# FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQs) WORKPLACE LITERACY AND NUMERACY (WPLN) ASSESSMENT TRANSITION

#### **PART 1: BACKGROUND**

#### 1 What is WPLN?

Literacy and numeracy are important foundational employability skills that help workers access job and training opportunities. The Employability Skills (ES) Workforce Skills Qualification (WSQ) Workplace Literacy and Numeracy (WPLN) programme was introduced by the then-Workforce Development Agency (WDA)/now-SkillsFuture Singapore Agency (SSG) in 2004 to make workplace literacy and numeracy training and assessment more relevant and accessible to adult learners. The WPLN programme comprises training courses and assessment for the four language skills in English (Reading, Listening, Speaking, and Writing), as well as for Numeracy, required to function in work and personal environments.

The WPLN assessment includes independent tests on Reading, Listening, Speaking, Writing and Numeracy. Before applying for WPLN training, individuals go through the assessments to ascertain their current level of proficiency for each WPLN skill. The results are then used to help enrol individuals in the suitable level of WPLN training, through the use of a Training Recommendation.

#### 2 What is the WPLN assessment transition about?

SSG will be transiting to a new assessment system for the WPLN programme w.e.f. **2 Jan 2020**. SSG has appointed British Council (Singapore) Limited to administer new assessments for the WPLN programme, and to take over the functions currently undertaken by SSG's Centre of Employability Skills (CES).

CES will cease operations on 31 Dec 2019. To facilitate the switchover to the new assessment system, there will be a **transition period from 14 Dec 2019 to 1 Jan 2020** where the current WPLN assessments will not be administered. The last date to sit for the current WPLN assessments in on **13 Dec 2019**.

[Please see also Part 3: WPLN Assessment Transition Period: Critical Cut-Off Dates and Other Important Information.]

### 3 What are the benefits of the new WPLN assessments?

The new Workplace Literacy (WPL) assessments are benchmarked to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), which is an internationally recognised standard for describing language proficiency. Test-takers taking the new WPL assessments can find out their CEFR level for each literacy skill (Reading, Listening, Speaking, and Writing) by comparing their test results against the benchmarked CEFR levels on British Council's website.

Having results articulated against the CEFR could be useful to test-takers who wish to compare their WPL achievements against:

- Other international English language proficiency qualifications such as International English Language Testing System (IELTS) and Test of English for International Communication (TOEIC).
- English language proficiency requirements set by organisations/institutions overseas.

The benchmarked skill scores for the new WPL assessments against the CEFR levels can be found on British Council's website at: <a href="https://www.britishcouncil.sg/exam/wpln">https://www.britishcouncil.sg/exam/wpln</a> from end-Oct 2019.

#### 4 What is the Common European Framework for Reference for Languages (CEFR)?

The Council of Europe's Common European Framework of Reference for Language (CEFR) is a series of description of abilities which can be applied to any language. These descriptions can be used to set clear targets for achievements within language learning, to help define language proficiency levels, and to interpret language qualifications. It has become accepted as a way of benchmarking language ability, not only within Europe but worldwide, and plays a central role in language and education policy.

The CEFR organises language proficiency in six levels, A1 to C2, which can be regrouped into three broad levels: Basic User, Independent User and Proficient User. The levels are defined through 'can-do' descriptors. Further information about the CEFR level descriptors can be found at: <a href="https://www.coe.int/en/web/common-european-framework-reference-languages/table-1-cefr-3.3-common-reference-levels-global-scale.">https://www.coe.int/en/web/common-european-framework-reference-languages/table-1-cefr-3.3-common-reference-levels-global-scale.</a>

### 5 What is the name of the new WPLN assessments?

There is no change in the name.

#### PART 2: ABOUT THE NEW WPLN ASSESSMENTS

#### NEW WPLN ASSESSMENTS – COMPONENTS, FORMAT AND TEST STRUCTURE

What are the new WPLN assessments like? Are there any changes to the assessment components?

The new WPLN assessments similarly comprise standalone tests for Reading, Listening, Speaking, Writing, and Numeracy, and produce separate results for each of these skills. There is an additional component for the literacy assessment, which is the **Core Grammar and Vocabulary component**.

