Language Cert

Exam results you can trust.

Test security is a challenge that all exam boards face, regardless of how the test is delivered.
While the majority of candidates approach exams with integrity, there will always be those intent on gaining results through fraudulent means.
We continually adapt to tackle the issue of cheating to ensure fairness in the assessment process.
With the comprehensive security protocols we have in place, candidates and institutions can be confident that the test results they receive are a valid and reliable reflection of language ability.

We invest heavily in anti-cheating initiatives, keeping track of the latest trends in examination fraud. We have been delivering Online Live Proctoring (OLP) tests for over a decade, enabling us to build a wealth of knowledge and experience in this field. Our approach to test security is made up of many different measures, including:

- Robust process and standard operating procedures

- A mix of human and AI contact, proctoring, and interventions

- Technology solutions

- Item/question bank security and volume

- Ongoing Quality and Compliance monitoring coupled with robust protocols to take action when actual and/or suspected malpractice is identified.

Our standards are maintained through our commitment to protecting the validity, security, and integrity of our exam content and delivery.

ISO 9001	ISO 10002	ISO 14001	ISO 27001	ISO 23988	ISO 22301	CYBER ESSENTIALS CERTIFIED
Quality Management	Customer Satisfaction & Complaints Handling	Environmental Management	Information Security	Use of IT in the Delivery of Assessments	Business Continuity	Cyber Essentials

LanguageCert ISO certifications

Secure test materials

Tests are developed, managed, and delivered through a rigorous process adhering to **ISO 27001 – Information Data Security** and **ISO 23988 – Use of IT in the Delivery of Assessments**. This includes monitored access controls (to facilities and to secure zones within buildings) and advanced technology to enable effective monitoring of every test session.

We use a **proprietary item bank system** to store all test materials securely. Test items (i.e., test questions) are encrypted twice using strong encryption algorithms, and each item has a unique encryption key.

Administrative **access to test materials is restricted** based on user roles, with auditing capabilities for change history. Protective measures are implemented to prevent brute force attacks and trigger service interruption mechanisms across our test platforms.

For **computer-based tests,** candidate responses are transferred securely to LanguageCert's marking application, ensuring test centres do not have access to or hold any test data. The same level of security applies to online proctored exams taken on candidates' own technology at home.

For **paper-based tests** (where applicable), LanguageCert carefully controls all materials, storing test content in sealed boxes and envelopes, and using tracked, secure couriers to transport them to and from test centres globally. Test centres have designated personnel who undergo vetting and training. Test documents are opened in front of the candidate by the invigilator to maintain integrity. Answer sheets are digitally uploaded using LanguageCert's mobile application, and speaking tests are digitally recorded with a digital stamp for identification. Test materials can be securely returned or destroyed, and test centres are not allowed to retain or copy them.

LanguageCert's **Interlocutor Application** digitally records all speaking tests using the interlocutor's smartphone. The recordings upload automatically to our secure cloud platform and include a digital stamp to identify the candidate, interlocutor, and test session. This gives a secure record of the speaking test for marking, quality assurance, and any subsequent candidate appeal.

Safeguarding integrity across all delivery methods

1. LanguageCert Approved Test Centres

LanguageCert Approved Test Centres operate globally and undergo **stringent quality controls and audits**. To become an Approved Test Centre, a formal application process and audit are conducted to evaluate the centre's staff, facilities, systems, and processes. Each centre is carefully evaluated against selection criteria to meet regulatory requirements and maintain ISO standards.

These centres, operated by trusted third parties globally, provide computer- and paper-based test delivery. They follow strict standards in terms of space, configuration, security, and accessibility, regardless of their location. The testing areas are secure and lockable, and all test rooms are continuously monitored by trained staff.
Test centre staff receive standardised training and perform critical surveillance functions to ensure the proper administration of exams.

Test invigilators ensure candidates comply with exam rules and protocols, and maximum ratios of invigilators to candidates are maintained (1:25). Chief Invigilators oversee overall standards and act as points of escalation for any issues.

Candidate identity is verified by trained authorised personnel, who confirm each candidate's identity against official identification documents (IDs) to prevent attempts at impersonation. IDs must be valid, government-issued items that include a photograph and date of birth; they must match the details used by the candidate for registration. Prohibited items are strictly controlled, and security checks are conducted to prevent any violation of protocols.

