

Online IESOL Exams - Frequently Asked Questions

NB The responses to all the questions in this document apply to Classic IESOL online examinations in Safe Exam Browser, unless specified otherwise.

1. How many times can the Candidate listen to the recordings in the Listening exam?

Classic IESOL

As per the instructions included in the exam, in Classic IESOL the Candidate is only permitted to listen to each recording twice. After they have played the recording twice, they will not be able to play it for a third time. Also, the Candidates are not able to pause or rewind the recordings.

2. Can we remotely invigilate more than 4 Candidates during one session?

The current regulations only allow one Invigilator to deliver the session to a maximum of 6 Candidates, all of whom must take the same CEFR examination level. If a centre wishes to deliver the examinations to more Candidates at the same time, or invigilate more than 1 CEFR level at the same time, they must ensure that they have additional members of staff as well as sufficient IT equipment available to invigilate additional sessions. Please note that this will also require your centre to have additional ZOOM licences in place.

For LRW resit examinations, GA may authorise for one additional resit Candidate per unit to be supervised with a cohort of four Candidates taking the examination at the same CEFR level.

3. Can we remotely invigilate more than 1 CEFR level during one session?

No. All Candidates in a session must be taking the same level examination.

4. What if the Invigilator / Interlocutor loses their online connection during the exam?

If the Invigilator / Interlocutor loses their connection for more than 5 minutes, the Candidates should be advised to submit their incomplete assessments 5 minutes after the connection was lost for LRW assessments, or exit the meeting for Speaking assessments, and wait for the Invigilator / Interlocutor to contact them by phone with further instructions.

The Invigilator / Interlocutor should write a full account of the event in the Examination Report Form, including the exact time and the length of time the connection was lost.

GA will provide further guidance for each session individually.

5. What if Candidate(s) lose their online connection during the exam?

Firstly, please advise all Candidates that they must ensure that they have access to a good and reliable Internet connection before enrolling for this type of examination.

If one of the Candidates temporarily loses their Internet connection during the exam session, ZOOM will automatically seek to reconnect to the meeting once the Internet connection is back in place. We also recommend that the Candidate downloads ZOOM applications on all relevant devices prior to the exam session rather than rely on a web-based connection.

Safe Exam Browser (SEB) will also automatically seek to reconnect as soon as an Internet connection becomes available. A warning window will display as soon as the Internet connection is lost, together with a counter showing how long the connection has not been available for. When the total time reaches 5 minutes, the system will automatically complete and submit the unit examination. **In speaking examinations**, the Interlocutor and the other Candidate should pause the exam and **wait for up to 10 minutes** for the other Candidate to re-join the meeting. The ZOOM session and the recording should continue during that time. The Interlocutor should contact the Candidate who lost their connection on the phone and instruct them to try and reconnect within the next ten minutes so that the exam can continue. If the Candidate is unable to reconnect, the Interlocutor should either complete the examination with the remaining Candidate (particularly if the interruption happened after a significant proportion of the exam has been completed), or rearrange the session. In either case, the Interlocutor must write a full account of the event in the Report Form.

Arrangements should be made with the Candidate who lost their connection to complete the spoken exam at a later stage. Both video recordings will need to be uploaded for the Candidate who lost their connection after completing some of the tasks during the first attempt.

In LRW examinations, the remaining Candidates should continue with their assessment when the Invigilator attempts to make telephone contact with the Candidate who lost their connection (please ensure that 'mute' function is used so that the remaining Candidates are not disturbed).

If the connection (both to the online assessment and the ZOOM session) is re-gained **within a maximum of 5 minutes**, the Candidate will be allowed to continue with the examination, and the Invigilator should write a full account of the event in the Examination Report Form, including the exact time and the length of time the connection was lost.

If the connection (to either the online assessment within SEB OR the ZOOM session) is lost **for more than 5 minutes**, the Candidate should be instructed that they need to take the entire unit assessment again on a different date, **unless the disruption occurred in the last ten minutes** of the allocated exam time, in which case GA may be able to extend special consideration and award results based on incomplete assessment submission. Please contact the GA team for further guidance.

