

Linguaskill Business  
sample Candidate  
responses and  
commentaries – CEFR  
levels B1 to C2



# Introduction

This set of candidate responses represents performances at different levels of the CEFR from B1 to C2. The responses and accompanying commentaries are intended to help teachers and learners understand the features of these examples of writing which contribute to the text being at a particular CEFR level. As you read through, you may also wish to refer to the Linguaskill Business Writing Assessment Criteria.

# Linguaskill Business

## Report task: sample report question

As part of a review of its pay policies, the company you work for is considering whether each employee's pay should be based on that person's performance at work. The head of the working group leading this review has asked you to write a report on how basing earnings on performance would affect your department.

Write a **report** for the head of the working group. **Discuss** and **evaluate** the potential benefits and issues for your department of basing earnings on performance, and **make recommendations**.

Here are some points you may wish to consider in your report:

- how performance-related pay might affect motivation and recruitment
- what challenges there might be with measuring performance
- whether this policy should be introduced, and if so, how

You can also include any other ideas you think are relevant.

Write at **least 250 words**.

## Report task: responses and commentaries

### B1 candidate response

*The Rossi company, my firm, is considering to based employee's pay on their performance at work. This method of payment might motivate our employees to do their better. This can be a way for reach better results in our firm too. Basing the payment on the performance can have also against point: for example there is the risk of creating a toxic climate into the emoployees, they can obstacolate eachother to rich more money than others. Another problem can be the cost of adopting this policy. If every employees do a very good performance thanks to this new propose the firm can't pay an extra to everyone. Adopting this policy we have to cut others cost of the company.*

*The most challenging part of this method is find a way to measuring performance. This method of value have to change to every type of work of our employees, perhaps every work have to be value in a different way. Some type of jobs are more difficult to value for the performance because it can have results in more time than others employees. We have to considered after which time the pay can chenge, because if the time is too short the firm have more problems to pay this extra. Another difficult point is how introduce this policy, it's very difficult start from 0 because we have to decide the start payment of every job. This method can create several problem for who have a good pay, because probably when we start with this policy their payment can decrease and someone can't accept that. This policy probably is more idicate for new company.*

### Commentary

The CEFR says that learners at B1 level are able to produce brief reports in a standard format for this type of writing and briefly give reasons and explanations for opinions and state reasons for actions.

The text is on topic and addresses the task requirements of discussing the benefits and challenges of introducing performance-based pay. A brief recommendation is given at the end of the text.

The tone of the report is generally consistent and appropriately formal. The writer has used straightforward but broadly appropriate functional language to present the benefits and issues of the proposed policy ('*This method of payment might motivate our employees to do their better*'; '*This can be a way for*'; '*there is the risk of...*'; '*Adopting this policy we have to...*'; '*we have to considered...*'; '*This method can create several problem...*').

Although there are language errors, the reader is able to follow the line of the argument presented (i.e., '*different jobs will likely need different performance indicators*', '*implications on the company's salary budget and impact on individuals whose salary may decrease*').

The writer uses signposting phrases to introduce points they want to make to the reader (e.g., '*Basing the payment on the performance can have also against point: for example...*'; '*Another problem can be...*'; '*The most challenging part...Another difficult point*'). Determiners, pronouns and conjunctions are also used to help connect the text ('*This policy*'; '*this method*'; *it*; *because*). More consistent paragraphing would also have assisted the reader in identifying the main points. For example, a clearly separate introductory and closing paragraph would have been helpful.

Everyday business vocabulary and some less common business vocabulary has been used generally appropriately (e.g., *risk*; *creating*; *toxic climate*; *adopting*). There are, however, instances of inappropriate use of everyday lexis (e.g., '*to pay this extra*'; '*against point*') and misspellings that make it difficult to know the intended meaning of the sentence (e.g., *obstacolate*; *idicate*).

The writer has used a range of simple and some complex grammatical forms, demonstrating inconsistent control over the complex ones. There are examples of good control (e.g., '*Another problem can be the cost of adopting this policy*') and less control (e.g., '*We have to considered after which time the pay can chenge, because if the time is too short the firm have more problems to pay this extra*').

