NATO Benchmark Advisory Test (BAT) EXAMINEE GUIDE

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I. INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this guide is to provide the Benchmark Advisory Test (BAT) examinees information about the BAT and help them plan for taking the test.

II. GENERAL TEST OVERVIEW

Background

The test was developed by a large group of testing specialists from NATO member countries. They designed, wrote, reviewed, and revised test material through on-line interaction and face-to-face meetings during a three-year period. Standards setting and establishment of cut-off scores for each level were also done through a combination of online and face-to-face activities.

Test Purpose

This test is intended for NATO military and civilian personnel who are non-native speakers of English. The BAT assesses English language proficiency regardless of how it was acquired. For this reason, the BAT is not related to any curriculum or language program.

The purpose of the BAT is to provide nations with an external criterion for review and validation of their general proficiency tests based on NATO STANAG 6001 (Ed. 3). Therefore, the scores examinees get on this test will be of advisory nature only, and shall not replace those awarded in their countries. The results obtained on the national tests shall be the official scores.

BAT Delivery

This test will be delivered online by using tailored software. Test proctors from each nation will receive specific information about logging onto the BAT website for administration. Each examinee will take a unique version of the test.

Test Reliability and Validity

Items used on the reading, listening and writing tests have been validated with examinee populations in several NATO countries and at SHAPE.

III. TEST DESIGN AND PROFICIENCY LEVELS

The BAT is a multi-level test covering Levels 1 through 3, and it includes tests of four skills: Reading, Listening, Writing and Speaking. There is a separate score for each skill, ranging from 0 through 3. Scores reflect language competence defined in the descriptors of NATO STANAG 6001 (Ed. 3), as follows:

Level 0	-	No proficiency
Level 1	-	Survival
Level 2	-	Functional
Level 3	-	Professional

Language proficiency will be recorded using a sequence of 4 digits to represent the 4 language skill areas, and those skills will be listed in the following sequence:

Skill L - Listening
Skill S - Speaking
Skill R - Reading
Skill W - Writing

The code letters SLP will be used to indicate that the scores represent the Standardised (S) Language (L) Profile (P).

