ELPAC

ENGLISH LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY FOR AERONAUTICAL COMMUNICATION

HANDBOOK 2020

INTEGRAL EDUCATION S.A.S
TEACHING LANGUAGE SERVICES

ELPAC

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WHAT IS THE ELPAC TEST?

The ELPAC test has been developed by EUROCONTROL to meet ICAO and EU requirements for air traffic controllers and pilots to demonstrate their English language proficiency in aeronautical communications.

ELPAC is designed for licensed (operational) air traffic controllers and ATPL pilots and reflects the range of communication tasks undertaken in aeronautical communications between air traffic controllers and pilots. The focus of the test is on language proficiency and not on operational procedures.

The standard ELPAC test comprises two test papers and assesses ICAO level 4 and ICAO level 5:

ELPAC paper 1: Listening comprehension
ELPAC paper 2: Oral interaction

To achieve a license endorsement, it is necessary to obtain a pass in both ELPAC paper 1 and ELPAC paper 2. There is no cumulative score. The lowest level achieved, in either paper 1 or paper 2, is the final assessment. Only ELPAC test takers who achieve an ICAO level 5 in the standard ELPAC test are eligible for the ELPAC paper 3 test:

ELPAC paper 3: ICAO level 6 assessment

To achieve an ICAO level 6 it is necessary to obtain a pass for ELPAC paper 3. If the test taker fails ELPAC paper 3, the final assessment remains ICAO level 5.

The ELPAC suite comprises three tests: ELPAC ATC, ELPAC pilots, ELPAC level 6. The ELPAC test suite has been designed to assess the level of proficiency of air traffic controllers and pilots in the context of radio telephony communications and in accordance with the ICAO language proficiency requirements that were put in place in 2011

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The ELPAC ATC test assesses the full range of communicative tasks at ICAO levels 4 and 5 that an air traffic controller maybe confronted with in the OPS room or the ATC control tower. Air traffic controllers rely on ICAO standardized phraseology in everyday situations however in an unexpected situation they may have to use plain English and they may have to shift between using standardized phraseology and plain English in order to adequately deal with and support the flight crews.
The ELPAC pilot test has been designed to assess the ability of pilots to communicate effectively with air traffic control at ICAO levels 4 and 5. This means that pilots in the test have to demonstrate their ability to make requests, to report unexpected situations, to negotiate and to resolve potential misunderstandings.

Traditionally language tests assess the ability of the test taker to show off their language ability as best they can. As such the highest scores are usually awarded to test takers who can impress with the range of their vocabulary or the complexity of their grammar. The ELPAC level 6 test however has been designed to assess the ability of pilots and of air traffic controllers to communicate effectively using radiotelephony communications. Effective communication is achieved by demonstrating the ability to adapt to a less proficient speaker or a speaker from a different cultural background. It also means dealing adequately deal with misunderstandings and identifying and resolving ambiguity.

ELPAC PAPER 1 OVERVIEW

ELPAC paper 1 listening comprehension tests the understanding of communications between pilots and controllers. Additionally, the test includes test items dealing with controller – controller communications. The test items cover both routine and nonroutine situations. The recorded test items are based on authentic material and range from short standard pilot/controller transmissions to longer communications in which the controller or the pilot deals with non-routine or unexpected situations. The ELPAC paper 1 test lasts approximately 45 minutes.

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Part 1, SAQ1 – list

Test takers write answers in alphanumeric format (sometimes a short word will be required). This part tests recognition. Items for this part will be presented on one screen.

Part 2, MCQ2 – table

This part tests careful listening (read back evaluation) for accuracy of readback3. There will be one or two correct answers (out of three options). The maximum number of checkmarks in the table will not be specified. Items for this part will be presented on one screen.

Part 3, SAQ

Testing comprehension of communications between a controller and one or two pilots and one communication between two controllers, in unusual and non-routine situations. There are four audio files (one for the example items and the remaining three for the test items). Each communication has three questions and these will be presented on a separate screen. Test takers type the requested answer by using a few words. Spelling will not be assessed.