#### 7 What is the Core Grammar and Vocabulary component?

The **Core Grammar and Vocabulary is a compulsory component of the new** <u>literacy</u> **assessment**. Essentially, the Grammar and Vocabulary component forms the core of the new literacy assessment, and the test-taker adds on the other literacy skills (Reading, Listening, Speaking and/or Writing) according to his/her needs.

The test-taker will take the Core Grammar and Vocabulary component **only once per test package**, regardless of the number of literacy skills he/she has selected for the test package. A test package can comprise any combination of assessments for literacy and numeracy skills, depending on the individual test-takers' needs. Test-takers must take all assessments in a test package on the **same day**.

[Please see also **Q29.**]

#### 8 What is the format of the new WPLN assessments?

The table below outlines the test structure of each assessment:

Assessment	Test Design	No. of	Maximum Duration
Component		Items	

Core Grammar	Two parts, comprising:	50	25 minutes
and	Part 1: Grammar	questions	
Vocabulary	Part 2: Vocabulary		
Reading	Four parts, comprising:	25 tasks	35 minutes
	Part 1: Sentence		
	comprehension		
	Part 2: Text cohesion		
	Part 3: Opinion Matching		
	Part 4: Long text		
	comprehension		
Listening	Four parts, comprising:	25 tasks	40 minutes
	Part 1: Word and number		
	recognition		
	Part 2: Information matching		
	Part 3: Monologue		
	comprehension		
	Part 4: Opinion matching		
Speaking	Four parts, comprising:	4 tasks	12 minutes
	Part 1: Personal information		
	<ul> <li>Part 2: Describe, compare,</li> </ul>		
	provide reasons and		
	explanations		
	<ul> <li>Part 3: Describe, compare,</li> </ul>		
	provide reasons and		
	explanations		
	Part 4: Discuss personal opinion		
	and experience on an abstract		
	topic		
Writing	Four parts, comprising:	4 tasks	50 minutes
	Part 1: Word-level writing		
	Part 2: Short text writing		
	Part 3: Three written responses		
	to questions		
	Part 4: Formal and informal		
	writing		
Numeracy	Two parts, comprising a mixture of	50 items	75 minutes
	multiple choice questions and short		
	answer questions.		
	An onscreen calculator is provided		
	for the second part of the test.		

Each assessment employs a variety of task types and response formats. For more details about the new assessments, including the test structure and format, please refer to the Candidate Guide available on British Council's website at:

https://www.britishcouncil.sg/exam/wpln.

### 9 Are the new Listening and Speaking assessments read out by British accents?

The audio recordings for the new Listening and Speaking assessments are localised.

#### 10 How are the new WPLN assessments conducted?

Similar to the current assessments, the new WPLN assessments will be administered on computers. The new assessments are **computer-based tests** for each skill (i.e. fixed form, not computer-adaptive).

The new WPLN assessments can only be taken using a computer at British Council and/or the WPLN Training Organisations' Approved Assessment Sites.

#### 11 How can test-takers prepare for the new WPLN assessments?

**Familiarisation tests and a Candidate Guide** are available at British Council's website at: <a href="https://www.britishcouncil.sg/exam/wpln">https://www.britishcouncil.sg/exam/wpln</a>. The information will help to familiarise individuals on what to expect for each assessment.

Please note that there will be no results provided for the familiarisation tests, as the objective of these tests is to help familiarise individuals to the different parts/formats of the new assessments, including task types and response formats.

# NEW WPLN ASSESSMENTS – SCORING, RESULTS, CERTIFICATION AND TRAINING RECOMMENDATION

#### 12 How are the new WPLN assessments scored?

The Core Grammar and Vocabulary, Reading, Listening and Numeracy assessments are scored automatically by the computer delivery system.

The Speaking and Writing assessments are marked by British Council's trained pool of appointed examiners.

#### 13 | Is there a pass/fail grade for the new WPLN assessments?

As the WPLN assessment serves to measure an individual's current proficiency level of literacy and numeracy skills, there is no pass/fail grade.