## B2 candidate response

*Good morning Mr/Mrs,*

*How are you doing? I'm writting you this e-mail to express my opinions and my views about the implementation of the new policies involving the employee's salary.*

*I understand that this implementation of the policies will help to boost the employee's performance and will make it a competition between departments, which is a good thing to see.*

*However, we should also consider the drawbacks that the policies can produce. Firstly, having a performance related pay might badly effect some employees's motivation, it could also hurt the recruitment rate. A jobseeker will be discourge and will be swayed away by the new policies. Secondly, there will also be some challenges related to how can we mesure each employee's performances accurately. Performance means that how fast can a person do the job. Introducing a performance based can lead to a new problem where employees will just try to pump out produt as quick as possible without considering it's quality. This can decrease our company product's quality and can ultimately effect our brand's name in a bad way.*

*In my opinion, the policies that you are trying to introduce is a good initiative to tackle the performance in the workplace. While it cans offer a wide range of advantages like increased productivity, competitiveness, etc. However, it also produces some challenges and problem related to motivation, recruitment and how can we accurately mesure the employee's performance that we need to tackle.*

*Before the implementation of the policies, maybe we can distribute a survey to all the employees in the company to see if they are positive about the policies first and then we can continue to the next step of the policies's implementation.*

*What do you think about it?*

*Hope to hear back from you soon*

*Q\_\_\_\_\_ D\_\_\_\_\_*

## Commentary

This is a B2-level response. At this level, the CEFR says learners can develop an argument and evaluate advantages and disadvantages.

The response is on topic and addresses the task requirements by identifying the benefits and challenges of introducing performance-based pay and making a recommendation of next steps.

While the text is embedded within an email that begins and ends in an overly informal tone (*'How are you doing?'; 'What do you think about it?'*), the main part of the text outlines a clear argument in an appropriately formal tone that communicates ideas to the reader successfully (i.e., *'recruitment issues and potential impact on product quality'*).

The writer has used appropriate functional language to present the benefits and issues of the proposed policy (e.g., *'The implementation of the policies will help to boost... and will make it..., which is a good thing to see'*; [this policy] *'might badly effect some employee's motivation, it could also hurt the recruitment rate'*; *'... can lead to a new problem where... This can ultimately effect on brand's name in a bad way'*). The writer has also used appropriate phrasing to set out some recommendations (*'Before the implementation... maybe we can distribute a survey... to see if... and then we can continue to the next step'*).

Paragraphing is used to identify the main elements of the report for the reader. The paragraphs are generally well-organised; the writer has used linkers (*Firstly; Secondly; However; ultimately*) pronouns (*This*) and also lexical cohesion (*'we should also consider the drawbacks...'; 'might badly effect...motivation'; 'could also hurt the recruitment rate'; 'jobseeker will be discourage'*) to connect the text together.

The writer uses a range of everyday vocabulary and less common lexis appropriately (e.g., *implementation; boost; competition; drawbacks; recruitment; tackle; initiative; productivity*). There is, however, occasional inappropriate use of less common lexis (e.g., *'swayed away'; 'pump out'*). A range of simple and some complex grammatical forms are used with a good degree of control (e.g., *'However, it also produces some challenges and problem related to motivation, recruitment and how can we accurately mesure the employee's performance that we need to tackle'*). Errors do not impede communication (e.g. *'a job seeker will be discourage'; 'the policies is a good initiative'*).

## C1 candidate response

*The aim of this report is to critically analyse the impact of how basing earnings on performances would affect the sales department and how such performances can be monitored.*

*The extensive review of our company's pay policies have revealed that with the current economic crisis the company is facing, the company must consider paying its employees based on the contribution they make for the company.*

*The employees of the sales department are quite money oriented and most of them are working for the company with the expectation of money and not for the well-being of the company itself. This was observed during the training sessions conducted by the company on a previous instances.*



*As company employees are working with sole motive of earning money, they do not have a deep rooted loyalty towards the company. So if this policy was to be introduced, the company should expect to see a considerable number of sales employees leaving the business. Staff retention rates will be at its lowest.*

*Salary is the biggest motivator for the employees in the sales department and the fact that they might be paid less for their work will demotivate them. A majority of employees will consider leaving the company as their best option and this in turn will lead to huge decrease in productivity. However the company will also be able to identify the select few who are loyal to the business.*

*People will also be less willing to join the company upon the introduction of this policy. The HR department should expect the recruitment levels of staff to come down.*

