

# Test Takers' Perceptions towards BEC Exams: a Case Study of a Russian University

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This is a qualitative study of candidates' motivation to take BEC exams and their expectations toward the exam results, which was conducted at the Cambridge Exam Preparation Center in a Russian university. The research dataset comprised 33 participants who took part in face-to-face, in-depth, semi-structured interviews. Overall, candidates showed a positive attitude to BEC at different exam levels. The main reasons for preparing for and taking the exams were extrinsic and defined by the institutional environment. The respondents opted for BEC exams as they intended to receive an international education (master's level) and/or build a successful career in international organizations. The study also revealed a connection between candidates' expectations toward exam results and their age and level of language proficiency.

*Keywords:* international English language exams, BEC, qualitative study, Russia, motivation, expectations

Standardised English language tests have expanded phenomenally over the past two decades, with over 5 million Cambridge English exams taken in 130 countries in 2014 according to Cambridge English Annual Review 2014. Globalised Business English proficiency tests such as BEC (Business English Certificates) are increasingly playing the role

of gatekeepers around the world. Leading employers, educational institutions, and governments trust and accept BEC worldwide. Many universities include BEC preparation courses into their curriculum. In Russia, one such university is the National Research University Higher School of Economics (hereafter abbreviated HSE).

Although the literature on standardised English language exams (mainly IELTS and TOEFL) is extensive, candidates' perceptions toward them, namely the reasons for taking the exams and test-takers' expectations toward the exam results, remains understudied. However, the necessity of empirical research investigating this issue is obvious, because the outcomes of such research will not only allow educators to work out some recommendations for the organisation of exam preparation courses but can also provide an adequate basis for practice-based policy-making. In this article, we extend the literature on standardised English language exams by using a dataset from a Russian university (HSE) to investigate candidates' motivation and their predicted BEC performance. In doing so, the current study supplements existing literature in several important ways. First, to our knowledge, there are no papers in which test takers' attitudes toward business-oriented English exams such as BEC were explored. For example, Suryaningsih (2014) considered the perceptions and attitudes of students to the content of IELTS and TOEFL; Cheng and DeLuca (2011) dealt with test takers' perceptions toward the validity of a number of large-scale English language tests, namely TOEFL, IELTS, HKALE (Hong Kong Advanced Level Examination–English Language), and LPAT (Language Proficiency Assessment for Teachers of English), whereas studies of BEC are rather fragmented.

Second, there are no papers studying Russian students' perceptions toward standardised exams in the context of a Russian university. For instance, Gardiner and Howlet (2016) explored students' perceptions of university gateway tests (IELTS, PTE-A, CAE, and TOEFL iBT) in Australia. The participants were from China, Brazil, Saudi Arabia, and Taiwan. He and Shi (2008) investigated Chinese students' perceptions of two standardised English proficiency writing tests at a Canadian university.

## Literature Review

Existing literature focuses on various phenomena related to standardised English language exams and a number of researchers have studied the construct validity and reliability of the most widespread exams, namely IELTS and TOEFL (Chalhoub-Deville & Turner, 2000; Zahedi & Shamsaee, 2012). Construct validity relates to meaningfulness and appropriacy of the test score interpretation (Bachman & Palmer, 1996). Chalhoub-Deville and Turner (2000) claimed that the validation process of IELTS, which is a research-based test, is not a single action but an ongoing process. However, the study also call attention to the fact that initially IELTS was created to be used in the United Kingdom and Australia, but since IELTS is now being

more extensively used in the USA and Canada, the adequacy of the test to the language differences in North America may become a matter for discussion. Zahedi and Shamsaee (2012) in their work compared IELTS candidates' speaking test scores with their scores in the other three tests (reading, listening and writing), as well as with their overall result. The analysis showed a strong correlation between them, which proves meaningfulness and appropriacy of IELTS speaking test. The authors conclude that the construct validity of the IELTS speaking test almost never causes doubt.

Another aspect being researched is test reliability which is understood as consistency of measurement (Bachman & Palmer, 1996). Chalhoub-Deville and Turner (2000) explored the reliability of the IELTS speaking test, and concluded that all variables that affect test scores, except the language itself, should be seen as measurement error. Zahedi and Shamsaee (2012) note that problems arise if an interviewer applies subjective ratings when assessing candidates' skills. Furthermore, different interviewers may use different questioning styles and approaches, which can influence the way candidates respond at the exam (Brown, 2003). Nevertheless, reliability is considered positive with respect to consistency of assessment according to the rating scale provided that all interviewers use open-ended items in interviews (Chalhoub-Deville & Turner, 2000).

