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University of Cambridge ESOL

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PREFACE

This handbook is intended principally for teachers and course designers who are, or intend to become, involved in preparing candidates for the Cambridge Key English Test (KET). There are separate handbooks for other Cambridge ESOL examinations.

The introductory part of the handbook provides a general background to the Cambridge ESOL examinations and an overview of the work of Cambridge ESOL, including a description of current procedures for test design, production and marking. It is hoped that this will be of interest both to those who are familiar with the Cambridge ESOL examinations, and to those who are coming to them for the first time.

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UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE ESOL EXAMINATIONS

Introduction to Cambridge ESOL

University of Cambridge ESOL Examinations (Cambridge ESOL) is a part of the University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate (UCLES), which has provided examinations in English for speakers of other languages since 1913. Cambridge ESOL offers an extensive range of examinations, certificates and diplomas for learners and teachers of English. In 2002 over 1.2 million people took these examinations at centres in over 130 countries.

Cambridge ESOL was formerly known as UCLES EFL. The title ESOL – English for Speakers of Other Languages – was adopted in October 2002, reflecting the increasing diversity of the candidature.

Cambridge ESOL examinations can be taken by anyone whose first language is not English. They are suitable for learners of all nationalities, whatever their first language and cultural background, and there are examinations suitable for learners of almost any age. The range of Cambridge ESOL

examinations includes specialist examinations in Business English and English for Academic Purposes, as well as tests for young learners and a suite of certificates and diplomas for language teachers.

The examinations cover all four language skills – listening, speaking, reading and writing. They include a range of tasks which assess candidates' ability to use English, so that in preparing for the examinations, candidates develop the skills they need to make practical use of the language in a variety of contexts. Above all, what the Cambridge ESOL examinations assess is the ability to communicate effectively in English.

Cambridge ESOL is committed to providing examinations of the highest possible quality. This commitment is underpinned by an extensive programme of research and evaluation, and by continuous monitoring of the marking and grading of all Cambridge ESOL examinations. Of particular importance is the rigorous set of procedures which are used in the production and pretesting of question papers, and these are described in the following section.

The Association of Language Testers in Europe (ALTE)

Cambridge ESOL is a member of the Association of Language Testers in Europe (ALTE), which was formed in 1990. The members are all providers of language examinations and certificates from countries within Europe.

The principal objectives of ALTE are as follows:

- to promote the transnational recognition of certification, especially in Europe
- to establish common standards for all stages of the language testing process, i.e. test development, question and materials writing, test administration, marking and grading, reporting of test results, test analysis and reporting of findings
- to collaborate on joint projects and in the exchange of ideas and know-how.

Cambridge ESOL examinations fulfil the Code of Practice established by ALTE. This Code of Practice focuses on the responsibilities of both examination providers and examination users and covers four main areas:

- developing examinations
- interpreting examination results
- striving for fairness
- informing examination takers.

For more information on ALTE please visit www.ALTE.org

Key features of Cambridge ESOL Examinations

Cambridge ESOL undertakes:

- to assess language skills at a range of levels, each of them having a clearly defined relevance to the needs of language learners;
- to assess skills which are directly relevant to the range of uses for which learners will need the language they have learnt, and which cover the four language skills – listening, speaking, reading and writing – as well as knowledge of language structure and use;
- to provide accurate and consistent assessment of each language skill at the appropriate level;
- to relate the examinations to the teaching curriculum in such a way that they encourage positive learning experiences and to seek to achieve a positive impact wherever possible;
- to endeavour to be fair to all candidates, whatever their national, ethnic and linguistic background, gender or disability.

Cambridge ESOL examinations are designed around four essential qualities: validity, reliability, impact and practicality. Validity is normally taken to be the extent to which a test can be shown to produce scores which are an accurate reflection of the candidate's true level of language skills. Reliability concerns the extent to which test results are stable, consistent and accurate, and therefore the extent to which they can be depended on for making decisions about the candidate. Impact concerns the effects, beneficial or otherwise, which an examination has on the candidates and other users, whether these are educational, social, economic or political, or various combinations of these. Practicality can be defined as the extent to which an examination is practicable in terms of the resources needed to produce and administer it. All these factors underpin the development and production of Cambridge ESOL examinations, and have been taken into consideration in developing the revised KET.