6. What if a Candidate did not return the completed Instructions document before the exam?

If a Candidate did not return the completed Instructions document before the exam, they will not be allowed to take the assessment. Please note that for Candidates under 18 years of age, the Instructions document needs to be additionally signed by a parent or other legal guardian.

7. Can I change the start time of the exam session?

Centres can start the exam up to 30 minutes after the scheduled start time. They are NOT permitted to start before the scheduled start time.

If a centre wishes to start the exam at any time earlier than the scheduled start time, or at any time later than within 30 minutes, they need to seek prior written authorisation from GA or the local GA representative organisation. Lack of such authorisation may result in the Candidate results not being released and will be further investigated as possible maladministration / malpractice.

8. The login details for a Candidate do not work.

In the first instance, please check that the Candidate is using the correct details.

Once you have confirmed that, ask the Candidate to try and enter their login details again.

If the Candidate is still unable to log in, please contact GA.

9. The Candidate clicked on the 'Submit exam' button in error.

You will need to call GA to obtain further guidance. If this happens outside of the hours where telephone support is available, make a full note of the incident in the Examination Report Form and proceed with the remaining parts of the exam.

10. I forgot to record the Speaking assessment for Classic IESOL.

A Classic IESOL spoken examination without an audio or video recording cannot be assessed and is therefore not valid. You need to stop the exam as soon as you have realised that the session is not being recorded.

If this happens within the first speaking task, you can start the exam again from the beginning using the same assessment materials. Make a full note of the incident in the Report Form.

If this happens later than during the first speaking task, or after the session has been conducted, you need to contact GA. It may be possible to issue you with additional assessment materials so that you can conduct the session again and record it on the same day. Make a full note of the incident in the Examination Report Form. Do not conduct the session again using the same version of the materials in this scenario.

If the Candidates are no longer present, make a full note of the incident in the Examination Report Form and contact GA for additional guidance.

11. What happens if a Candidate closes the exam window by mistake?

It is not possible to close the exam window without exiting SEB. If a Candidate chooses to close SEB during their assessment, they will see a warning message. If they disregard the message and proceed to close the SEB, the system will automatically complete and submit

the unit examination, and the Candidate will not be able to proceed any further with that particular unit.

12. What happens if there is an emergency in the middle of the exam?

Depending on the exact nature of the emergency, you might be able to apply the guidance as outlined in questions 4 and 5 pertaining to lost Internet connection.

For any other issues, please contact GA for further guidance.

Any actions undertaken during an emergency situation should be guided primarily by the need to ensure that all delivery staff as well as the Candidates remain physically safe at all times, and secondarily by the need to ensure that the validity and reliability of the online assessment has not been compromised.

A full account of the events and any decisions taken should be made in the Examination Report Form.

13. What if a Candidate does not have their ID document with them? (adult candidates)

All Candidates are required to present their original ID documents at the beginning of the online examination and have them available throughout the exam. The delivery staff will conduct the ID checks by verifying the Candidate's identity against that document and compare it against the copy provided at the time of registration. Centres must ensure that the copies of ID presented at registration are of very high quality, enabling GA staff to conduct subsequent identity checks based on the video recordings as and when required.

The remaining candidates should be put in the 'waiting room' when checks of the ID documents are undertaken.

The centre must ensure a copy of each Candidate's ID is kept on record.

14. What are the timescales for the results being released?

The timescales for the results being released are the same as for paper-based examinations.

15. A member of staff at the centre logged in using Candidate access details – what do I do?

Centre staff must not log in using the Candidate details for any reason. This will be logged as maladministration and investigated as possible malpractice.

If a member of staff logged in and started one or more of the online assessments, you need to contact GA for further guidance, as the Candidate will no longer be able to use the same details to access the exam.

16. The answer window in the writing task is not big enough.

The size of the answer window has been set to the maximum size. If a Candidate produces more text than fits the window, the text will automatically move up to allow the Candidate to continue typing.

17. The font in the exam window is not big enough.

Candidates can increase the size of the entire screen by using the Ctrl + function. Similarly, they can decrease the size of the screen by using the Ctrl – function.

18. What happens if somebody enters the room while the Candidate is being assessed?

The person who entered the room where the Candidate is taking the exam should be instructed to leave immediately. The Invigilator should remind the Candidate that this must not happen again. If this continues to happen, the Invigilator should terminate the exam for the Candidate by instructing them to proceed to the final page and submitting the exam. If the Candidate does not comply with the instruction, advise them that their assessment will not be considered valid, and that they may be disqualified from the examination.