Ockey, Kayama, Setoguchi, and Sun's study (2015) was set out to determine how much Japanese university students' performance on the TOEFL iBT speaking section is associated with other indicators of their abilities to communicate orally in an academic English environment. The authors found strong relationships between TOEFL iBT speaking scores and university tasks; the correlations between TOEFL iBT speaking scores and components of oral ability were found to be high or moderate.

Standardised English language exams (mainly IELTS and TOEFL) were also investigated as predictors of future academic performance (Graham, 1987) and academic language performance (Bayliss & Ingram, 2006; Kokhan, 2013). Although these exams were found to have some predictive value, the prediction of long-term academic performance on the basis of the language exams results alone remains a difficult task (Permyakova & Sheveleva, 2013).

Despite the fact that motivation is considered to be one of the most significant and well-studied determinants of second language learners' performance, research on motivation in the context of standardised English language exams seems to be quite scarce. Cheng et al. (2014) studied the motivation of test-takers in connection with test anxiety and test performance. The data comprised

responses of candidates taking Canadian Academic English Language (CAEL) Assessment in Canada, the College English Test (CET) in the People's Republic of China, and the General English Proficiency Test (GEPT) in Taiwan. The authors concluded that there are a number of personal and social contextual factors which affect motivation and test anxiety, leading to performance differences across the three testing contexts. Zheng and Wei (2014) who also investigated the interconnection between students' performance on the Pearson Test of English Academic (PTE Academic) and their motivation and anxiety-related factors, came to similar conclusions. They found that the observed score differences between Chinese and Indian test takers may be partially explained by the variance in their affective factors in English learning and testing.

Test-takers' expectations have been studied in terms of motivation, in the framework of expectancy-value motivation theory which posits that learners' "choice, persistence, and performance can be explained by their beliefs about how well they will do on the activity and the extent to which they value the activity" (Wigfield & Eccles, 2000, p. 68). According to expectancy-value theory, when dealing with a task and making related choices, students tend to ask themselves two questions: "Do I want to do it?" and "Can I do it?" (Eccles & Wigfield, 2002). If they answer in the positive to both, they are more likely to become involved in the task and cope with it successfully (Xie & Andrews, 2013, p. 53).

Gosa (2004) studied Romanian students and found that their expectations of assessment was the single most crucial factor that explains students' perspectives on teaching and learning activities. The author concluded that learners' expectations of assessment not only affected their attitudes toward teaching, but also their own learning. Nine out of the 10 respondents chose not to prepare for the test at all because they expected the test to be too easy. Likewise, Green (2007), having compared an IELTS preparation course with university language courses, concluded that individual learners' goals and their "understanding of test demand" (p. 93) had a larger influence on their learning outcomes than their choice of a course and its content.

In Russia, the demand for specialists having a good command of Business English is increasing each year. It is connected with the rise in the number of multinational companies operating in Russia and the desire of students and professionals to improve their career opportunities. Developed in the 1990's to be suitable for Chinese test-takers with a low language level, today the BEC examination is considered globally to be the best choice for proving business-related language skills. The exam is a set of three

tests, each of which targets a distinct level of ability. Like the Cambridge ESOL Main Suite examinations, the BEC exams have been linked to the Common European and ALTE frameworks. All three levels of the BEC suite comprise papers aimed to assess candidates' proficiency in the four skills of listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Additionally, the different papers offer a wide variety of response formats via the inclusion of different tasks and item types within each skill's paper. This whole approach allows educators to view the three examinations not simply as unique measures, or even as a set of interconnected measures which cover a broad range of language abilities within a business context, but essentially as a single unit, with individual elements focused on particular criterion levels of proficiency (O'Sullivan, 2006, p. 84-85).

The current article is intended to contribute to making standardised English language exams an object of systematic theoretical and empirical study, and to fill the gap in research by investigating candidates' attitudes to Business English exams, specifically professional exams offered by Cambridge English Language Assessment.

## Method

The study addressed the following research questions.

### Research questions

1. What motivates the candidates to take the exam?
2. What shapes their expectations towards the exam?

### Procedure

This research was carried out at the Perm campus of the National Research University – Higher School of Economics (HSE) which is one of the leading Russian higher educational institutions. It offers bachelor's and master's degree programmes in economics and management, IT and social sciences. As the HSE preparation center organises preparatory courses for all three levels of BEC exams: BEC Preliminary, BEC Vantage, and BEC Higher, three groups of students were interviewed.