Part 4, Table completion (ELPAC ATC ONLY)

Testing comprehension of a call from a pilot including various pieces of information. Test takers type the appropriate flight level(s) into the table cells (not all cells will require an answer). This part tests listening for specific information. The number of answers required will not be specified. Items for this test part will be presented on one screen.

Part 4, Table completion (ELPAC PILOT ONLY)

In this part of the test, you will hear six audio files of ATIS messages (one for the example and five for the test items). Each ATIS message has three questions. The first two questions require you to type a few digits (sometimes a short word will be required). The third question requires a short sentence or phrase. Items for this test part will be presented on one screen.

Part 5, SAQ

Testing comprehension of three telephone communications between controllers and/or pilots in unusual and non-routine situations (these are longer and more complex transmissions than found in Part 3). There will be four audio files (one for the example items and the remaining three for the test items). Each communication has five questions and these will be presented on a separate screen. Test takers type their answers by using a few words. Spelling will not be assessed.

Part 6, SAQ

Testing comprehension of radio communication between pilots and controllers dealing with unusual situations. (these are longer and more complex transmissions than found in part 3). There will be four audio files (one for the example items and the remaining three for the test items). Each communication has five questions and these will be presented on a separate screen. Test takers type the requested answer by using a few words. Spelling will not be assessed.

Part 6, SAQ

ELPAC paper 2 oral interaction, with non-visual (I) and visual tasks (II and III), requires test takers to demonstrate in task I:

- appropriate use of standard ICAO phraseology.
- switching between standard ICAO phraseology and plain English.
- making an appropriate response to a pilot message.
- resolving misunderstandings.
- dealing effectively with the pilot/controller relationship.
- negotiating a developing unusual situation.
- making a verbal report in plain English.

And, in task II and III be able to:
- give opinions.
- put forward arguments.
- evaluate (advantages & disadvantages).
- speculate.
- hypothesize.
- produce extended speech in aviation context.

ELPAC paper 2 lasts approximately 20 minutes and provides a context appropriate to the ATPL pilot's or controller's (tower, approach or en-route) operational environment.

Task Ia (ELPAC ATC ONLY)

Non-visual communication where the test taker acts as the controller and the interlocutor plays the role of a number of pilots in routine an non-routine situations. The interlocutor follows a script. Duration 6-8 minutes.

Task Ia (ELPAC PILOT ONLY)

Non-visual communication where the test taker plays the role of an aircraft's pilot and the interlocutor plays the role of the controller and other aircrafts in routine and nonroutine situations. The interlocutor follows a script. Duration 6-8 minutes.

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Task Ib

Visual (face-to-face) communication in which the test taker gives a verbal report on the events that happened in task I to the interlocutor now playing the role of the supervisor (for air traffic controllers) or superior (for pilots). Duration 3-4 minutes.

Task II

Visual communication with an interlocutor in which the test taker is first asked to describe a picture relating to aviation and then to answer a set of questions related to the photograph. Duration 3-4 minutes.

Task III

Visual communication with an interlocutor in which the test taker is asked a set of questions about aviation issues in a broader context. The interlocutor follows a script. Duration 4–5 minutes.

ELPAC PAPER 3 OVERVIEW

ELPAC paper 3 oral interaction with visual tasks requires test takers to demonstrate their ability to:
• identify misunderstandings.
• successfully resolve misunderstandings.
• deal effectively with the controller/pilot relationship by asking and clarifying.
• succesfully negotiate meaning.
• understand idiomatic language.
• avoid using idiomatic language.
• identify ambiguity.
• avoid ambiguity.
• accommodate a weaker speaker by adapting the level of language to that of the interlocutor.

The test taker must be able to:

• give opinions.

• put forward arguments.

• evaluate and weigh one concept against another.

• speculate.

• hypothesise.

ELPAC paper 3 lasts approximately 15 minutes and provides a context appropriate for the test-taker's operational environment.