The Production of Cambridge ESOL Question Papers

The production process for question papers for Cambridge ESOL examinations begins with the commissioning of material and ends with the printing of question papers.

For the majority of Cambridge ESOL question papers there are five main stages in the production process:

- commissioning
- editing
- pretesting
- analysis and banking of material
- question paper construction.

This process is represented in the diagram on the right.

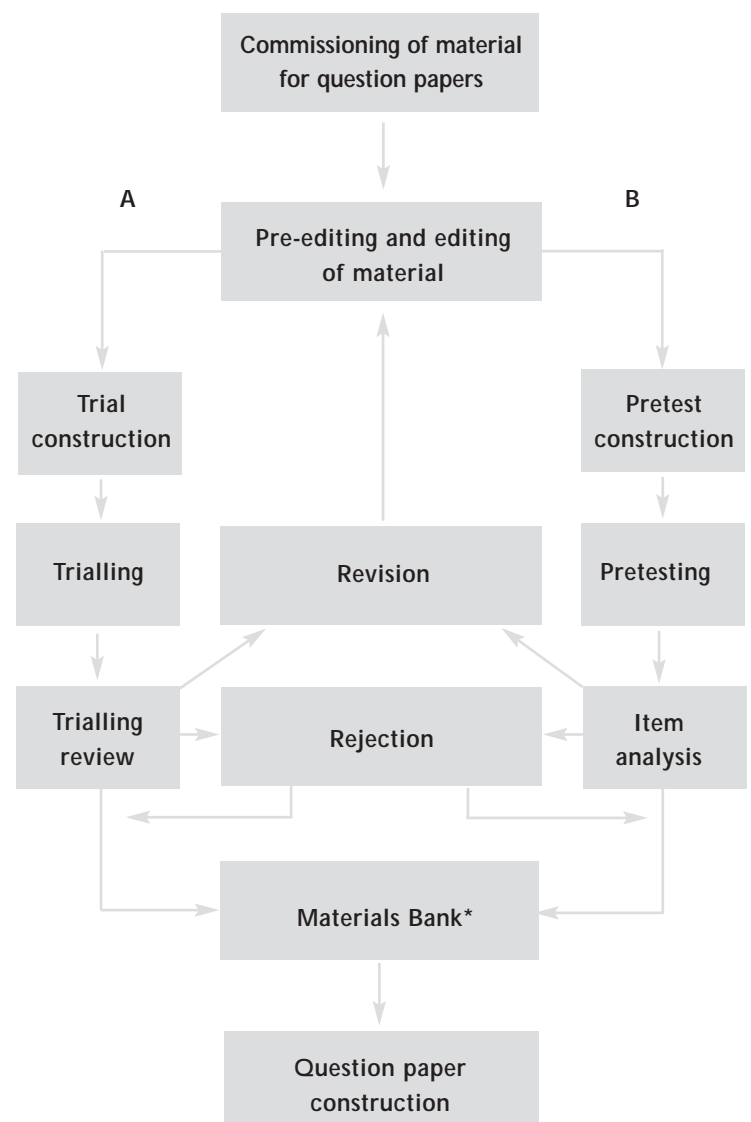
Cambridge ESOL employs teams of item writers to produce examination material, and throughout the writing and editing

process strict guidelines are followed in order to ensure that the materials conform to the test specifications. Topics or contexts of language use which might introduce a bias against any group of candidates of a particular background (i.e. on the basis of sex, ethnic origin, etc.) are avoided.

After selection and editing, the items are compiled into pretest papers. Pretesting plays a central role as it allows for questions and materials with known measurement characteristics to be banked so that new versions of question papers can be produced as and when required. The pretesting process helps to ensure that all versions conform to the test requirements in terms of content and level of difficulty.

