

You are going to listen to a conversation between an employee and her line manager. The employee is French and she has just done a Cambridge BEC exam. Her line manager is asking questions about it.

Optional activity:

Multiple choice. While you listen, decide which of the choices is the best one.

1 The woman took the level BEC exam.

- a lower
- b middle
- c higher

2 The Vantage exam has papers.

- a four
- b five
- c six

3 The BEC Vantage exam is for candidates who have level of English.

- a a pre-intermediate
- b a high intermediate
- c an advanced

4 The BEC Vantage exam is the First Certificate exam.

- a the same level as
- b a higher level than
- c a lower level than

5 Each paper is worth of the total mark.

- a 33%
- b 50%
- c 25%

6 The paper lasts an hour.

- a Reading
- b Writing
- c Listening

7 For the Speaking paper there are people in the room.

- a 2
- b 3
- c 4

8 In the Speaking paper you have minute(s) to prepare a presentation.

- a 1
 - b 2
 - c 3
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A: Hey, didn't you have your exam yesterday?

B: Yes, I did.

A: So, what was it like? It was a BEC exam, wasn't it?

B: Yes. It was. It was the BEC Vantage.

A: What does that mean?

B: Well, it's the middle one. There are three BEC exams; the Preliminary, the Vantage and the Higher.

A: So what level is that, compared to FCE for example.

B: Well, it's like the FCE. It's an Upper Intermediate level.

A: So what did you have to do? Was there a speaking test? Were you nervous?

B: Hang on! One question at a time.

A: Sorry!

B: There are four exams; Reading, Writing, Listening and Speaking.

A: And how are they marked? I mean, do you have to pass all of the papers in order to pass the exam? Or do they work out an average score?

B: Each paper is worth 25% of the total mark. So if you don't do too well in one paper, you can make up the marks on another paper.

A: How long did the exam last?

B: The Reading paper was the longest; that was an hour. Then the writing lasted 45 minutes and the Listening was 40 minutes.

A: What about the Speaking?

B: That was 14 minutes but it felt like 5. The time flew.

A: Tell me about the Speaking exam. Were you nervous?

B: At first yes but my partner was much more nervous so I ended up calming him down.

A: What do you mean, your partner?

B: You do it in twos. There are two candidates and two examiners too. Well one examiner speaks to you. The other one just sits and makes notes.

A: What did you have to talk about?

B: Well, there are three sections. First of all they asked us a few questions about ourselves, our personal life and then about work related things.

A: Oh no.

B: No, that was fine. They didn't ask anything difficult. The next part is harder because you have to do a sort of mini presentation.

A: About what?

B: Well they give you a few things to choose from and a minute to prepare.

A: A minute!

B: Yeah!

A: And how long is the presentation?

B: That's about a minute too. It was ok actually. I spoke about what is important when you are selecting applicants for a job. That was quite easy for me. In the last section you have to discuss something with your partner.

A: What?

B: Well, we were fairly lucky there too, I think. We had to imagine we were attending a trade fair in a foreign country. So we had to discuss travel plans and accommodation. Stuff like that.

A: All very business orientated then?

B: Oh yeah! That's the whole point. The BEC exams are 100% geared towards people working in businesses. Everything you do is relevant. It makes it more useful.

A: And something good to put in your file. We'll include it in your job appraisal. We've got our meeting on Friday so remind me then.

Answer key: 1B; 2A; 3B; 4A; 5C; 6A; 7C; 8A.