	61.90	18.88	56.24	11.20	61.36	13.03	62.56	13.10
Other	66.08	15.58	61.86	18.47	56.30	10.38	63.99	10.33	63.41	12.02

### Appendix C: CAEL CE Scores by Declared Nationality, Top 8 Represented Countries

Country	Listening		Reading		Writing		Speaking		Overall	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Brazil	70.87	19.64	68.04	18.81	57.39	12.19	60.87	12.62	65.87	14.69
Canada	66.67	15.52	61.67	18.27	56.97	10.66	66.55	10.33	64.34	12.00
China	62.94	17.04	60.51	21.04	54.57	10.62	56.70	11.19	59.75	13.49
India	67.38	12.96	63.23	16.86	56.86	7.91	65.09	7.58	64.51	9.79
Iran	62.24	18.41	55.67	20.32	52.84	12.29	60.60	10.57	59.10	14.22
Nigeria	69.49	11.91	67.69	15.12	61.03	7.88	68.46	7.09	68.21	7.56
Philippines	66.67	15.81	60.49	18.63	56.79	9.85	61.98	11.00	62.22	12.04
South Korea	68.93	14.61	61.79	18.10	56.43	11.51	55.71	13.05	62.14	12.17

The countries are listed alphabetically

### Appendix D: CAEL CE Scores by Declared First Language, Top 8 Represented Languages

Language	Listening		Reading		Writing		Speaking		Overall	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Arabic	59.56	18.12	53.85	18.28	49.78	13.3	60.37	11.68	57.48	13.86
Chinese	62.85	17.05	60.35	20.37	54.53	10.61	56.40	10.91	59.59	13.04
English	71.89	14.18	65.31	18.38	61.38	9.37	71.84	10.01	68.88	11.27
Farsi	62.35	17.41	57.04	19.84	52.22	12.14	62.84	10.15	59.88	13.18
Hindi	67.46	11.45	62.46	15.31	57.96	8.71	67.68	6.38	65.21	8.73
Panjabi	65.43	13.79	60.41	16.46	55.27	7.68	64.03	7.29	62.84	9.74
Spanish	67.23	16.01	65.45	17.41	56.83	9.37	64.85	7.82	64.55	11.00
Tagalog	66.02	16.10	60.00	17.64	56.53	9.43	62.96	10.07	62.24	11.35

The language groups are listed alphabetically