*The company has an enormous number of employees working in the sales department numbering 1021. With this large of a figure, it will be extremely difficult for the company to personally observe the performance of the employees as it is extremely time consuming.*

*The company would have to depend on progress reports which are not that reliable and believable. The other option is to hire an outside agency which is a quite costly method and a method the company cannot afford at the moment.*

*Overall, it is recommended that the business should not introduce this policy. While the company will be able to identify and weed out those who are not loyal to the company, the company would have to sacrifice its productivity and recruitment levels which would lead to the company facing issues in the future. The policy should be introduced gradually over the course of a long time period.*

## **Commentary**

The CEFR says that writers at C1 level can expand and support points of view at some length with subsidiary points, reasons and relevant examples.

The text is on topic and responds to the task requirements by describing mostly the challenges of introducing performance-based pay and explaining why this policy is not recommended. The writer has effectively tailored their response to a specific department which results in a more focused text which contains a clearly developed argument for why this policy should not be implemented that is generally easy to follow. There are good examples of functional language used to present various challenges and implications of the policy and to suggest how these might be addressed (e.g. '*So if this policy were to be introduced, the company should expect to see...*' ; '*and this in turn will lead to*'; '*The company would have to depend on progress reports which are not that reliable and believable. The other option is to...*'). One way in which the text could be improved would be through greater use of linguistic modality to give a more nuanced presentation of the challenges. A somewhat negative description of employees as money-oriented and the use of '*will*' to describe the impact of the policy gives a slightly blunt and rather negative impression of the sales department and comes across, perhaps unintentionally, as overly critical of the policy which may not necessarily be appropriate in a report to a colleague.

In terms of organisation, the text is well-organised and coherent. The writer uses a mix of overt linkers (e.g., *'The aim of this report'*; *However*; *So*; *'this in turn'*; *Overall*) and grammatical devices such as pronouns and demonstratives (e.g., *'such performances'*; *'most of them'*; *'This was observed'*; *'the select few'*; *'the other option'*; *while*; *which*) to link the text together. The use of words belonging to the same lexical set also helps text cohesion (e.g. *loyal / loyalty*; *motivator...demotivate*; *numbering 1021*. *'With this large of a figure...'*). In places the text could benefit from better transitions between the paragraphs.

The writer uses a range of vocabulary, including less common lexis, with appropriate use of collocations, and noun phrases (e.g., *'considerable number'*; *'staff retention rates'*; *'deep rooted'*; *'biggest motivator'*; *'recruitment levels'*; *loyalty*; *'outside agency'*; *'costly method'*). The writer also uses a range of simple and complex grammatical forms with control and flexibility (e.g., *'While the company will be able to identify and weed out those who are not loyal to the company, the company would have to sacrifice its productivity and recruitment levels which would lead to the company facing issues in the future'*). Occasional errors are present but do not impede communication.

## C2 candidate response

N\_\_\_\_\_ Z\_\_\_\_\_  
Sales department

To Mr John Cooper  
Head of the pay policies review group

Subject: Report on the potential effects of performance-based earnings in the sales department

Dear Mr Cooper,

*I am writing this report in response to your request for an analysis of the potential benefits and issues associated with implementing a performance-based earnings system in our department. After careful consideration, I have outlined the key points below, including the impact on motivation, recruitment, challenges with performance measurement, and my recommendations.*

### 1. Benefits

*a. Motivation: Introducing performance-related pay has the potential to enhance employee motivation by aligning individual goals with organizational objectives. Employees may be motivated to perform at their best in order to perform at their best to earn higher rewards, leading to increased productivity and efficiency.*

*b. Retention and recruitment: A performance-based system can attract and retain high-performing individuals who value the opportunity to be rewarded for their contributions. This may help in building a high-performing team and maintaining a competitive advantage.*

### 2. Issues and challenges:

*a. Subjectivity and Bias: Measuring performance objectively can be challenging, and subjective assessments may introduce bias and favoritism. It is crucial to*



*establish clear and fair performance evaluation criteria to mitigate these concerns.*

*b. Unintended Consequences: A sole focus on individual performance could inadvertently discourage collaboration and teamwork, as employees may prioritize personal gains over collective achievements. This could impact overall departmental cohesion and cooperation.*