Task 1

Visual communication. The test taker is first asked to describe and compare two pictures. Next, the test taker hears a sound file of a person describing one of the pictures. Finally, the test taker is asked a question related to aviation issues in a broader context.

Task 2

Visual communication. The test taker hears a sound file in which there is an apparent misunderstanding between pilot and air traffic controller or between two air traffic controllers. They are then given a set of questions related to the events in the sound file. Next, the test taker is instructed to give a summary of the events in the sound file in their own words, assuming that the person they are giving the account to is not a very proficient speaker of English and knows little about aviation. Finally, the test taker is asked a question related to aviation issues in a broader context.

Task 3

Visual communication. The test taker hears another sound file in which there is an apparent misunderstanding between pilot and air traffic controller or between two air traffic controllers. They are then given a set of questions related to the events in the sound file. Next, the test taker is instructed to give a summary of the events in the sound file in their own

own words, assuming that the person they are giving the account to is not a very proficient speaker of English and knows little about aviation. Finally, the test taker is asked a question related to aviation issues in a broader context.

Task 4

Visual communication. The test taker hears another sound file in which a number of idiomatic expressions are used. The sound file is of a conversation between tower controllers or between two pilots or between a pilot and a controller. The test taker is asked a set of questions related to the events in the sound file.

ELPAC ROLES AND REQUIREMENTS

ELPAC paper 1 marker

The ELPAC test administrator is responsible for setting up ELPAC tests on the ELPAC test system and for the coordination of all test activities with:
• own administration.
• test takers.
• paper 1 marker.
• paper 2 examiners.
• paper 3 examiners.
• test invigilator.
• EUROCONTROL ELPAC team.

An ELPAC test centre may appoint more than one ELPAC test administrator.

ELPAC paper 1 marker

The ELPAC paper 1 marker marks the test on the system after the test taker has completed their paper. Paper 1 markers shall have an operational background (air traffic controller or pilot).

ELPAC paper 2 examiners

The ELPAC test paper 2 examiners are responsible for the interlocution with the test taker and assessing the test taker's performance in Paper 2 during the delivery of ELPAC paper 2. An ELPAC paper 2 test is administered by a team of two ELPAC examiners consisting of one OPE (Operational Expert) examiner and one ELE (English Language Expert) examiner.

ELPAC paper 2 OPE examiner: An ELPAC paper 2 examiner with an operational background (holder of an air traffic control or pilot license). OPE examiners must have achieved a minimum of ICAO Level 5 proficiency (IELTS 6.5 equivalent).

ELPAC paper 2 ELE examiner: An ELPAC paper 2 examiner with formal education in English language teaching, language testing, or equivalent experience. ELE examiners must have a minimum IELTS Level 7.0 (or equivalent), or be a native speaker of English.

ELPAC paper 3 examiners

ELPAC paper 3 OPE examiner: An ELPAC paper 3 examiner with an operational background (holder of an air traffic control or pilot license) and who has at least an ICAO level 5 proficiency that was achieved with the ELPAC test. (IELTS 7.0 equivalent)

ELPAC paper 3 ELE examiner: An ELPAC paper 3 examiner with an educational background in English language teaching, assessment or app lied linguistics. ELE examiners must have a minimum IELTS level 7.5 (or equivalent), or be a native speaker of English.

ELPAC test taker

The ELPAC test taker is a professional pilot, a licensed air traffic controller or a student air traffic controller shortly before they start their on-the-job training.

ELPAC test invigilator

The ELPAC test invigilator supervises test takers during ELPAC paper 1 testing to ensure a proper conduct of the test. Although the above roles have been identified for ELPAC testing, in most situations one person will carry out more than one role e.g. an ELPAC test administrator may be an ELPAC paper 2 examiner and could also invigilate ELPAC paper 1.

PREPARING FOR ELPAC

Test-takers should familiarize themselves with the ICAO Language Proficiency Requirements and of the testing methodology of the ELPAC test. While it may not be necessary for all candidates to attend formal programmes of ELPAC preparation, candidates will be expected to undertake and declare some form of preparation for the test.