The Invigilator should make a note of the incident in the Examination Report Form.

19. What happens if Candidate's phone rings and the Candidate answers?

The Invigilator should instruct the Candidate to immediately end the call and that a note of the incident will be made in the Report Form, and that they may be disqualified from the examination. The phone can only be used for the purpose of communicating with the exam delivery staff.

20. What happens if the Interlocutor / Invigilator hears somebody whispering during the exam session?

The Invigilator should instruct the Candidate to show them a full picture of the room via the video so that the Invigilator is satisfied that no unauthorised persons are present.

21. Can we administer the S, L, R, W exams in any order?

No. The examinations should be administered in the following order:

- Listening
- Reading (or Reading and Writing combined in ESOL CADETS examinations)
- Writing
- Speaking

The only exception to this rule is if one or more of the Candidates in the cohort take a partial resit examination.

Any further changes to this order should be communicated to and authorised by GA in advance of the examination session.

22. Can I still register a Candidate for an existing exam session after the 1 working day registration deadline?

No, Candidates should be registered no later than 1 working day ahead of the exam session.

23. What if a Candidate arrives late?

The Invigilator / Interlocutor can use their own discretion to delay the start of the exam by up to 30 minutes, provided that this does not negatively impact other Candidates.

If the exam session has already started, the Candidate who arrived late should be advised to make arrangements to attend the exam on a different date.

24. What if I suspect a Candidate has cheated in any way?

During the exam, you must warn the Candidate to stop any behaviour you observed which is against regulations. After the exam, a full record of this must be made in the Examination Report Form.

25. Do Candidates have to answer the questions in order, or can they return to a task at the end of the exam?

Candidates can move between the tasks and their responses will be automatically saved, but we strongly recommend that they complete the tasks in the order they are presented, especially in the Listening exam.

26. Can a Candidate finish the exam session if they have completed all the online tasks before the other Candidates?

They can submit their assessment on the screen, but they must remain in front of their device until the end of the session.

27. Do the online exams lead to the same qualification as the paper-based exams?

Yes. The online exams lead to the same qualification as the paper-based exams.

28. Will the certificate state whether it was online or paper-based?

No. The certificate for online assessments is exactly the same as the certificate for paper-based assessments.

29. What preparation materials are available for Candidates?

Candidates can practice using online assessments available on the GA website. We also strongly recommend that centres invite all Candidates for mock assessments prior to the live exam session.

30. Can I mix up the online and paper-based exams, e.g. my Candidate did a paper-based one but wants to re-sit two elements using the online version?

Yes. For resit examinations, it is possible to switch from online to paper-based or vice versa.

However, you cannot choose to take some of the components online and others on paper during the same attempt.

31. Do we have to teach the Candidates different content prior to an online exam?

No. The online exams test exactly the same skills as the paper-based exams.

However, the candidates will need a certain level of computer skills to be able to navigate comfortably across the examination, as well as typing skills to be able to complete their writing tasks.

32. What are the technical system requirements?

In order to undertake the online exams, all participants must have access to a reliable Internet connection, a laptop / PC, with either an internal or external video camera (webcam) and good quality speakers, as well as an additional device to run ZOOM during the LRW component. The video camera is needed as Candidates are expected to run the Zoom session for the speaking examination on their main device (i.e. a laptop / PC) rather than a phone.

We also recommend that Candidates who would ordinarily use a mouse to operate their device make sure they have one available. Please see the *Technological Requirements for Online Examinations* documents for further guidance.

33. Can my Candidates take the exam on their phone or on a tablet?

No. Onscreen exams must be taken using either laptops or PCs. GA's online examination system has been designed to work on laptops and PCs only. We do not guarantee that they will work properly on any other devices, and any Candidates attempting to take them on a different type of device do so at their own risk.

34. What if Candidates don't have access to email? Can I send them the information on a different platform, e.g. Messenger or What's App?

Whilst it is possible for Candidates to access the required information using means other than an email, we strongly recommend that an email account is used for this purpose.