IV. TEST DESCRIPTION

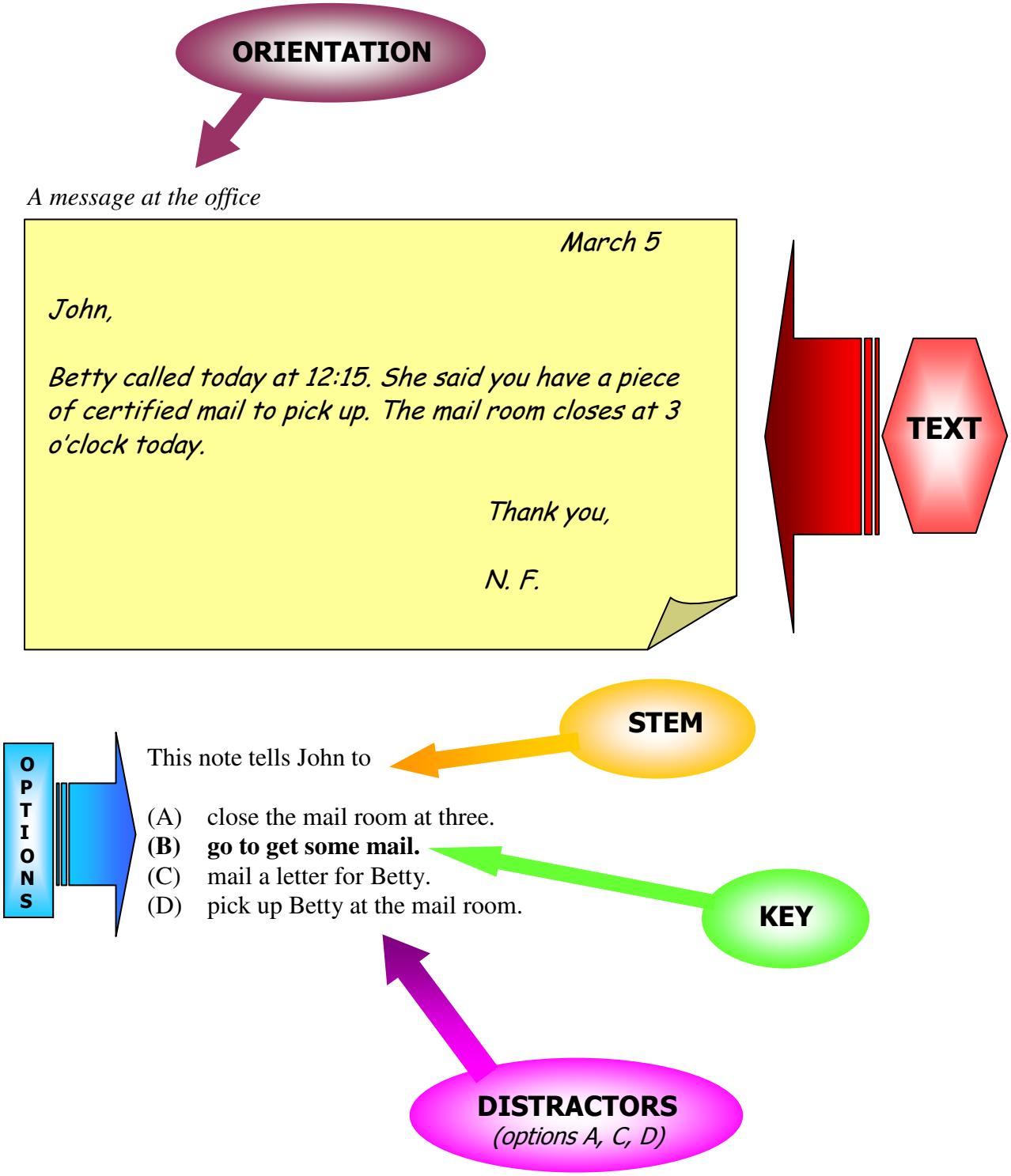
READING COMPREHENSION

Test Format

The test consists of 60 items covering Levels 1 through 3, with 20 items at each level. The test items are multiple-choice. Each one consists of a brief orientation, a stem, and four options (or choices). All test materials, examples, and instructions are in English.

Example:

A MULTIPLE-CHOICE TEST ITEM



Topical Content

The content of the reading items comes from articles written for the general reader in English-speaking countries. There are topics related to everyday life and work situations, as well as higher level texts on such subjects as military and security issues, economics, science, and culture. There are also texts relevant to NATO operations.

Text Types

Texts are selected from a variety of authentic sources intended for the general reader of international English used in the NATO countries and NATO environment, such as:

Level 1 – texts related to common everyday situations requiring survival reading skills to understand very basic information. There may be simple descriptions and narratives;

Level 2 – texts related to concrete, factual situations requiring reading skills to understand detailed instructions, detailed descriptions, and narratives. Some texts may be work-related;

Level 3 – texts dealing with complex issues, abstract language, and specialized topics, requiring reading skills to understand argumentation, supported opinion, analysis, and hypothesis. Some texts may include implications and nuances. Some texts may be work-related.

Tasks and Accuracy

The specific reading tasks and accuracy requirements are based on the NATO STANAG 6001 (Ed. 3) criteria.

Administration Procedures

Examinees' identity will be checked before they take the BAT. Proctors will be present in the testing facility, and they will help the examinees log in their passwords. They will also monitor the test administration.

Test instructions will be presented on the computer in English.

No aids (such as reference materials, dictionaries, and electronic sources) may be brought into the testing facility.

The timing of the test is controlled by the examinee. The maximum time needed for the entire reading test is approximately two and one-half hours. Many examinees may finish sooner. There will be a mandatory break between the Level 2 and Level 3 portions of the reading test.

The examinee will submit each item for scoring after completing it. It will not be possible to go back to an item and change the answer.