LanguageCert's security infrastructure, including ExamShield software for computer-based and online proctored tests, helps enforce candidate compliance and maintain test integrity. Employees can identify and address suspicious activities and have access to a whistleblowing process. Staff have a full understanding of incident notification protocols.

To ensure compliance with performance standards, our quality assurance and security departments monitor centre performance via a comprehensive, layered auditing plan. Statistical analysis of test results is within the auditing regime to monitor for any irregularities on a test-by-test and location-by-location basis.

2. LanguageCert Secure Test Centres

Specifically designed to meet the requirements of the UK Home Office for visa and immigration, this network incorporates **additional enhancements** to address the risks associated with fraud and malpractice in the visa and immigration market. These enhancements include biometric and database checks to mitigate the risk of candidate identity fraud.

All test centres have controlled access to the internal movement and are under live video and audio surveillance (and direct test invigilation), with recordings securely stored for audit and investigation purposes. Recordings are stored in compliance with local data protection legislation.

Test centre security check-in procedures can include the use of hand-held metal detectors to scan candidates for mobile phones, cameras, or other prohibited devices. Metal detector wands catch more than 300 cheating attempts every year.

As part of the check-in process, staff will inspect eyeglasses, jewellery, and other accessories to look for camera devices that could capture exam content. Candidates must remove eyeglasses and any facial coverings for close visual inspection at check-in and again upon return from breaks to ensure that no violations of security protocols have occurred. Apart from wedding and engagement rings, we do not allow jewellery.
Hair accessories and ties are subject to inspection. Candidates with ornate clips, combs, barrettes, headbands, tie clips, cuff links, and other hair accessories cannot wear them in the testing room and instead, store them in lockers (shown below). Our checks include candidates raising their trouser legs above their ankles, emptying and turning out all pockets, and raising their shirt sleeves above their wrists. Within the test room, we permit only centre-supplied soft ear plugs (with no wires or cords attached) and centre-supplied tissues. If candidates remove light clothing items (e.g., sweater, suit jacket, and scarf), these must be on the back of the candidate's chair, not on their laps or the desktop. We do not allow outerwear (e.g., heavy coats or jackets) in the test room.

For breaks, staff follow our 'end-of-exam process' to ensure the path to exit is clear and that we record time in and out of the test room, removing the need for the candidate to sign the roster. During an exam break, there is no access to a candidate's locker. On returning from a break, without exception, candidates go through all necessary security checks. There are no breaks in any LanguageCert exam session unless granted in advance of the session starting as part of an agreed Reasonable Adjustment plan.

During test events, qualified Proctors monitor the behaviour of candidates to deter, prevent, and detect malpractice. Standard operating procedures include:

- At least one staff member always directly observes the candidates.
- Proctors observe the test room via the viewing window and video monitor. The video link in full-screen mode monitors each workstation, and the Proctor cycles through each camera view for at least 5 seconds to look for prohibited items or suspicious behaviour, taking care to check back against the full room view for raised hands.
- A thorough walk-through by a Proctor occurs every 5 to 10 minutes.
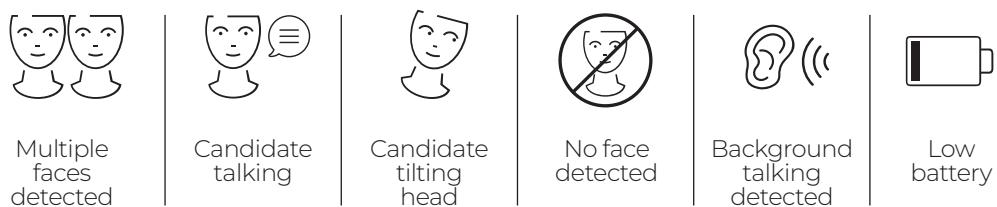
3. Online Live Proctoring (OLP)

Online proctoring involves conducting exams using a candidate's own computer from their chosen location. Live video and audio connections are established between candidates and proctors to remotely monitor and authenticate candidates.

OLP is the fastest-growing method of test delivery, with LanguageCert offering OLP testing 24/7/365 in over 215 countries and territories, and to over 500,000 candidates each year.