35. Can Candidates change their answers in the exam?

Yes. All the answers can be amended up to the point when the Candidate submits their unit exam.

36. Will the cost of the exam change?

Please refer to the price list.

37. One of the Candidates did not enter their details on the final page containing the declaration.

This should not stop the online exam from getting submitted. If there are any issues, GA will notify the centre and provide further instructions on case-by-case basis.

38. I mixed up the login details for the Candidates and they logged in with somebody else's username and password.

Ask the Candidates to proceed with the rest of the exam using the details provided in error. Record the exact details of the error on the Examination Report Form.

39. Can we offer the same range of reasonable adjustments as for the paper-based examinations?

No. Online examinations do not support exactly the same range of reasonable adjustments as the paper-based ones. Please contact GA for advice on each case prior to enrolling the Candidate for an online exam.

40. Can the online exams be arranged on any day of the week / at any time of the day?

In theory, yes, unless specific restrictions have been communicated to a centre. Additionally, we recommend that centres who are new to remotely invigilated online examinations book the exam sessions during GA office working hours (Monday to Friday, 9 am to 5 pm UK time), so that we can try and provide advice and technical support in case of any unexpected issues.

41. Do you recommend a particular browser?

Yes. We would recommend either Chrome, Safari or Firefox, and strongly advise against the use of Internet Explorer, which is now outdated and may lead to the exam not loading properly.

42. One of the Candidates skipped to the Declaration page and can no longer go back to view the questions during a Classic exam?

Ask the Candidate to complete all the fields in on the declaration page, at which stage the 'previous page' button should appear allowing them to navigate back to the exam.

43. A Candidate did not follow the instructions and is unable to use ZOOM on the exam date.

If a Candidate is not prepared in terms of being able to use ZOOM / audio / video, the Invigilator should not allow them to continue with the session and instead advise them that they will need to re-register on another session after they have made the necessary preparations. This is to avoid a situation where a single Candidate causes issues for both the Invigilator and other Candidates due to their lack of preparation, and also possibly makes claims regarding the online exam system where the real issue lies with them. Of course, Invigilators can use their own discretion to decide when to allow and not allow the Candidate to continue. The instructions document signed by the Candidates ahead of the session already covers that aspect. Rearranging the exam date for such candidates would not incur additional charges with GA.

44. A Candidate did not follow the instructions and has not installed Safe Exam Browser before the exam.

Candidates will not be able to access live exams without SEB software installed. The same guidance as for the question above will apply.

45. The Internet connection deteriorated during the spoken exam and whilst we remained connected, I could not hear one / some of the Candidates well.

If the Internet connection suddenly becomes weak and Candidates cannot be heard well during the spoken exam, the Interlocutor can pause the exam (Candidates remain connected via ZOOM) and wait for a few minutes for the connection to improve. If there is no improvement, the exam needs to be rescheduled for both Candidates, or the Interlocutor can complete the exam with the Candidate whose connection remained good if the progress made up to that point was significant. Alternatively, the Interlocutor can choose to reschedule the exam for both Candidates. The details need to be included in the Examination Report Form, including the exact time the exam was paused and the duration of the pause.

46. The Interlocutor did not have enough space on their device and failed to save the speaking recording for a Classic exam.

GA is unable to mark the Speaking exam without either an audio or a video recording, so the examination is invalid. It will need to be rearranged with GA and delivered again using a different set of assessment materials.

We recommend that centres activate the Cloud storage on their ZOOM accounts and save the recordings directly to the Cloud.

Alternatively, the recording can be saved to an external location, for example an USB drive or external hard drive.

47. In a Classic IESOL exam, the Candidate clicks on the unit assessment icon but nothing happens.

Ask the Candidate to ensure that pop-up windows are enabled in their browser.

Do you have any other questions that have not been answered in this document?

If so, you might find answers in the:

- *GA Practical Guide to Conducting Remote Online Classic Examinations*
- *GA Regulations For Conducting Remote Online Examinations*
- *Technology Requirements for Online Examinations*
- *SEB Installation Guide*
- *Interlocutor Guidance for Conducting Online Spoken Examinations.*

If you are still unable to find an answer to your questions, please contact Gatehouse Awards via email: info@gatehouseawards.org.