Scoring Procedures

Scores will be reported to the POC for the country, and they will reflect levels from 0-3 in accordance with the NATO STANAG 6001 (Ed. 3).

Sample Items

Each STANAG 6001 level represents a range of easy to difficult texts. The reading demonstration test will not show that full range, but it will give a sample of texts within that range.

LISTENING COMPREHENSION

Test Format

The test consists of 60 items covering Levels 1 through 3, with 20 items at each level. The test items are multiple-choice. Each one consists of a brief orientation, a stem, and four options (choices). The examinee will click a button to hear the audio texts for each item. Level 1 and Level 2 texts may be played twice. Level 3 texts may only be played one time. All test materials, examples, and instructions are in English.

Topical Content

The content of the listening items comes from sources intended for the general listener in English-speaking countries. There are topics related to everyday life and work situations, as well as higher level texts on such subjects as military and security issues, economics, science, culture, etc. There are also texts relevant to NATO operations.

Text Types

Texts may include monologues, dialogues, debates, and interviews.

Texts are selected from a variety of authentic sources intended for the general listener of international English used in the NATO countries and the NATO environment, such as:

Level 1 – texts related to common everyday situations requiring survival listening skills to understand very basic information;

Level 2 – texts related to concrete, factual situations requiring listening skills to understand detailed instructions, detailed descriptions, and narratives. Some texts may be work-related;

Level 3 – texts dealing with complex issues, abstract language, and specialized topics, requiring listening skills to understand argumentation, supported opinion, analysis, and hypothesis. Some texts may include implications and nuances. Some texts may be work-related.

Tasks and Accuracy

The specific listening tasks and accuracy requirements are based on the NATO STANAG 6001 (Ed. 3) criteria.

Administration Procedures

Examinees' identity will be checked before they take the BAT. Proctors will be present in the testing facility, and they will help the examinees log in their passwords. They will also monitor the test administration.

Test instructions will be presented on the computer in English.

No aids (such as reference materials, dictionaries, and electronic sources) may be brought into the testing facility.

The timing of the test is controlled by the examinee. Examinees can read the item on the screen before listening to the audio. At Levels 1 and 2, they can control the length of the pause before listening a second time. The maximum time needed for the entire listening test is approximately 90 minutes. Many examinees may finish sooner. There will be a mandatory break between the Level 2 and Level 3 portions of the listening test.

The examinee will submit each item for scoring after completing it. It will not be possible to go back to an item and change the answer.

Scoring Procedures

Scores will be reported to the POC for the country, and they will reflect levels from 0-3 in accordance with the NATO STANAG 6001 (Ed. 3).

Sample Items

Each STANAG 6001 level represents a range of easy to difficult texts. The listening demonstration test will not show that full range, but it will give a sample of audio texts within that range.

WRITING

Test Format

The writing component of the test is multi-level consisting of four prompts for written responses on a variety of practical, social, and professional topics in informal and formal contexts. These prompts cover proficiency levels from Level 1 to Level 3. The tasks and prompts are written in English.

Each prompt will give information about the intended audience for the text and the criteria for evaluation.

Topical Content

Topics covered in the writing component are in accordance with NATO STANAG 6001 (Ed.3) descriptors. They are intended for the general language user at each level. While topics may be generally relevant to NATO operations, they will not be job-specific.

Task Types

At Level 1, the examinee needs to demonstrate the ability to write short notes, short personal letters, telephone messages, invitations, and similar texts requiring the use of simple sentences.

At Level 2, the examinee needs to demonstrate the ability to write texts that state facts; give instructions; describe people, places and things; narrate current, past, and future events in complete but simple paragraphs. These texts may include simple personal and routine workplace correspondence, as well as memoranda and brief reports.

At Level 3, the examinee needs to demonstrate the ability to write essay-length argumentation, analysis, hypothesis, as well as extended explanation, narration, and description on both concrete and abstract topics. These texts may include both formal and informal correspondence and documents for practical, social, and professional purposes.

