Blue Water
EDUCATION SERVICES

Mock Examination Report

Band: **6**

F&C **6**   LR **7**   GRA **6**   Pron. **6**

Overall

Your Overall band score would have been a 6 (6,7,6,6), but you were very close to pushing up to a band 6.5 or 7. You were able to get 7 in one domain (Lexical Resource) and for the other three domains where your band score was 6, it could be improved to a 7 with some focussed attention. Whilst there are things that you would need to refine in all three, if you can work on and resolve the issues I have highlighted below, an overall 7 is achievable.

Fluency and Coherence

Although Fluency and Coherence are related, we can separate them in terms of what the examiner is looking for. You were close to a seven for this domain, but there were elements of both your fluency and your coherence that would probably lead an examiner to award a six.

Your fluency was what an examiner would expect to see from a higher-level band six candidate. You showed that you were able and willing to maintain the flow of your speech. You were able to produce long passages of speech without significant difficulty and a showed a degree of naturalness that is indicative of a good fluency level. However, your speech was interrupted fairly frequently by hesitations which disrupted your fluency at times. Examiners will allow hesitation that relates to thinking about ideas, but if it is for you to think about vocabulary or grammar, it can impact your score.

In order to improve this, there are a few things you could consider. It is hard to improve issues with hesitation quickly, but practice and frequent use will help. The idiomatic usage shown in your LR section indicates that you are quite familiar communicating in English, so perhaps for you, a good approach would be to video yourself speaking, then try to pick out the moments where the hesitations occurs, then to go over them again. By highlighting the points where you are likely to get a bit stuck and working through them, you should see some improvement. Another approach that could be helpful is for you to try to slow down your speech rate. As long as it is natural, a slower speech rate will not be penalised and it gives you more time to think and form your responses.

In terms of your coherence, you performed well. Your ideas were linked together and were organised effectively. You showed a reasonable range of linkers and cohesive devices, for example "Whereas in London …, in my home country, …" and "on top of that…". However, you did have a tendency to over-use "I suppose" and "so", which impacted your performance. More diversity in linkers would have made the examiner more comfortable considering a seven.

Lexical Resource

This was clearly your strongest area. You were able to show both a wide range of vocabulary as well as effective decision making in use, both in terms of accuracy and appropriacy.

You were able to use some less common items, most notably the use of 'dilettante' and 'insipid' were excellent examples of individual items that were both less common and used effectively.

You also showed good awareness of how words link with each other (known as 'collocation'), (for example, "people tend to gloss over") and employed idiomatic language to good effect: 'down the pub' 'witter on about' and 'D'you know what I mean?' as a question tag. All of these would be characteristic of higher band scores.

If you had been able to sustain the high-quality vocabulary and idiomatic usage across your whole assessment, the examiner might have even considered an eight. Unfortunately for you, your higher quality vocabulary use was concentrated in your speech on certain topics (museums in particular, but also when you discussed your trip to London) and there was not quite enough consistency for them to award an eight on this occasion.

Cautionary Note: Clearly the discussion about museums favoured you – you might not get a topic that is so well suited to you in your real assessment!

Grammatical Range and Accuracy

Your GRA score was clearly a band six and you would be highly unlikely to drop to a five. You were able to show a good range with some accurate passive ("The building was put up more than a hundred years ago") and perfect ("People have always been interested in that") usage that was appropriate to the situations you were discussing. You clearly have a good level of grammatical awareness that would allow an examiner to consider higher bands for you.

However, the main reason an examiner would be unlikely to award you a seven was a lack of consistency. For example, you had a tendency, particularly in part 3, not to 'inflect' your sentences. This means that you sometimes did not employ any tense to your structures. For example "[In the past] people go to museums to learn. Now it's because they want other people see them or to put on IG." In this structure it didn't impact the clarity of what you were saying, but in other situations, it had a bigger impact. "He always waste my time. I not talk him much these days."

When these structures are compared with the high level examples I gave earlier, there is a marked contrast!

In terms of your sentence structures, they were generally good, with a wide range being demonstrated, but at times you seemed to favour quite basic, short structures. For example, this chain of sentences: "I go there often. Usually, I go with my boyfriend. We like it there." This is fine for a six, but an examiner would like to see more variety throughout the assessment, not just in the strongest parts to be comfortable awarding you a seven.

In order for you to raise your score to a seven, you would need to be more consistent. If you can do this, a seven is certainly achievable for GRA.

Pronunciation

Your pronunciation was generally clear, and you demonstrated good control of English phonological features. You could be understood with ease throughout the assessment. However, there were some areas where clarity was affected or you were unable to show sufficient control to be awarded a seven.

The most noticeable of these was in terms of your intonation. In some places it was a little 'flat' and intonation was simply not employed enough. Not only did this make your speech less expressive, but it led to your rhythm being a little monotonous. More use of intonation would have made it much clearer and allowed the examiner to consider a seven.

In terms of the clarity of pronunciation of individual sounds, there were a few phonemes (sounds) that were unclear.
The /æ/ sound (as in the 'a' in apple) was often produced closer to an /e/ sound. This impacted understanding in words like 'bad' which sounded more like 'bed'. There was also a degree of confusion between /s/ and /z/ as well as /t/ and /d/.

Neither of these issues is significant, but the combination would probably result in the examiner being reluctant to award you a seven. To improve these, try to force yourself to add more intonation into your speech and focus on ensuring you fully stretch your mouth to form the sounds – your issue with /æ/ and /e/ is common and results from 'lazy' use of the mouth. These interventions can take a bit of practice but can be effective reasonably quickly.