Each pretest paper contains anchor items or is supplied to candidates with an additional anchor test. The anchor items are carefully chosen on the basis of their known measurement characteristics, and their inclusion means that all new items can be linked to a common scale of difficulty.

Pretest papers are despatched to a wide variety of schools and colleges which have offered to administer the pretests to candidates of a suitable level. After the completed pretests



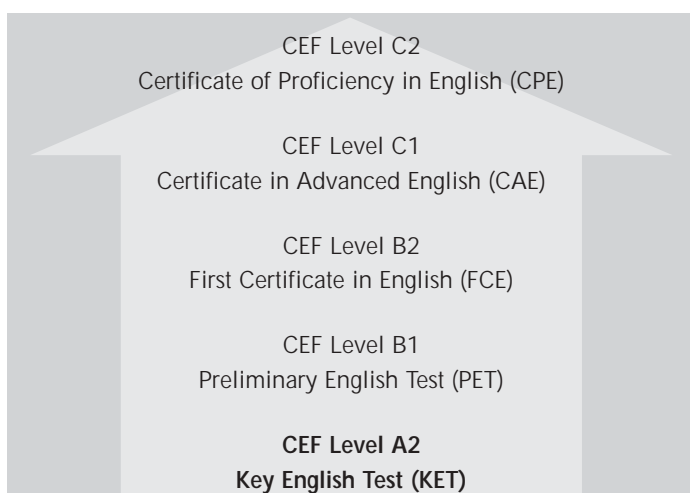
*electronic bank for pretested materials

have been returned to the Pretesting Section at Cambridge ESOL, a score for each student is provided to the centre within two weeks of receiving the completed scripts. The items are marked and analysed, and those which are found to be suitable are banked.

Material for the productive components of the examinations is trialled with candidates to assess its suitability for inclusion in the Materials Bank.

The Cambridge ESOL Main Suite: a Five-Level System

Cambridge ESOL has developed a series of examinations with similar characteristics, spanning five levels and linked to the levels of the Common European Framework (CEF) established by the Council of Europe. Within the series of five levels the Key English Test (KET) is at CEF Level A2.



KEY ENGLISH TEST (KET)

Background

KET was developed between 1991 and 1994, during which time extensive trialling took place. It offers a basic qualification in English and also represents a first step for those wishing to progress towards Cambridge Level Two, the Preliminary English Test (PET) and the rest of the Cambridge ESOL examinations.

In 1999, a review of KET was undertaken involving key clients and stakeholders. The result of this review is the updated KET, applicable from March 2004.

The Level of KET

KET corresponds to Level A2 of the Common European Framework. A description of this level is given below in terms of:

- the general level of proficiency;
- what material learners can handle;
- what learners can be expected to be able to do.

KET is based on the Waystage 1990 specification (J A van Ek and J L M Trim, Council of Europe Press 1991) or what may be achieved after approximately 180–200 hours of study, about half-way to PET. It includes Reading and Writing, Listening, and Speaking components. It may be seen as either an objective half-way towards the Threshold Level, or as a final objective indicating that successful candidates have the linguistic ability to satisfy their most basic communication needs in everyday situations.

A Waystage user will be able to use English in their own or a foreign country in contact with native and non-native speakers of English for the general purposes listed on pages 6 and 7.

Materials a Waystage User can deal with

A language user at this level needs to be able to read simple texts, many of which are of the kind needed for survival in day-to-day life or while travelling in a foreign country. These include street signs and public notices, product packaging, forms, posters, brochures, city guides and instructions on how to make a phone call. The user should also be able to deal with personal messages written as letters or postcards, and gain some information from informative texts taken from newspapers and magazines. Where listening skills are concerned, a user needs to understand the basic facts given in announcements such as at railway stations and airports, traffic information given on the radio, and public announcements made at sporting events or pop concerts.