Test takers should prepare themselves by taking the ELPAC Paper 1 sample test and by watching the ELPAC Paper 2 sample video. This information can be found on the ELPAC website *http://www.elpac.info*. Additionally, they should study the guidelines for ELPAC test takers which will be provided by the ELPAC test centre after registering for an ELPAC test.

The ELPAC assesses a candidate's ability to use plain English in the context of aviation and aeronautical communications and addresses specifically each of the critical skills of communicative competence defined in the ICAO Holistic Descriptors. In this sense, the most appropriate way for candidates to prepare for the EALT is to practise using English in realistic aviation-related situations.

ICAO RATING SCALE

The ICAO rating scale assesses speaking and listening only. There are six levels in the ICAO rating scale. Level 1 is the lowest level, while level 6 is the highest level that can be achieved. Level 4 is the operational level, which

means that level 4 is the minimum level of proficiency that is required for a pilot or a controller to keep their licence.

The ICAO rating scale should only be used to assess the language ability or proficiency of air traffic controllers and pilots. This is because language testing for pilots and air traffic controllers falls clearly into the domain of English for specific purposes. This is an important feature to understand. Just because a test taker may achieve a level 5 in a test that meets ICAO language proficiency requirements does not necessarily mean that they will pass a Cambridge proficiency test, for example.

Over the years, the ICAO rating scale has come under a lot of fire – even from within ICAO. In fact, at the assembly in Montreal in 2016, Brazil presented a petition to have the ICAO rating scale reengineered. Admittedly, the ICAO rating scale is not perfect, but it works. Fortunately, ICAO recognizes the importance of the ICAO rating scale.

Construct irrelevant variance

Construct irrelevant variance is the term used to refer to factors which may influence the test result, but which do not have anything to do with the test taker's performance. The most common cause of construct irrelevant variance is the performance of the assessor. That is why we also speak of co-variance or co-production.

Pronunciation

In the ICAO rating scale, the descriptor for pronunciation covers:
• Pronunciation.
• Stress.
• Rhythm.
• Intonation.
Stress describes the relative emphasis that may be given to certain

syllables in a word or to words in a sentence. Stress is marked by increased loudness, vowel length, vowel articulation and pitch. Stress is used to indicate word boundaries in spoken language, to indicate when one word or sentence ends, and a new one begins.

There are syllable-times languages, where the duration of every syllable is equal. Moreover, there are stress-timed languages, where the duration between two stressed syllables is equal. English is a typical example of a stress-timed language.

Intonation refers to variations of pitch that do not distinguish words. Intonation is used to express a number of different functions in spoken language:
• Indicating the attitude and emotion of the speaker.
• Signaling the difference between assessment and question.
• Expressing different type of questions.
• Focusing attention.
• Regulate conversational interaction.

In radiotelephony communication, turn taking is marked by using the call sign of an aircraft – either at the beginning or ending of a transmission. Additionally, intonation is not used as a means of marking an utterance as a question.

Structure

In the ICAO rating scale, the descriptor for structure covers:
• Simple or basic structures.
• Complex structures

The grammar of a language organizes words into sentences. Even within one language there are many ways to do this. The grammar gives language structure. So we can say that the individual words are the building blocks of language, while the grammar provides the cement to assemble words in a way that makes sense.

Vocabulary

In the ICAO rating scale, the descriptor for vocabulary covers:
• Range.
• Accuracy.
• The ability to paraphrase.
• The use of idiomatic expressions.
Range refers to the number of different words a speaker uses. Accuracy looks at how appropriate these words are.
An idiom is a combination of words that have a figurative meaning that is different from the literal meaning of the individual words that make up an idiom. As a result, the meaning of an idiom can only be learned by heart – and not derived. There are 25'000 idioms in English. Not even a native speaker knows all of these idioms!

Paraphrasing describes the ability to express the meaning of an utterance in different ways, using different words. Weak speakers will paraphrase to overcome a communicative obstacle, while confident speakers may paraphrase to give a statement more strength.