#### 14 How are test-takers' results reported for the new WPLN assessments?

The **Candidate Report issued by British Council** will reflect the test-taker's results for each component (Listening, Reading, Speaking, Writing, Core Grammar and Vocabulary, and Numeracy) in terms of a skill score (out of 50 points per skill). The corresponding WPLN proficiency level will also be reported for each component, except for Core Grammar and Vocabulary.

Results are reported separately for each skill.

[Please refer to Annex A for a sample Candidate Report.]

### 15 Are the new assessment results benchmarked to the current 8 WPLN proficiency levels?

Yes, the assessment results for the new WPLN assessments are benchmarked to the current 8 WPLN proficiency levels. The benchmarking serves to facilitate the continued recognition and acceptance of existing and new WPLN credentials by various stakeholders (e.g. employers, education and training providers, regulatory bodies, WPLN learners, the general public), for purposes such as entry into training, employment, or licensing/regulatory requirements.

The Candidate Report issued by British Council will reflect the test-taker's results for each WPLN skill (Listening, Reading, Speaking, Writing and Numeracy) in terms of skill score and

the corresponding WPLN proficiency level. Only the skill score will be reported for the Core Grammar and Vocabulary component.

[Please see also **Q14**.]

# Will test-takers receive Workforce Skills Qualifications (WSQ) Statement of Attainments (SOAs) upon completion of the new WPLN assessments?

As the new WPLN assessments are non-WSQ, test-takers will no longer receive WSQ e-SOAs for the new assessments.

#### 17 What certification will test-takers receive under the new WPLN assessments?

Test-takers will receive a **Candidate Report from British Council**, which will reflect test-takers' results for each component (Reading, Listening, Speaking, Writing, Core Grammar and Vocabulary, and Numeracy) they have attempted. The number of results reflected on the Candidate Report will depend on the number of skills which the test-taker had sat for in the particular test package.

[Please refer to Annex A for a sample of the Candidate Report issued by British Council.]

### 18 What is the validity period of the new WPLN assessment results?

There is no expiry to the test results for the new WPLN assessments. However, individuals are strongly encouraged to use their latest set of WPLN assessment results for when applying for jobs and/or training programmes.

#### 19 Will Training Recommendations be available under the new WPLN assessments?

British Council will continue to provide Training Recommendations for the new WPLN assessments. However, the Training Recommendations will be based on results attained for the new assessments only (i.e. Training Recommendations will be generated based on results achieved on 2 Jan 2020 and later).

### NEW WPLN ASSESSMENTS – DELIVERY MODES AND SPECIAL ACCOMMODATIONS

#### 20 Is it possible to take the new WPLN assessments in a pen-and-paper format?

The assessments can only be taken using a computer at British Council and/or the WPLN Training Organisations' Approved Assessment Sites.

There is no pen-and-paper option or alternative test formats unless the test-taker has special needs.

### 21 Are there any accommodations available for test-takers with special needs?

For test-takers from Special Education schools, and for test-takers with a disability from the general community, special accommodations are available upon request. Requests should be made at least 4 weeks prior to the test date. Requests should be made to the British Council Customer Service team via British Council's hotline **from 2 Dec 2019**, or through this webform: <a href="https://www.britishcouncil.sg/about/contact/message">https://www.britishcouncil.sg/about/contact/message</a>.

#### Accommodations currently available:

- Adjustments to the colour settings in computer-based testing.
- Braille
- Extra time (e.g. for dyslexia or a stammer/stutter)
- Large-print pen-and-paper test
- Custom test content (e.g. Speaking test for visually impaired)

#### Screen reader test

British Council requires 4 weeks' notice to manage such requests, and British Council will require evidence of the special need (e.g. medical certificate of dyslexia).

### NEW WPLN ASSESSMENTS – ASSESSMENT FEES, ASSESSMENT VENUE, REGISTRATION AND PAYMENT

### 22 When can test-takers start taking the new WPLN assessments?

The public can sit for the new assessments from 2 Jan 2020.

# When can test-takers start registering for the new WPLN assessments? How do test-takers register and pay for the new assessments?

The public can register and pay for the new WPLN assessments at **British Council's Register** and Pay Portal at <a href="https://www.britishcouncil.sg/exam/wpln">https://www.britishcouncil.sg/exam/wpln</a> from 2 Dec 2019.

