BRITISH COUNCIL

Aptis General Technical Manual

What is the technical manual?

The manual describes the content and technical properties of Aptis General, the standard English language assessment product offered within the Aptis test system.

The manual provides information on:

- **The theoretical framework which has shaped the development of the Aptis test system.** The Aptis test system was based primarily on a test development and validation model advanced by O'Sullivan (2011a, 2015a), O'Sullivan and Weir (2011), and Weir (2005). In practice, the socio-cognitive model is reflected in Aptis in the design of the underlying test and scoring systems. These are operationalised using detailed specifications, again based on the socio-cognitive approach, and supported by exemplar tasks and items as reflected in the sample tests available on the Aptis website www.britishcouncil.org/exams/aptis.

- **The content of the Aptis General test.** The CEFR has been used from the outset to provide a descriptive framework of proficiency to structure the levels targeted and as starting points for task design and content selection. The test is primarily a computer-based (non-adaptive) test which can measure all four skills in addition to grammatical and vocabulary knowledge.

- **How the Aptis General test is scored.** The Core, Reading and Listening components are scored automatically within the computer delivery system. This ensures that accurate results are available immediately following testing. Trained human raters mark the Speaking and Writing components, using an online rating system.

- **The technical measurement properties of the Aptis General test, such as reliability.** Aptis reliability measurements achieve the standards expected of high-stakes exams in both the receptive and productive skill components.

Intended Audience

- Assessment researchers
- Language testing specialists
- Decision makers of organisations

The British Council's language assessment research agenda is comprehensive and transparent.

The following publications are available on our website:

- Aptis Results and Scoring
- Technical Reports
- Assessment Research Awards and Grants Reports
- British Council Validation Series
- English Impact

The technical manual is **not** intended as a test preparation guide for test takers although some material may be useful in better understanding test tasks for teachers and trainers preparing candidates to take the test. Support materials for these groups are provided separately in the Aptis Candidate Guide.

Key Terms

CEFR

The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment. **The CEFR has been incorporated into the Aptis system from the design and development stage.**

Reliability

Reliability refers to the consistency of scores or test results and is a fundamental criterion of a good test. It is regarded as an attribute of test validity. **Aptis scoring reliability meets what is expected of high-stakes exams.**

Validity

Validity refers to 'the degree to which' or 'the accuracy with which' an assessment measures what it is supposed to measure. A test could be valid for some uses for some test takers, but not for others. **The technical manual outlines the test takers, target language use domain, and test purpose for which Aptis scores are valid.**

New to assessment?
Become familiar with language testing terminology by referencing the **A-Z Assessment Glossary.**

A number of free resources including animated videos, accompanying worksheets, and online training are available through The British Council's **How Language Assessment Works series**.

What's in the technical manual?

The Aptis Test System	▪ Model of test development and validation
Socio-cognitive validation model (O'Sullivan and Weir)

▪ Localisation
Adaptations for specific contexts

▪ Overview of current variants
Aptis General, Aptis for Teachers, Aptis Advanced, Aptis for Teens |
| **Aptis General** | **Overview of typical test takers**
Test system

▪ Test purpose
Outlines possible situations in which Aptis is an ideal assessment

▪ Target language use (TLU) domain
Range and scope of communicative tasks

▪ Test components
Computer-based four skills test

▪ Mode of delivery
Offering test users flexibility and convenience

▪ Administration and security
Offering guidance and support from The British Council

Scoring

▪ Overview of scoring and feedback
Relationship between score elements and reporting

▪ Reliability of receptive skill components
Consistency of reading and listening scores

▪ Reliability of productive skill components
Consistency of speaking and writing scores, rater reliability

▪ Precision of scoring: Standard Error of Measurement
Confidence in the Aptis scoring system

▪ CEFR level allocations
Calculation of CEFR skill levels and overall score |
| **Other Documentation** | **Description of the test production process**
▪ Distinguishing between development and production cycles
▪ The production cycle
▪ Accommodations
▪ Overview of other documentation on research and validation |
| **Appendices** | ▪ Global scale CEFR
▪ Task specifications
▪ Sample score reports
▪ Flow chart of the item and test production cycle
▪ Glossary |

Educators may find components in the appendices of practical use. Distinct from other assessments, Aptis task specifications are included in the Technical Manual. These detailed documents clearly describe the design and structure of test items and can be useful for developing teaching materials focusing on specific language areas.