*c. Measurement difficulties: Some roles, such as those requiring creative problem-solving or long-term project management, may have less quantifiable performance metrics. Identifying appropriate measures for such positions and ensuring fair evaluation can be complex.*

### *3. Recommendations:*

*a. Balanced approach: Consider implementing a hybrid system that combines individual performance with team-based or departmental objectives. This approach would encourage collaboration while still recognizing individual contributions.*

*b. Clear Performance Criteria: Establish well-defined and transparent performance evaluation criteria that are aligned with departmental goals. Regular feedback and communication should be encouraged to ensure employees understand expectations and have the opportunity for improvement.*

*c. Training and Development: Invest in training programs to enhance employee skills and competencies, as well as providing opportunities for professional growth. This can further motivate employees and increase their ability to perform at a higher level.*

*In conclusion, implementing a performance-based earnings system in our department can have both positive and negative implications. It is essential to carefully address the challenges of subjectivity, unintended consequences, and measurement difficulties to ensure fairness and effectiveness. A balanced approach that considers both individual and collective performance, along with clear criteria and ongoing development initiatives, is recommended for a successful implementation.*

*Should you require further information or clarification, please do not hesitate to contact me. I am available to discuss this report or any related matters in detail.*

*Sincerely,*

*N\_\_\_\_\_ Z\_\_\_\_\_*  
*Managing Assistant*  
*Sales department*

## **Commentary**

At C2 level, the CEFR says writers can produce clear, smoothly flowing reports that provide an appropriate and effective logical structure which helps the reader identify significant points.

The writer uses the conventions of the communicative task (here, an internal report to a colleague) with sufficient flexibility to communicate complex ideas in an effective way. The text explores the complexity of the policy, weighing up the different possible outcomes and suggesting ways to mitigate any negative ones.

The writer has presented each idea succinctly, providing enough information to make a clear point while avoiding too much explanation, which helps the reader easily extract meaning from the text. There is a consistent tone throughout and the text holds the reader's attention with ease. The writer has fulfilled all the communicative purposes of the task.

There are many instances of nuanced functional language used to outline the benefits (e.g., '*has the potential to enhance...by...*'; '*Employees may be...leading to...*') and issues (e.g., '*A sole focus on...could inadvertently...*'; '*some roles, such as...may have less quantifiable performance metrics.*') and to make recommendations (e.g., '*Consider implementing... This approach would encourage...*') which are fully appropriate to a report of this kind.

The text is a well-organised, coherent whole. The writer uses headings and bullet points to organise complex ideas clearly, effectively packaging up ideas for the reader (e.g. '*Subjectivity and Bias*'; '*Unintended Consequences*'); the sub-headings effectively summarise the content of each sub-point. The writer uses organisational patterns such as parallelism and grammatical choices (e.g., the imperative form in the recommendations) to support text cohesion. Additionally, the writer uses the range of their vocabulary to create chains of words within the same lexical set which also help the reader to trace connections between the ideas in the text (e.g., '*collaboration and teamwork...collective achievements; training programs... opportunities for professional growth*').

A range of vocabulary, including less common lexis, has been used with fluency and precision (*Retention*; '*Subjectivity and Bias*'; *enhance*; *mitigate*, *inadvertently*; *hybrid*, *metrics*; *criteria*). The writer also demonstrates effective use of collocations (e.g., '*maintaining a competitive advantage*'; '*unintended consequences*'; '*personal gains*'; '*collective achievements*'; '*professional growth*').

Simple and complex grammatical forms are used with full control, flexibility and sophistication. For example, the writer uses a range of different sentence patterns, varying the structure while also maintaining effective parallelism (e.g., '*Identifying appropriate measures for such positions and ensuring fair evaluation can be complex*') and embedding phrases well (e.g., '*Some roles, such as those requiring creative problem-solving or long-term project management, may have less quantifiable performance metrics*'). Additionally, the writer effectively uses linguistic modality to signal the strength of a position or argument (e.g., '*has the potential to enhance*'; '*may help*'; '*can attract*'; '*is crucial to*'; '*could impact*'; '*it is essential to*'; '*would encourage*'; '*should encourage*'; '*consider implementing*').

Overall, the writer uses language to convey their ideas precisely and succinctly.

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