#### 24 What are the fees for the new assessments?

	Fees (excluding GST)		
Assessment	SCs/PRs^	Foreigners (non-subsidised)	
Reading			
Listening			
Speaking	\$4.00	\$40.00	
Writing			
Numeracy			

[Please refer to **Q26** for the requirements to be eligible for subsidised assessment fees.]

### Do test-takers need to pay assessment fees for the Core Grammar and Vocabulary component?

Please note that there is **no separate assessment fee for the Core Grammar and Vocabulary component.** 

# What are the requirements to be eligible to take the WPLN assessment and to qualify for the subsidised assessment fees?

- Singaporeans/Singapore Permanent Residents; and
- 16 years and above^; and
- Not taking assessment within the 90-day lockout period; and

  ^ For individuals taking WPLN assessments in order to enter National Institute of
  Technical Education Certificate courses offered by Institute of Technical Education (ITE),
  minimum age of 18 years old for females and 20 years old for males (after serving
  National Service)

### Where are the assessment venues where test-takers can sit for the new WPLN assessments?

British Council (Napier Road Centre) 30 Napier Road Singapore 258509 WPLN Training Providers' Approved Assessment Sites (locations will be shared at a later date).

### 28 What are the various modes of payment for the new WPLN assessments?

The available modes of payment on British Council's Register and Pay Portal are: Credit Card/Debit Card/eNets.

SkillsFuture Credit will be accepted as a mode of payment for the new WPLN assessment fees from 1 Feb 2020.

Individuals who require assistance making online payment can proceed to British Council's Customer Service office at British Council (Napier Road Centre).

The operating hours are:

Monday to Friday: 9.30am – 7.30pm Saturday and Sunday: 9.00am – 4.00pm

Public Holidays: Closed

# What combination of the new WPLN assessments can test-takers sign up for in a test package?

Test-takers can take assessments for any combination of skills, but should note that the Core Grammar and Vocabulary component has to be taken each time a test taker attempts a literacy skill assessment, regardless of the number of literacy skills in the test package.

Test-takers will take the Core Grammar and Vocabulary component **only once per test package**, regardless of the number of literacy skills he/she has selected for the test package. Test-takers must take all assessments in a test package on the **same day**.

Some examples of possible test packages selected by test-takers:

- Test-Taker A: Reading + Core Grammar and Vocabulary (G&V)
- Test-Taker B: Speaking + Writing + G&V
- Test-Taker C: Listening + Speaking + Reading + Writing + G&V
- Test-Taker D: Listening + Speaking + Reading + Writing + G&V + Numeracy
- Test-Taker E: Listening + Reading + G&V + Numeracy
- Test-Taker F: Numeracy only

[Please see also Q7 and Q30.]

# 30 Is there a recommended maximum number of the new WPLN assessments that test-takers should register for in one session?

Test-takers are advised not to not to take all 5 assessments without a break as fatigue might set in and affect their performance. Test-takers can take some assessments in the morning and some after a lunch break in the afternoon.

Please note that test-takers must take all assessments in a test package on the same day.

### NEW WPLN ASSESSMENTS – ACCESSING TEST-TAKERS' ASSESSMENT RESULTS AND TRAINING RECOMMENDATION

31 When will test-takers be able to view their results for the new WPLN assessments?

All results for the new WPLN assessments will be available through British Council's Register and Pay portal\* at <a href="https://www.britishcouncil.sg/exam/wpln">https://www.britishcouncil.sg/exam/wpln</a> within 5 calendar days of the assessments being completed.

(\*operational from 2 Dec 2019)

### 32 When can test-takers view their Training Recommendation?

Test-takers can view/download the Training Recommendation on British Council's Register and Pay portal\* at <a href="https://www.britishcouncil.sg/exam/wpln">https://www.britishcouncil.sg/exam/wpln</a> within 5 calendar days of their assessment date.

(\*operational from 2 Dec 2019)

### 33 How can test-takers view/print their assessment results and Training Recommendation?

Test-takers will need to log into their individual accounts on British Council's Register and Pay Portal\* at <a href="https://www.britishcouncil.sg/exam/wpln">https://www.britishcouncil.sg/exam/wpln</a> in order to access their Candidate Reports and Training Recommendations. The Register and Pay Portal will contain all of the test-takers' Candidate Reports and Training Recommendations issued from 2 Jan 2020 onwards.