The research was conducted in two stages and employed the following methods and techniques.

In Stage 1 (November-December 2013) a questionnaire was developed to investigate what had motivated students to choose these professional exams and their expectations toward the exam results. This allowed the authors to explore the benefits attributable

to BEC and the perception of the preparatory courses' value.

The questions in the questionnaire aimed at learning about candidates' motivation were:

- *Why did you decide to prepare for and take a BEC exam?*
- *Why do you want to get a Business English Certificate?*
- *Do you agree with the statement that preparing for the BEC you feel more motivated to study English?*

The question about test-takers' expectations towards the exam was formulated as follows:

- *What are your expectations towards your exam results?*

In Stage 2, after an official exam (May-July 2014), a semi-structured interview was performed with all of the candidates in order to find out how they felt during the exam, whether their expectations met performance, whether they felt prepared, and what their expectations toward the result were.

Stage 2 questions regarding expectations were:

- *Do you think you are prepared for the exam?*
- *Why do you think so?*
- *What are your expectations towards your exam results?*

## Participants

The dataset included: 1) 33 candidates in Stage 1 attending BEC preparation courses at HSE-Perm Cambridge Exam Preparation Centre; 2) 33 candidates in Stage 2 who took the exam at the same site. The sample consisted of HSE students and employees of different enterprises in the Perm region. Table 1 shows the sample composition by gender and age.

Table 1  
*Gender and age distribution of the sample*

	Number of respondents		Age	
	Stage 1	Stage 2	Range	Average
BEC Preliminary	10 (5F, 5M)	10 (5F, 5M)	22-58	39
BEC Vantage	12 (10F, 2M)	15 (12F, 3M)	21-37	23
BEC Higher	11 (7F, 4M)	8 (6F, 2M)	20-22	21
Total	33 (22F, 11M)	33 (23F, 10M)	20-58	27,6

## Results

### Motivation

The reasons for choosing to prepare for a BEC exam that respondents gave were mainly extrinsic and defined by the institutional environment. They can be

divided into four groups:

1. career-related, such as employer's requirements and the need to have proof of their English language abilities or the necessity of having the certificate "for future employment", "to get a job abroad";
2. studies-related, namely, plans to continue their studies and get a master's degree where a BEC certificate is one of the requirements;
3. intrinsic motivation to improve their language skills;
4. convenience – the preparation takes place in their university.

The respondents' answers are summarised in Table 2.

Table 2  
*Reasons for choosing to prepare for a BEC exam*

Reasons	BEC Preliminary	BEC Vantage	BEC Higher	Total
Career-related	7	3	5	15
Studies-related	-	5	8	13
Intrinsic motivation	3	4	2	9
Convenience	-	2	-	2

As can be seen from the table, test takers mainly chose to prepare for a BEC exam for career-related reasons – this option was chosen by almost half of all respondents and was the most popular reason among BEC Preliminary test takers. Studies-related reasons were mentioned only by BEC Vantage and BEC Higher candidates. This can be explained by the fact that all of the candidates were bachelor-level students. Intrinsic motivation is present in the answers of all of the groups of test takers but it is weaker among BEC Higher candidates (approximately one fifth gave this reason compared to about a third among BEC Preliminary and BEC Vantage test takers). This can probably be explained by the high level of language proficiency BEC Higher candidates already have so that by the time they started exam preparation they had set other goals to achieve.

The respondents' reasons for their desire to get a BEC certificate were fivefold:

1. career-related reasons, i.e. employer's requirements or future employment in Russia or abroad;
2. studies-related reasons: intention to continue studies for a master's degree in Russia or abroad;
3. non-specified personal reasons;
4. the certificate is a good proof of their English language skills;
5. "because it is for life", i.e. there is no expiration

date.

The candidates' answers to the second question are summarised in Table 3.

**Table 3**  
*Reasons for the intention to get a BEC certificate*

Reasons	BEC Preliminary	BEC Vantage	BEC Higher	Total
Career-related	5	3	4	12
Studies-related	-	5	8	13
Personal reasons	5	-	-	5
Proof of language skills	-	3	1	4
"For life"	-	2	1	3

The table shows that career and studies-related reasons dominated the answers. Personal reasons were given only by BEC Preliminary test takers who did not mention that the certificate is a proof of language skills or that it is "for life" like BEC Vantage and BEC Higher candidates did.