What a Waystage User can do

In the context of work, a language user at this level can handle basic enquiries related to their own familiar job area, dealing, for example, with questions about prices, quantities of goods ordered, or delivery dates. In a meeting, they could provide straightforward facts if asked directly, but cannot follow a discussion. On the telephone, they could take the name of a caller and note down a simple message including a phone number.

If travelling as a tourist, a user is able to find out what time a tour starts and how much something costs. They can understand the outline of the information given on a guided tour, as long as it is in a predictable context, but can ask only very simple questions to get more information.

They can express their own likes and dislikes, but only in simple terms.

Where reading is concerned, at this level the user can understand the gist of a tourist brochure with the help of a dictionary, to the extent of being able to identify the starting and finishing times of a guided tour and what will be seen on the tour. They can write very simple personal letters, expressing thanks, or a basic message, although there may be elementary mistakes.

KET Candidature

In 2002, there were over 46,000 candidates for KET. Information is collected about KET candidature at each session, when candidates fill in Candidate Information Sheets. These provide essential information, which is needed, for example, to see whether certain types of question cause difficulties for candidates in particular age ranges or from particular language backgrounds.

The information provided is treated as confidential and is covered by the Data Protection Act of the United Kingdom. The answers that a candidate gives to the questions on the Candidate Information Sheet will not affect his/her result in any way.

Nationality

KET is taken in over sixty different countries, with the majority of candidates in Europe, South America, and the Asia-Pacific region.

Age

About 75% of KET candidates are aged 18 or under. A further 20% are in the 19–30 age group.

Gender

Approximately 60% are female.

Employment

Most candidates are studying full-time.

Exam Preparation

Approximately 85% of the candidates attend preparation classes.

Reasons for taking KET

Candidates enter for a variety of reasons. About 55% of candidates indicate that they are taking KET out of personal interest and 40% for employment reasons. About 30% of the candidature are also specifically interested in further study of English.

What sort of test is KET?

In real life, language is used in context, and the forms of language vary according to that context. The assessment aims of KET and its syllabus are designed to ensure that the test reflects the use of language in real life. The question types and formats have been devised with the purpose of fulfilling these aims. KET corresponds closely to an active and communicative approach to learning English, without neglecting the need for clarity and accuracy.

Marking and Grading

The final mark a candidate receives in KET is an aggregate of the marks obtained in each of the three papers (Reading/Writing, Listening and Speaking). There is no minimum pass mark for individual papers.

KET has two passing grades:

Pass with Merit
Pass

and two failing grades:

Narrow Fail
Fail

'Pass' ordinarily corresponds to about 70% of the total marks. 'Pass with Merit' ordinarily corresponds to approximately 85% of the total number. A 'Narrow Fail' grade means that the candidate is within 5% of the 'Pass' level.

Statements of Results contain a graphical display of a candidate's performance in each paper. These are shown against a scale of Exceptional – Good – Borderline – Weak and indicate the candidate's relative performance in each paper.

Administration

Candidates mark all their answers for KET Paper 1 (Reading and Writing) on answer sheets. Candidates must fill in these sheets within the total time allowed for the examination. The answers for Parts 1–5 are automatically read by computer. Answers for Parts 6–9 are marked by trained examiners. For KET Paper 2 (Listening), candidates write their answers on the question paper as they listen to the tape, and are given 8 additional minutes to transfer their answers to the answer sheet. Parts 1–3 are automatically read by computer, and Parts 4 and 5 are marked by trained examiners.

Samples of the answer sheets are given on pages 29, 30 and 47. Students should be given practice in completing these before the date of the examination.

Time and Place

KET is usually available six times a year on fixed dates in March, May, June (twice), November and December.

Current information on dates and the administrative details of the examination are provided separately to centres. A copy can be obtained from your nearest Cambridge Examination Centre. A list of Cambridge Examination Centres is obtainable from Cambridge ESOL (address on page 1) or from the nearest office of the British Council. All KET entries must be made through an authorised centre.

Special Circumstances

Special circumstances covers three main areas: special arrangements, special consideration and malpractice.