(\*operational from 2 Dec 2019)

### 34 Will British Council's Register and Pay Portal host individuals' past Training Recommendation?

British Council will provide Training Recommendations based on results attained for the new assessments only (i.e. Training Recommendations will be generated based on results achieved on 2 Jan 2020 and later).

# Will hardcopy Training Recommendations continue to be issued to test-takers for the new WPLN assessments?

Hardcopy Training Recommendations will no longer be issued after 2 Jan 2020. Test takers are advised to log into their individual accounts on British Council's Register and Pay Portal\* at <a href="https://www.britishcouncil.sg/exam/wpln">https://www.britishcouncil.sg/exam/wpln</a> to access their Candidate Reports and Training Recommendations.

(\*operational from 2 Dec 2019)

### PART 3: WPLN ASSESSMENT TRANSITION PERIOD: CRITICAL CUT-OFF DATES AND OTHER IMPORTANT INFORMATION

#### TRANSITION PERIOD AND IMPORTANT TIMELINES

#### 36 What is the purpose of implementing a transition period?

The purpose of implementing the transition period is to facilitate the switch from the current WPLN assessments to the new WPLN assessments.

### 37 Will there be a period where there is no WPLN assessments?

There will be a transition period from **14 Dec 2019 to 1 Jan 2020** where the current WPLN assessments will not be administered.

When is the last day to take the current WPLN assessment? What are the cut-off dates for registering for the current WPLN assessments for the various stakeholders?

Individuals intending to enrol for Training – Please submit your registration via WPLN Training Providers by **29 Nov 2019.** 

Individuals who are taking Assessments only – Please submit your registration by **6 Dec 2019.** Employers who are sponsoring employees for current WPLN assessments – Please submit your registration by **6 Dec 2019**.

The last day to complete the current WPLN assessments will be **13 Dec 2019** and the registration will be closed on **6 Dec 2019** (Registration is subject to availability).

# What can test-takers do if they are unable to complete the current WPLN assessments by 13 Dec 2019 (even with valid reasons)?

They will need to register for the new assessments that will take effect from 2 Jan 2020.

# What is the cut-off date for submitting applications for the Employability Skills (ES) WSQ Career Readiness Certificate (CRC) to the Centre of Employability Skills (CES)?

Test-takers with CES as last assessment stop can approach CES to apply for the ES WSQ CRC, upon obtaining the required ten (10) WSQ Statements of Attainment (SOAs) for Workplace Literacy (WPL), Workplace Numeracy (WPN), and Workplace Skills (WPS)/EDGE, by **23 Dec 2019, 5:00pm.** 

# How can test-takers obtain a hardcopy Training Recommendation for the current WPLN assessments?

Test-takers can submit a request to obtain a copy of the hardcopy training recommendation for the current WPLN assessments. The request should reach SSG not later than **23 Dec 2019**, **5:00pm**.

#### IMPACT OF TRANSITION ON CURRENT WPLN ASSESSMENT RESULTS/WSQ SOAs

# 42 If test-takers have taken the WPLN assessments on/before 13 Dec 2019, are their results/WSQ SOAs still valid?

The results of test-takers who have taken the WPLN assessments under the current system (i.e. 13 Dec 2019 and before) will **remain valid going forward. There is no expiry to test-takers' results/WSQ SOAs**.

However, individuals are strongly encouraged to use their latest set of WPLN assessment results when applying for jobs and/or training programmes.

# How can test-takers access their results for WPLN assessments taken on/before 13 Dec 2019?

To access WPLN test results under the current system (i.e. results achieved on 13 Dec 2019 and before), individuals can use their SingPass to access their Skills Passport in the MySkillsFuture Portal to download their WSQ SOA e-Certificates.

### 44 How can foreigners access their WPLN assessment results taken on 13 Dec 2019 or earlier?

Results for the current WPLN assessments taken on/before 13 Dec 2019 will not be available under British Council's system. Foreigners who wish to obtain their past WPLN assessment results are advised to request for the hardcopy print eSOA from CES by 23 Dec 2019, 5:00pm.

