

## Answers to Frequently Asked Questions about Scaled Scores on the ECCE and ECPE

### 1. Does everyone take the same test?

In the same test administration, the majority of the items that test takers answer are the same. There are some differences between forms within an administration for security reasons. More importantly, however, each new ECPE and ECCE administration is a brand new test containing items that have not been previously used.

### 2. Is one test form easier than another?

Each ECPE and ECCE examination contains different items. The tests are constructed following explicit guidelines regarding content and difficulty. After every administration, we check the performance of the items. Our analyses show that the different forms do indeed have approximately the same difficulty. However, the items are not identical from administration to administration, and this means that it is possible for there to be small differences in difficulty. It would be unfair to test takers if final test scores did not correct for these small differences. The process of creating scaled scores removes even this slight variation.

### 3. How is the passing score determined?

In order to pass the ECPE or the ECCE, test takers must demonstrate that they have the language proficiency described in the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR). That is, that successful ECPE test takers have the competencies described at the C2 level on the CEFR and that successful ECCE test takers have the competencies described at the B2 level on the CEFR. The exams are carefully designed to target those competencies. The standard does not change from administration to administration. It is what is called a *criterion*, and it is not affected by when a test taker takes the test or who they take the test with.

### 4. Why don't you use percentages?

The goal of any test is to provide a fair and accurate assessment of individuals, irrespective of the specific items used for any particular test. All ECPE and ECCE examinations are compiled taking the utmost care to maintain the content coverage and difficulty level of the exams. However, different tests across different years will always have some slight variations concerning the difficulty of the items on the test. Therefore, a certain percentage, such as 80%, will not have exactly the same meaning across different forms of a test—80% on a slightly easier test has a different meaning than 80% for a slightly more difficult test. Therefore, reporting scores using percentages could be extremely unfair to test takers.

**5. What is a scaled score?**

All scales are reporting mechanisms. The scale could be of any length and contain different categories. It could be A–E. Alternatively, it could be High Pass to Fail. The scale is a way of reporting abilities.

A scaled score is a special kind of scale. It is a mathematical transformation of individuals' raw scores in order to report each test taker's score on a consistent scale and it converts the test takers' raw score to a common scale that takes into account differences between versions of a test.

Raw scores or percentages can differ slightly across different forms of a test, making it misleading to compare them from one test administration to another. Scaled scores adjust raw scores in a consistent way in order to remove these differences.

**6. Why scale the scores?**

Because it would be unfair to test takers to report number of items correct or percentage correct, it is important to find a way of reporting scores that makes scores equivalent and comparable in meaning regardless of the test taken or the average ability of the test taking group. This is why we use Item Response Theory to score our examinations. It helps us to ensure that candidates receive the score that they deserve regardless of the abilities of the test-taking group that they were part of and the questions that they answer—a statistical property called *item and population invariance*. The scaled score is a standardized reporting mechanism. The test takers' scores on a particular administration are mathematically transformed so that the passing score equals the same number on the scale each time. In the case of the ECPE and ECCE this is 650.

**7. Why is the scale 0 to 1000 when I don't see 1000 questions?**

The scale is a reporting mechanism. *The scaled score on a test does not have to be the same as the number of tasks on the test.* For instance, in Greek secondary schools the scale is 0–20, while in Mexico and Brazil the scale is 0–10. Achieving a score of 20 in Greece does not mean that a student successfully completed 20 tasks. Similarly, achieving a score of 10 in Brazil does not mean that a student successfully completed only 10 tasks. It would actually be unfair to ask test takers to answer 1000 questions, because they would become extremely tired and would probably perform much worse than their actual ability. The number of items on the ECPE and the ECCE has been carefully chosen to help us gather as much information about what the test takers can do without causing them to become unnecessarily tired.

**8. Does scaling affect who passes or fails an exam?**

No. The language proficiency required to pass the ECPE and the ECCE does not change from administration to administration. It is what is called a *criterion*. In other words, an ECCE test taker who demonstrates the competencies expected at B2 on the CEFR will pass the ECCE. Imagine a table. The table can be measured in Imperial units (feet and inches) or in metric units (meters and centimeters). The length of the table does not change. However, the unit of measurement can. Like the choice of imperial units or metric units to measure a table, a scale is a choice. Cambridge Michigan Language Assessments has selected a 1000-point scale. The scaling procedure is the same for each person, each form, and each year, and is designed to insure that each individual is judged fairly and impartially no matter what year they have taken the test or what form has been administered to them.

**9. Can I find out how many questions I answered correctly?**

No. It would not be helpful to know how many questions have been answered correctly. This is because each ECPE and ECCE examination contains different items. Even though the tests are constructed following explicit guidelines regarding content and difficulty it is possible for there to be small differences between tests. This means that, as with percentages, a certain number of items correct will not have exactly the same meaning across different forms of a test—56 items correct on a slightly easier test has a different meaning than 56 items correct on a slightly more difficult test. Therefore, providing information about the number of questions answered correctly would not be informative.