Tasks and Accuracy

In accordance with the NATO STANAG 6001 descriptors:

The Level 1 writer's output can be understood by native readers used to non-natives' attempts to write;

The Level 2 writer's output can be understood by native readers not used to reading material written by non-natives;

The Level 3 writer's output will rarely disturb the native reader, although there may be occasional errors.

Administration Procedures

The online writing test will be scheduled in consultation with the examinee's testing chain.

Examinees' identity will be checked before they take the BAT. Proctors will be present in the testing facility, and they will help the examinees log in their passwords. They will also monitor the test administration.

Test instructions will be presented on the computer in English.

No aids (such as reference materials, dictionaries, and electronic sources) may be brought into the testing facility.

The length of the whole writing component of the test is 120 minutes. Each prompt will state the suggested length of the examinee's response along with the suggested time frame.

Scoring Procedures

The examinee's performance will be rated globally, by using the STANAG 6001 (Ed.3) writing descriptors. The rating will be based solely on the linguistic evidence demonstrated during the test.

Each writing sample will be independently evaluated by two raters. A third independent rating will be requested in case of discrepancy.

Scores will be reported to the POC for the country, and they will reflect levels from 0-3 in accordance with the NATO STANAG 6001 (Ed. 3).

Sample Prompts

Level 1

1. Write a note to your colleagues inviting them to a surprise birthday party for your language teacher. Tell them about the event, including the time and place. Let them know what you want them to bring.

2. Write a note to your friend and invite him/her to a concert. Write about the event's place and time. Offer a place to meet before the concert.

Level 2

1. Assume that you have just returned from a trip and are writing a letter to a close friend. Describe a particularly memorable experience that occurred while you were travelling.

This will be one paragraph in a longer letter to your friend. This paragraph should be about 100 words in length.

You will be judged on the style and organization of this paragraph as well as vocabulary and grammar. Remember, the intended reader is a close friend.

2. As a military officer, you were recently reassigned to another command at a different location. To welcome you, one of your new colleagues, an Army captain, invited you to have dinner at his home with his wife, daughter and son. You accepted the invitation and met the captain's family on Saturday. During dinner, you discovered his wife was an old friend of your cousin who now lives in the United States. Write a letter to your cousin telling about this event and the family.

This letter should not be longer than 150 words.

You will be judged on the style and organization of this letter as well as vocabulary and grammar.

Level 3

A professional organization to which you belong has requested that you write a paper for their quarterly newsletter.

Select one of the topics listed below, and write a paper of approximately 550 words.

You will be judged on the style, organization, logical development, and complexity of your paper as well as the richness and precision of vocabulary, accuracy of grammar and spelling, and the suitability for the intended audience.

TOPICS:

- *Teachers' resistance to change.*
- *The influence of television on language skills.*
- *Quality versus equality in higher education.*
- *The move toward neutralizing gender in American English.*

SPEAKING

Test Format

The speaking component of the test is a multi-level adaptive test of speaking measuring proficiency from Level 1 to Level 3 in accordance with NATO STANAG 6001 (Ed.3) descriptors.

The speaking test consists of a variety of language tasks on a range of topics. The tester will try to establish the minimum and maximum level of language competence of the examinee at the time of the test.

Topical Content

Topics covered in the speaking test are in accordance with NATO STANAG 6001 (Ed.3) descriptors. They are intended for the general language user at each level. While topics may be generally relevant to NATO operations, they will not be job-specific.

Task Types

At Level 1, the examinee needs to demonstrate the ability to ask and answer simple questions related to daily life, take part in short conversations, and handle basic survival situations in a role play.

At Level 2, the examinee needs to perform such tasks as narration in the past, reporting on current events, providing a physical description, giving instructions and/or directions, and handling familiar situations with complications in a role-play.

At Level 3, the examinee needs to perform such tasks as supporting opinions, conveying abstract concepts, hypothesizing and resolving a problem in an unfamiliar situation in a role-play.