Special arrangements

These are available for disabled candidates. They may include extra time, separate accommodation or equipment, Braille transcription, etc. Consult the Cambridge ESOL Local Secretary in your area for more details.

Special consideration

Cambridge ESOL will give special consideration to candidates affected by adverse circumstances immediately before or during an examination. Special consideration can be given where an application is sent through the centre and is made within ten working days of the examination date. Examples of acceptable reasons for giving special consideration are in cases of illness or other unexpected events.

Malpractice

The Malpractice Committee will consider cases where candidates are suspected of copying/collusion or breaking the examination regulations in some other way. Results may be withheld because further investigation is needed or because of infringement of regulations. Centres are notified if a candidate's results have been investigated.

KET Support

Course materials

A list of UK publishers which produce course books and practice materials related to the examinations is available

from Cambridge ESOL and is on the Cambridge ESOL website. KET requires an all-round language ability and this should be borne in mind when selecting course materials. Most coursebooks will be supplemented; care should be taken to ensure that coursebooks and practice materials selected accurately reflect the content and format of the examination.

N.B. Cambridge ESOL does not undertake to advise on textbooks or courses of study.

Past Papers and Examination Reports

Cambridge ESOL produces past examination papers, which can be used for practice, and examination reports, which provide a general view of how candidates performed overall and on each paper and offer guidance on the preparation of candidates. Details of how to order past papers and examination reports, and how to download an order form, are available from www.CambridgeESOL.org

Seminars for Teachers

Cambridge ESOL offers a wide range of seminars designed for teachers concerned with the examinations; some are also suitable as introductions for administrators, school directors etc. Some seminars are intended to provide information and support for teachers who are familiar with the examinations, and others can be used to introduce teachers to established examinations and also to new or revised examinations. Contact Cambridge ESOL for further details.

KET CONTENT: AN OVERVIEW

Paper	Name	Timing	Content	Test Focus
Paper 1	Reading/ Writing	1 hour 10 minutes	Nine parts: Five parts (Parts 1–5) test a range of reading skills with a variety of texts, ranging from very short notices to longer continuous texts. Parts 6–9 concentrate on testing basic writing skills.	Assessment of candidates' ability to understand the meaning of written English at word, phrase, sentence, paragraph and whole text level. Assessment of candidates' ability to produce simple written English, ranging from one-word answers to short pieces of continuous text.
Paper 2	Listening	30 minutes (including 8 minutes transfer time.)	Five parts ranging from short exchanges to longer dialogues and monologues.	Assessment of candidates' ability to understand dialogues and monologues in both informal and neutral settings on a range of everyday topics.
Paper 3	Speaking	8–10 minutes per pair of candidates	Two parts: In Part 1, candidates interact with an examiner; in Part 2 they interact with another candidate.	Assessment of candidates' ability to answer and ask questions about themselves and about factual non-personal information.

Summary of papers

KET has three papers, covering the four skills. The Reading and Writing component carries 50% of the final marks; the Listening and Speaking components carry 25% each. The components of KET are described in summary in the table

above and in greater detail in the following pages. They are also exemplified in the Sample Papers on pages 12–51.

Aims and Objectives

Candidates who are successful in KET should be able to

satisfy their basic communicative needs in a range of everyday situations with both native and non-native speakers of English. This aim corresponds to the recommendations of the Council of Europe's Waystage specification.

Reading

Making use of the limited structural and lexical resources at their disposal, KET candidates should be able to understand the main message, and some detail, of a variety of short factual reading texts: for example, signs, notices, instructions, brochures, guides, personal correspondence and informative articles from newspapers and magazines. They should also have strategies for dealing with unfamiliar structures and vocabulary.

Writing

KET candidates need to be able to produce items of vocabulary from a short definition, select appropriate lexis to complete one-word gaps in a simple text, and to transfer information from a text to a form. They also need to show their ability to complete a short everyday writing task appropriately, coherently and showing reasonable control of structure, vocabulary, spelling and punctuation.