Table 4 summarises the respondents' answers to the question about the candidates' motivation to study English that was triggered by the preparation for the exam.

**Table 4**  
*Perceptions of BEC exams influence on motivation to study English*

	Agree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree
BEC Preliminary	10	-	-
BEC Vantage	11	1	-
BEC Higher	9	2	-
Total	30	3	-

All BEC Preliminary students and a vast majority of BEC Vantage and BEC Higher candidates agree that they felt more motivated to study English while preparing for the exam. Investigating the reasons why three respondents disagreed with this statement was a perspective for the second stage of the research

**Candidates' expectations towards the exam.**

*Stage 1.* Table 5 presents expected exam grades with the number of answers marked by respondents. It should be mentioned that the percentage range for expected exam results was given in the questionnaire for the respondents' convenience:

- BEC Preliminary: below C – less than 40 %; C – 40-64 %; B – 65-79 %; A – more than 80 %;
- BEC Vantage: below C – less than 60 %; C – 60-74 %; B – 75-79 %; A – 80-100 %;
- BEC Higher: below C – less than 60 %; C – 60-74 %; B – 75-79 %; A – 80-100 %.

**Table 5**  
*Candidates' expectations about the exams results*

		Below C	C	B	A
Speaking	BEC Preliminary	1	5	4	-
	BEC Vantage	2	7	1	2
	BEC Higher	-	6	2	3
	Total	3	18	7	5
Writing	BEC Preliminary	-	6	4	-
	BEC Vantage	2	4	4	2
	BEC Higher	-	4	5	2
	Total	2	14	13	4
Listening	BEC Preliminary	-	4	5	1
	BEC Vantage	2	4	4	2
	BEC Higher	1	4	2	4
	Total	3	12	11	7
Reading	BEC Preliminary	-	2	7	1
	BEC Vantage	2	4	4	2
	BEC Higher	-	2	7	2
	Total	2	8	18	5

The data reveal that in the majority of cases students expected B and C grades. Overall, the reading section is perceived to be the easiest one where candidates expected to get more A and B grades; while listening is seen as the most challenging section where only a few students expected to get A or B grades.

*Stage 2.* The candidates' perceptions of their preparedness for the exam are reflected in Table 6.

**Table 6**  
*Students' perceptions of their preparedness for the exam*

	Yes	No	Neither yes nor no
BEC Preliminary	6	2	2
BEC Vantage	9	3	3
BEC Higher	5	1	2
Total	20	6	7

Overall, most test takers felt that they were ready for the exam; about a fifth thought they were not well prepared, and about a fifth of the respondents found it difficult to answer this question.

Reasons for feeling ready for the exam were twofold. Some candidates mentioned that either they had been studying hard to prepare for it, putting a lot of effort into preparation or the preparation courses were very helpful and well structured.

The test takers who considered themselves not ready said that it was difficult to combine exam preparation and other things (work or studies) and they did not have enough time for preparation or lacked some necessary skills (range of vocabulary, listening skills).

Those who could not give a definite answer to this question said they did not have enough time for preparation or they had missed a lot of classes.

Table 7 gives information about expected exam grades with the number of answers marked by candidates. Like in Stage 1, the percentage range for expected exam results was given in the questionnaire for the respondents' convenience:

- BEC Preliminary: below C – less than 40 %; C – 40-64 %; B – 65-79 %; A – more than 80 %;
- BEC Vantage: below C – less than 60 %; C – 60-74 %; B – 75-79 %; A – 80-100 %;
- BEC Higher: below C – less than 60 %; C – 60-74 %; B – 75-79 %; A – 80-100 %.

Table 7  
*Candidates' expectations about the exams results*

		Below C	C	B	A
Speaking	BEC Preliminary	1	3	6	-
	BEC Vantage	3	8	1	3
	BEC Higher	1	2	3	2
	Total	4	13	10	5
Writing	BEC Preliminary	1	5	3	1
	BEC Vantage	1	9	4	1
	BEC Higher	1	4	2	1
	Total	3	18	9	3
Listening	BEC Preliminary	3	6	1	-
	BEC Vantage	3	7	5	-
	BEC Higher	3	-	5	-
	Total	9	13	11	0
Reading	BEC Preliminary	-	2	8	-
	BEC Vantage	4	8	3	-
	BEC Higher	1	3	4	-
	Total	5	13	15	0

The largest number of candidates expected to receive a C grade for all of the test sections except Reading for which almost a half chose a B grade. Overall, BEC Preliminary candidates seemed to be the most optimistic marking B grades more frequently than others (almost half of the responses).