ExamShield is a proprietary application that provides context, locking, security, and anti-cheating mechanisms during an online exam.
It is responsible for preventing any malicious or blacklisted applications from being accessed during the test. The lockdown features provided by Examshield include the following:

Navigation prevention features	Infringement prevention features
- Prevents right click. - Prevents function keys. - Prevents important key combinations. - Hides taskbar and desktop. - Hides menus and icons. - Prevents window minimisation. - Prevents copy and paste. - Prevents printing.	- Terminates block listed applications, such as screen capture and key loggers. - Grey listed applications generate a candidate alert. The application must be closed before the test can continue. - Prevents the launch of any application during the test session. - Terminates all communication software. - Prevents execution on virtual machines. - Prevents simultaneous tests. - Allows only one monitor and prevents its display on other monitors.

PeopleCert's Many2Many software facilitates direct communication and monitoring between candidates and proctors. It allows proctors to observe candidates in real time and detect any non-compliant or suspicious behaviour.

Multiple faces detected	Candidate talking	Candidate tilting head	No face detected	Background talking detected	Low battery

Many2Many also records all test events, including interactions between candidates, exam systems, and proctors, providing an audit trail for subsequent review and investigation.

LanguageCert's online Proctors and Marking Interlocutors undergo comprehensive training (including facial recognition techniques) and follow strict protocols to maintain exam integrity. This includes:

1. A full identity check of the candidate and their documentation. During this process, we record a digital copy of both the ID document and the face of the test taker. We include the test day photograph in the Statement of Results.

2. 360-degree camera check of the candidate's chosen test room and its contents to prevent any prohibited items from being present and to ensure that no one else is in the room.

3. Inspection of the candidate to ensure they are not wearing any prohibited items.

4. Continuous visual and audio monitoring of the candidate throughout the test.

5. The monitoring of test systems such as ExamShield and Many2Many and any alerts they raise.

To support Proctors with candidate identity verification, in 2023 we implemented the latest technology in biometric authentication, referred to as **Know Your Customer (KYC).**

Security of results and verification

Once candidates receive their results, they can share their Statement of Results (SoR) with recognising institutions electronically through a secure verification portal. We advise institutions to only accept results verified through the portal and not to accept paper copies (that might have been printed out by the candidate). Institutions can trust the authenticity of the test results they receive through the LanguageCert portal.

LanguageCert is improving its results services to meet the needs of both test candidates and institutions. The new results service will launch in 2024 and will provide additional result management capabilities, including bulk download scores and related analysis and reports.

Additional security enhancements

To ensure we stay at the forefront of test security, LanguageCert has introduced the following countermeasures to deter and detect cheating attempts:

Know your customer (KYC)

Our Know Your Customer solution validates government identity (ID) documents during the onboarding process outlined above. Depending on the applicable government ID template, our KYC technology ensures secure and swift verification by:

☐ Recognising valid ID templates
☐ Verifying individual ID elements (i.e., expiration date, date of birth, address)
☐ Checking for accuracy of format
☐ Detecting crumpled/folded edges
☐ Checking photoshopped/tampered/forged cards
☐ Verifying hologram/rainbow print
☐ Detecting blurriness/exposure
☐ Supplementing ID verification with a live photo corroboration (validating that the candidate presenting for verification is 'live' and not an image).
☐ Digital assessment of the presenting candidate's face against the identity document photograph and against a large, global database of previous test takers registered under different identities
☐ Digital assessment of the presenting candidate's voice against a database of previous test takers identified as potential or actual imposters

Our KYC solution supplements existing security checks and improves service by:

1. Verifying test takers' identities faster and shortening the candidate journey
2. Reducing the risks of manual (human) verification and increasing security assurance
3. Retaining manual (human) checks of the technology verdict on candidate identity
4. Providing further evidence to support investigations of actual or suspected malpractice

Second camera for OLP tests

LanguageCert is introducing a second camera to aid invigilation during online proctored exams. Integrated software enables a candidate's smartphone to act as a second camera during a test session, giving the proctor a video feed of current 'blind spots.' For example, the camera will make 360-degree room checks during candidate onboarding simpler and more comprehensive. It will also give the proctor visibility of the candidate's hands and keyboard or mouse, as well as the space behind the computer screen (where there are walls, doors, windows, etc.) throughout the test event. The application will digitally record all footage, which will be available with the primary camera recording and audio data for subsequent audit and investigation.

Remote access detection

We have implemented detection software to prevent the use of remote access applications (such as AnyDesk®) during test sessions, which, if undetected, can allow third parties to undertake the test remotely during a live test session.

Similarity detection

This tool has been introduced to enable us to identify potential plagiarism in exams.

For more information, contact us at **partnership@languagecert.org**

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