Listening

Candidates should be able to understand and respond to dialogues and monologues, including telephone conversations and recorded messages, in both informal and neutral settings on a range of everyday topics. The texts will be delivered at a pace which is slow but not unnaturally so. Candidates should be able to extract relevant factual information from what they hear.

Speaking

Candidates should be able to interact both with an examiner and with another candidate. They should be able to answer questions about themselves and ask and answer questions about factual information on a prompt card (e.g. times, prices, etc). They should also demonstrate strategies for dealing with communication difficulties, e.g. paraphrasing, asking for clarification.

Language Specifications

The language specifications of KET are the same as those set out in Waystage 1990. It should be noted that the Waystage specification is not a closed syllabus. The following is a summary of the language which is tested in KET. In terms of vocabulary and grammatical structure, KET candidates will have productive control of only the simplest of exponents for each category below; there is a wider, but still limited, range that they will be able to deal with receptively; and they will have strategies for coping with the unfamiliar.

Language Purposes

- Carrying out certain transactions:
 - Making arrangements
 - Making purchases
 - Ordering food and drink
- Giving and obtaining factual information:
 - Personal
 - Non-personal (places, times, etc.)
- Establishing and maintaining social and professional contacts:
 - Meeting people
 - Extending and receiving invitations
 - Proposing/arranging a course of action
 - Exchanging information, views, feelings and wishes

Language Functions

There are six broad categories of language functions (what people do by means of language):

- Imparting and seeking factual information
- Expressing and finding out attitudes
- Getting things done
- Socialising
- Structuring discourse
- Communication repair

A more detailed inventory of functions, notions and grammatical areas covered by KET/Waystage is given below.

Inventory of Functions, Notions and Communicative Tasks

The realisations of these functions, notions and communicative tasks will be in the simplest possible ways.

greeting people and responding to greetings (in person and on the phone)
introducing oneself and other people
asking for and giving personal details: (full) name, age, address, names of relatives and friends, occupation, etc.
understanding and completing forms giving personal details
describing education and/or job
describing people (personal appearance, qualities)
asking and answering questions about personal possessions
asking for repetition and clarification
re-stating what has been said
checking on meaning and intention
helping others to express their ideas
interrupting a conversation
asking for and giving the spelling and meaning of words
counting and using numbers
asking and telling people the time, day and/or date
asking for and giving information about routines and habits
understanding and giving information about everyday activities

talking about what people are doing at the moment
 talking about past events and states in the past, recent activities and completed actions
 understanding and producing simple narratives
 reporting what people say
 talking about future situations
 talking about future plans or intentions
 making predictions
 identifying and describing accommodation (houses, flats, rooms, furniture, etc.)
 buying and selling things (costs and amounts)
 talking about food and ordering meals
 talking about the weather
 talking about one's health
 following and giving simple instructions
 understanding simple signs and notices
 asking the way and giving directions
 asking for and giving travel information
 asking for and giving simple information about places
 identifying and describing simple objects (shape, size, weight, colour, purpose or use, etc.)
 making comparisons and expressing degrees of difference
 expressing purpose, cause and result, and giving reasons
 making and granting/refusing simple requests
 making and responding to offers and suggestions
 expressing and responding to thanks
 giving and responding to invitations
 giving advice
 giving warnings and stating prohibitions
 asking/telling people to do something
 expressing obligation and lack of obligation
 asking and giving/refusing permission to do something
 making and responding to apologies and excuses
 expressing agreement and disagreement, and contradicting people
 paying compliments
 sympathising
 expressing preferences, likes and dislikes (especially about hobbies and leisure activities)
 talking about feelings
 expressing opinions and making choices
 expressing needs and wants
 expressing (in)ability in the present and in the past
 talking about (im)probability and (im)possibility
 expressing degrees of certainty and doubt

Inventory of Grammatical Areas

Verbs

regular and irregular forms

Modals

can (ability; requests; permission)
 could (ability; polite requests)
 would (polite requests)
 will (future)

shall (suggestion; offer)
 should (advice)
 may (possibility)
 have (got) to (obligation)
 must (obligation)
 mustn't (prohibition)
 need (necessity)
 needn't (lack of necessity)

Tenses

Present simple: states, habits, systems, processes and with future meaning (and verbs not used in the continuous form)
 Present continuous: present actions and future meaning
 Present perfect simple: recent past with just, indefinite past with yet, already, never, ever; unfinished past with for and since
 Past simple: past events
 Past continuous: parallel past actions, continuous actions interrupted by the past simple tense
 Future with going to
 Future with will and shall: offers, promises, predictions, etc.