The reasons for preparing for and taking a BEC exam identified in the survey were mainly extrinsic and defined by the institutional environment, the most frequent ones being career-related and studies-related, i.e. requirements for getting a master's degree.

There is universal agreement among the three groups about the increase in their motivation to study English caused by exam preparation.

According to the results of the survey, there was a positive dependence of candidates' expectations about the exam results and the exam level, i.e. expectations toward the exam results grew with increases in the

exam's level of difficulty. This tendency might be explained by the average age in three groups in this research context – the average age decreased with the level of exam. This finding supports Bordia, Wales, Pittam, and Gallois' claim (2006) that younger age groups are characterised with less critical perceptions of their abilities and demonstrate higher ambitions overall.

Respondents regarded exam preparation as advantageous because it helps to support and improve their English language proficiency, and obtaining a Business English certificate as useful because it will improve their career prospects or educational opportunities.

Respondents either did not report any disadvantages in preparing for BEC exams or complained about the lack of preparation time. A large majority of students did not name any disadvantages in obtaining a Business English Certificate.

Most candidates felt prepared for the exam due to their personal efforts and regular course attendance. Those test takers who could not give a definite answer about their preparedness referred to non-exam-dependent reasons such as time constraints, inability to combine work and study, and missing classes. The most frequently mentioned problems during the exam were the perceived lack of time for completing all the tasks, noise interference during listening, tiredness by the end of the written part, and vocabulary difficulties.

Expectations for exam performance were as follows: the most frequently expected grade for BEC Preliminary and BEC Higher candidates was a B; BEC Vantage candidates chose Cs. The Listening section of the exams seemed to be the most difficult because almost a third of test takers expect to get a grade below a C.

BEC exam-takers might take another international English-language exam for such reasons as job requirements, positive feedback on the current exam, educational and career opportunities, and for language practice.

## Discussion

### Research question 1. What motivates the candidates to take the exam?

Throughout all three levels, test takers displayed obvious dominance of extrinsic motivation when preparing for and taking BEC exams ("employer's requirements", "to get a master's degree", "for career"). This fact coincides with the reasons for their intention to obtain BEC certificates, where the most common ones were international education or employment. This trend is linked with the candidates' age and

institutional university requirements at the HSE.

Almost all candidates reported increased motivation to study English during their preparation for BEC exams. It can be put down to clear and structured short-term goals as opposed to life-long language learning where progress might be hard to gauge.

Respondents at the two higher levels (Vantage, Higher) also expressed the opinion that preparation for the exam helps to support and enhance their language skills especially in terms of vocabulary. These findings could be considered further evidence that exam content and exam level correspond to respondents' needs in terms of both language and professional development. Moreover, candidates at all three levels placed a high value on Business English certificates as they are believed to be "good official proof" of students' English language proficiency levels.

**Table 8**  
*Expectation toward BEC Preliminary results in Stage 1, Stage 2 and certificate results*

	Below C (less than 40 %)	C (40–64%)	B (65–79%)	A (more than 80%)
<b>Speaking</b>				
Stage 1	1	5	4	
Stage 2	1	3	6	
Certificate			8	2
<b>Writing</b>				
Stage 1		6	4	
Stage 2	1	5	3	1
Certificate		5	5	
<b>Listening</b>				
Stage1		4	5	1
Stage2	3	6	1	
Certificate	5	4		1
<b>Reading</b>				
Stage 1		2	7	1
Stage2		2	8	
Certificate		2	5	3

**Research question 2. What shapes the candidates' expectations towards the exam results?**

**BEC Preliminary.** Table 8 below summarises changes in expectations toward BEC Preliminary results in Stage 1, Stage 2, and actual results (certificates).

In Stage 1, expectations toward exam results leaned toward the average for all sections. Test takers

expected to receive slightly lower marks for productive skills than for receptive ones – Listening, and especially Reading. However, after the exam, students' expectations were higher for Speaking and Reading and lower for Listening; expectations for Writing stayed almost the same, with individuals showing the lowest and highest performance.

Certificate results show that the candidates' expectations for Writing and Listening were met, whereas actual results exceeded expectations for Reading and even more noticeably for Speaking. Overall, in Stage 2, after the exam, predictions in this group were almost correct, except for Speaking.