Fluency

In the ICAO rating scale, the descriptor for fluency covers:
• Pauses.
• Discourse markers.
• Connectors.
A discourse marker does not change the meaning of a sentence, mainly because it has no meaning of its own. Typical discourse markers are:
• Oh
• Well
• Now
• Then
• You know
• I mean
• like

Connectors are parts of speech that have no meaning of their own. Their purpose is to connect words and sentences. Connectors describe the logical order of events that have occurred:

- however
- therefore
- nonetheless
- because
- first of all
- mainly

Comprehension

In the ICAO rating scale, the descriptor for comprehension covers the ability to accurately understand spoken language. The ability to identify and interpret isolated words and numbers is assessed in paper 1. In paper 2 the assessment focusses on the test taker's ability to understand on a more overarching level – in unexpected or unprepared situations when either ICAO standard phraseology or Plain English are used. One of the biggest problems non-native speakers face is the distinction between literal and intended meaning.

Interaction

In the ICAO rating scale, the descriptor for Interaction covers:
- how informative the response is
- how appropiate the response is
- how immediate the response is
- how the test taker manages the speaker-listener relationship.

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	Pronunciation	Structure	Vocabulary	Fluency	Comprehension	Interactions
5	Pronunciation, stress, rhythm, and intonation **rarely** interfere with ease of understanding.	Basic structures are **consistently** well controlled. Complex structures have errors which **sometimes** interfere with meaning.	Range and accuracy are **sufficient** to communicate effectively on common, concrete and work related topics. Paraphrases **consistently** and successfully.	Speaks at length with relative ease on familiar topics. Makes appropriate use of discourse markers and connectors. Fillers **not** distracting.	Accurate on common, concrete and work-related topics and **mostly** accurate when confronted with an unexpected turn of events/situational complication. Able to comprehend a range of speech varieties and/or registers.	Responses are immediate, appropriate and informative. Manages the speaker – listener relationship effectively.
4	Pronunciation, stress, rhythm, and intonation **sometimes** interfere with ease of understanding.	Basic structures are **usually** well controlled. Errors **in** basic structures may occur, particularly in unexpected circumstances but **rarely** interfere with meaning.	Range and accuracy **usually** sufficient to communicate effectively on common, concrete and work-related topics. **Often** able to paraphrase successfully in unexpected circumstances. Vocabulary is **sometimes** idiomatic.	Produces stretches of language at an appropriate tempo. Limited use of discourse markers and connectors. **Occasional** loss of fluency on transition to spontaneous interaction but this does not prevent effective communication.	**Mostly** accurate on common, concrete and work related topics when the accents or varieties are sufficiently intelligible for an international community of users. Comprehension may be slower and require clarification strategies when confronted with an unexpected turn of events.	Responses are **usually** immediate, appropriate and informative. Initiates and maintains exchanges even when dealing with an unexpected turn of events. Deals adequately with apparent misunderstandings by checking, confirming or clarifying.
3	Pronunciation, stress, rhythm and intonation **frequently** interfere with ease of understanding.	Basic structures are **not always** well controlled. Errors **frequently** interfere with meaning.	Range and accuracy **often** sufficient to communicate on common, concrete and work-related topics but range is limited, word choice is **often** inappropriate. **Often** unable to paraphrase successfully.	Produces stretches of language but phrasing and pausing are **often** inappropriate. Hesitations or slowness may prevent effective communication. Fillers **sometimes** distracting.	**Often** accurate on common, concrete and work-related topics when the accent or variety used is sufficiently intelligible for an international community of users. May fail to understand an unexpected turn of events/ situational complication.	Responses are **sometimes** immediate, appropriate and informative. Able to initiate and maintain exchanges on familiar topics and in predictable situations. **Generally** inadequate when dealing with an unexpected turn of events.

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TEST RESULTS

In most cases your results should be available within three days after completing your test. Sometimes an additional review is required, delaying the availability of the test results by a maximum of six days. The ELPAC test centre administrator will inform you of your results.
Your English Language Proficiency is determined via two tests.