Verb Forms

Affirmative, interrogative, negative
 Imperatives
 Infinitives (with and without to) after verbs and adjectives
 Gerunds (-ing form) after verbs and prepositions
 Gerunds as subjects and objects
 Passive forms: present and past simple
 Short questions (Can you?) and answers (No, he doesn't)

Clause types

Main clause: Carlos is Spanish.
 Co-ordinate clause: Carlos is Spanish and his wife is English.
 Subordinate clause following sure, certain: I'm sure (that) she's a doctor.
 Subordinate clause following know, think, believe, hope: I hope you're well.
 Subordinate clause following say, tell: She says (that) she's his sister.
 Subordinate clause following if, when, where, because:
 I'll leave if you do that again.
 He'll come when you call.
 He'll follow where you go.
 I came because you asked me.

Interrogatives

What, What (+ noun)
 Where; When
 Who; Whose; Which
 How; How much; How many; How often; How long; etc.
 Why
 (including the interrogative forms of all tenses and modals listed)

Nouns

Singular and plural (regular and irregular forms)
Countable and uncountable nouns with some and any
Abstract nouns
Compound nouns
Noun phrases
Genitive: 's & s'
Double genitive: a friend of theirs

Pronouns

Personal (subject, object, possessive)
Impersonal: it, there
Demonstrative: this, that, these, those
Quantitative: one, something, everybody, etc.
Indefinite: some, any, something, one, etc.
Relative: who, which, that

Determiners

a + countable nouns
the + countable/uncountable nouns

Adjectives

Colour, size, shape, quality, nationality
Predicative and attributive
Cardinal and ordinal numbers
Possessive: my, your, his, her, etc.
Demonstrative: this, that, these, those
Quantitative: some, any, many, much, a few, a lot of, all, other, every, etc.
Comparative and superlative forms (regular and irregular)
Order of adjectives
Participles as adjectives

Adverbs

Regular and irregular forms
Manner: quickly, carefully, etc.
Frequency: often, never, twice a day, etc.
Definite time: now, last week, etc.
Indefinite time: already, just, yet, etc.
Degree: very, too, rather, etc.
Place: here, there, etc.
Direction: left, right, etc.
Sequence: first, next, etc.
Pre-verbal, post-verbal and end-position adverbs
Comparative and superlative forms (regular and irregular)

Prepositions

Location: to, on, inside, next to, at (home), etc.
Time: at, on, in, during, etc.

Direction: to, into, out of, from, etc.
Instrument: by, with
Miscellaneous: like, about, etc.
Prepositional phrases: at the end of, in front of, etc.
Prepositions preceding nouns and adjectives: by car, for sale, on holiday, etc.

Connectives

and, but, or,
when, where, because, if

Note that, in KET, students will meet forms other than those listed above on which they will not be directly tested.

Topics

Personal identification
Personal feelings, opinions and experiences
Hobbies and leisure
Sport
Travel and holidays
Transport
Health, medicine and exercise
Shopping
Clothes
Services
Language
House and home
Daily life
Entertainment and media
Social interaction
School and study
Food and drink
People
Places and buildings
Weather
The natural world
Work and jobs

Lexis

The Vocabulary used in KET is restricted to common items which normally occur in the everyday vocabulary of native speakers using English today.

Candidates should know the lexis appropriate to their personal requirements, for example nationalities, hobbies, likes and dislikes.

Note that the use of American pronunciation, spelling and lexis is acceptable in KET.