The fact that the results were justified and even surpassed expectations might lead to an enhanced positive image of exam preparation and the exam itself, hence, more sustained motivation for study. This conclusion is also aligned with the finding that many BEC Preliminary test takers expressed a willingness to continue the course of study.

**BEC Vantage.** Table 9 summarises changes in candidates' expectations toward BEC Vantage results in Stage 1, Stage 2, and certificate results..

**Table 9**  
*Expectations toward BEC Vantage results in Stage 1, Stage 2 and certificate results*

	Below C (less than 60%)	C (60–74%)	B (75–79%)	A (80–100%)
<b>Speaking</b>				
Stage 1	2	7	1	2
Stage 2	3	8	1	3
Certificate		10	5	
<b>Writing</b>				
Stage 1	2	4	4	2
Stage 2	1	9	4	1
Certificate	1	14		
<b>Listening</b>				
Stage 1	2	4	4	2
Stage 2	3	7	5	
Certificate	4	7	4	
<b>Reading</b>				
Stage 1	2	4	4	2
Stage 2	3	7	5	
Certificate	4	7	4	

The table shows that in Stage 1 expectations tend toward the middle of the scale except for Speaking where expectations are lower. Expectations after the exam decreased for all four parts despite the fact that

the students said they felt prepared for the exam. [Note: we take into account the increased number of samples for the second part of the research]. In regard to the comparison with the actual exam results, the majority of expectations for Speaking were fulfilled, with the exception of the highest and lowest expectations. All higher expectations for Writing were not met as well as the highest grade expectations for Listening. By contrast, the highest initial expectations for Reading were rewarded while the other expected grades were justified accordingly.

**BEC Higher.** Table 10 below summarises changes in expectations toward BEC Higher results in Stage 1, Stage 2, and certificate results.

Table 10  
*Expectations toward BEC Higher results in Stage 1, Stage 2 and certificate results*

	Below C (less than 60%)	C (60–74%)	B (75–79%)	A (80–100%)
Speaking				
Stage 1		6	2	3
Stage 2	1	2	3	2
Certificate		4	3	1
Writing				
Stage 1		4	5	2
Stage 2	1	4	2	1
Certificate	6	1	1	
Listening				
Stage 1	1	4	2	4
Stage 2	3		5	
Certificate	6	1		1
Reading				
Stage 1		2	7	2
Stage 2	1	3	4	
Certificate	5	2		1

The table above shows that initial expectations for Speaking were changed to more evenly distributed ones after the exam in Stage 2, and were finally matched by actual results. This means that generally positive expectations for Speaking at the BEC Higher level led to a generally successful performance. However, regarding Writing, the first two sets of expectations followed the same pattern as with Speaking, but the results were quite the opposite since the majority of candidates (6 out of 8) did not achieve the borderline level of 60%. As for Listening, in Stage 1 candidates' expectations were high as well, but were lowered after the exam, yet the performance was low, well below the expectations of the two stages. The same pattern is

observed in Reading.

To sum up, there is a connection between expectations toward exam performance and candidates' age and level of proficiency. For older candidates and lower levels of the exam, more realistic expectations were formed. For younger candidates and higher levels of the exam, more unjustifiable expectations were created, especially before the preparation course. In the meanwhile, the preparation course and exam situation built up more realistic expectations, with the exception of younger candidates at the BEC Higher level.

## Conclusion

The research delivers outcomes in three areas: 1) candidate profiles; 2) factors influencing BEC exam perceptions, 3) implications for organizational educational policies in English teaching and learning.

The evidence gathered indicates that in the HSE institutional setting BEC exams appeal to young, ambitious, goal-oriented candidates who aim to receive an international education (master's level) and/or build a successful career in international organizations. The overwhelming majority of test takers were extrinsically motivated by organizational standards and requirements. Candidates were determined to enhance their English language proficiency by preparing for and taking other international English language examinations.

Expectations toward exams depended on age, professional background, and level of language proficiency. Candidates regarded obtaining BEC certificates as rewarding.

Students placed a high value on getting a BEC certificate while in university, which adds to the status of the organisation in the competitive environment. Therefore, considering the increased motivation of students learning English for BEC exams and the perceived language progress through obtaining BEC certificates, it would be reasonable to conclude that the incorporation of official BEC exams into the main university curriculum would be an advantageous administrative top-level decision at the HSE.

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