Tasks and Accuracy

In accordance with the NATO STANAG 6001 descriptors:

At Level 1, the speaker shows the ability to handle communication in typical everyday situations. Language production is at the sentence level with frequent errors that often distort meaning;

At Level 2, the speaker shows the ability to produce paragraph-length speech. Command of spoken language is not always firm and errors may sometimes distort meaning;

At Level 3, the speaker shows the ability to produce extended discourse, discuss topics appropriately in both formal and informal speech, even though there may be occasional errors that do not distort meaning.

Administration Procedures

The BAT speaking test will be scheduled online in consultation with the examinee's testing chain, and administered telephonically.

Examinees' identity will be checked before they take the BAT speaking test.

A testing official will assist the examinee in making the telephone connection.

No aids (such as reference materials, dictionaries, and electronic sources) may be brought into the testing facility.

The length of the speaking test will be 20 to 40 minutes, depending on the level of the examinee and the complexity of tasks.

One trained tester/rater will test each examinee by telephone in order to obtain evidence of the speaking proficiency of the examinee. That tester will provide a preliminary rating. The digitized speaking sample of each test will be saved and independently rated by an additional trained rater. A third independent rating will be requested in case of discrepancy.

Scoring Procedures

The examinee's performance will be rated globally by using the STANAG 6001 (Ed.3) speaking descriptors. The rating will be based solely on the linguistic evidence demonstrated during the test.

Each rater will evaluate the speaking sample independently of any other raters. A third independent rating will be requested in case of discrepancy between the two raters.

Scores will be reported to the POC for the country, and they will reflect levels from 0-3 in accordance with the NATO STANAG 6001 (Ed. 3).

Sample prompts

Level 1

SPEAKING PROMPTS (TASKS)

Where do you live?

How long have you lived there?

Where did you live before?

Do you have a job? Where do you work? What are your duties?

How do you get to work?

ROLE PLAYS

1. Your family is coming to visit you for a week. You want to make hotel reservations for them. Call the hotel. The interviewer will play the role of the reservations clerk.

2. Last night while you were eating dinner, you broke a tooth. Call the dentist's office to make an appointment. The interviewer will play the role of the dentist's receptionist.

3. You are in a gift shop in New York and would like to take some souvenirs back home to your family. The interviewer will play the role of a salesperson. Ask for my assistance.

Level 2

SPEAKING ROMPTS (TASKS)

Describe your first trip to (the United States, Canada, Spain, etc.)

Describe a typical day for a school child in your country.

What will you do after you finish this test?

ROLE PLAYS

1. Your teacher has just asked you to describe your language learning program to a military visitor. Provide a clear summary that includes the purpose of the program, the amount of time students spend, and the skills they develop. Answer any questions the visitor may have. The interviewer will play the role of the visitor.

2. You are trying to enroll in a computer class at a local college. You can only attend class on Monday and Wednesday evenings. Call the Department of Computer Science for information about their new course. Find out as much as possible about the course and how it fits into your schedule. The interviewer will play the role of the scheduling clerk.

3. While you are vacationing in a hotel in San Francisco, your child wakes up with a fever and a headache. You go to an all-night drugstore and ask for advice as to what to do or what non-prescription medicine to buy. Explain to the drugstore clerk what is wrong and try to get help with your purchase. The interviewer will play the role of the drugstore clerk.

Level 3

SPEAKING PROMPTS (TASKS)

What do you think the role of the press should be in the 21st century? Why?

Are you concerned about the continuing proliferation of nuclear weapons into Third World countries? Why?

If you could establish a system to categorize television programs so that parents could control their children's viewing, how would you go about it? What would you include? Why?

ROLE PLAYS

1. You live in an apartment building. When your upstairs neighbor waters the plants on her balcony the water ends up on your balcony damaging your furniture. The interviewer will play the role of your neighbor. Go to her and discuss the problem.

2. You and your small child are in a large city park. Your child has just thrown your keys into the goldfish pond. The interviewer will play the role of a park policeman. Explain your problem to the policeman and ask for help.

3. Arriving at an U.S. airport, you find out that your flight back to Europe has been cancelled for the day. However, you urgently need to fly back home. Explain your problem to the desk officer and demand an option to fly back to your country on the same day. The interviewer will play the role of the desk officer.