ELPAC Paper 1 is a listening comprehension test. This test consists of recordings of aeronautical conversations, and you will have to answer questions. The first sound files will be very short and test numbers or short word recognition. Gradually the sound files will become longer and towards the end they will involve more than one communication partner. There are no technical or knowledge questions and you should only answer what you hear in the sound file.

ELPAC Paper 2 is an oral interaction test. This test consists of several tasks providing you with an opportunity to speak and interact with the examiners. The first tasks are a reflection of the daily operational environment of air traffic controllers and pilots. Gradually during the test the tasks will require you to step outside of your daily routine communications and apply plain English to answer the questions and interact with the examiner.

Please bear in mind that ELPAC does not assess your aviation knowledge. Therefore there will not be any technical or operational questions. Answers provided are not necessarily correct or wrong, and your opinions are not part of the assessment. The tasks presented to you have been designed to elicit a relevant sample of your English language communications in order to allow the examiners to assess your English Language Proficiency.

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IF YOU FAIL THE TEST

Under ELPAC guidelines, first-time ELPAC test takers may ask for a re-sit soon after their first attempt. If this is not the first ELPAC test for this test taker, the guidelines recommend a minimum of TWO months between two ELPAC tests in order to improve or brush up your English Language Proficiency first.

HOW TO APPLY TO A LEVEL 6

The ELPAC Level 6 test (ELPAC Paper 3) is not used by all ELPAC test centres. ELPAC test takers interested in being assessed for ICAO level 6 should start with the regular ELPAC test. If they achieve ICAO level 5, they may decide to take the ELPAC level 6 test. The ELPAC level 6 test is an additional 20-minute test specifically focussing on the level 6 aspects of the ICAO Rating Scale. The outcome of the ELPAC level 6 test is a pass or a fail, which will result in a final ICAO level 6 or ICAO level 5.

HOW TO APPEAL

Every ELPAC test taker is entitled to initiate an appeal. This shall be done within 14 days after receiving the results (certificate) of the ELPAC test from the ELPAC test centre administrator. In order to start the appeal process, the test taker shall complete the ELPAC appeal form and give this to the ELPAC test centre administrator. The ELPAC test centre administrator shall confirm the start of the appeal process to the test taker. The appeals process shall be completed within 4 weeks. An appeal may relate to one or more of the following aspects of the ELPAC test:

• ELPAC paper 1 technical issues.
• ELPAC paper 1 room issues.
• ELAPC paper 1 noise issues.
• ELPAC paper 2 examiner behavior.
• ELPAC paper 2 room issues.

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- ELPAC paper 2 noise issues.
- ELPAC paper 3 examiner behavior.
- ELPAC paper 3 room issues.
- ELPAC paper 3 noise issues.

ELPAC APPEAL FORM

ELPAC candidate name:			
ELPAC test centre:			
ELPAC test date:	Date paper 1	Date paper 2	Date paper 3
Appeal Date:		Candidate Signature	
Appeal form accepted by:	Name	Date	Signature

Reason(s) for appeal.

Please specify what happened and how you think your ELPAC test has been affected:

Actions taken by ELPAC test centre administrator:

Outcome of the appeal evaluation:

TEST SYSTEM SECURITY

The ELPAC test system contains sensitive information. It depends on the nature of the data, but in general sensitive information could be: user

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logins, passwords, user details (such as names, addresses, contact details, test results, etc.). This information shall not be transmitted unencrypted.
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The communication between the ELPAC test system and the user is encrypted. The Secure Sockets Layer (SSL) technology is an industry standard and the current security technology for establishing an encrypted link between a browser (client) and a web server. This protocol provides encrypted, authenticated communications across the Internet and ensures that all data passed between client and server remains private and integral. It is based on a public/private key technology and uses certificates which typically contain the domain name and details about the website operator (e.g. company name, address, geographical location, etc.).

Test system database backup

The ELPAC test system database(s) are located in Bergen and in Oslo, Norway. The information in the ELPAC test system databases is continuously synchronised. Every night a hard copy back up is made.

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