

# ***IPA Certificate of Proficiency in the Phonetics of English***

## **Examination Secretary's Report 2011-2015**

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- **Examination entry numbers**

The number of individuals entering for the examination has declined. In the years 2012 to 2015, only 37 individuals have entered and, to date, 22 *Certificates* have been awarded. One examination session is outstanding for this current year.

Normally, the examination is offered twice per year. This year a third session was arranged to coincide with the ICPHS. However, in spite of expectations that this would provide an opportunity for candidates from abroad, there were no entrants and the session was cancelled. Of the possible nine sessions in the four year period 2012-2015, the examination has taken place only five times.

- **Report on projected developments**

- Fees

The fee (discussed in my last report) has been increased annually over the past four years and will reach £100 by 2016. Payments to examiners have also been increased in line with the fee increases.

The Association makes only a token payment for administrative costs and accommodation to UCL. At market rates, this would run at a very considerable loss on every occasion. As an example, the present breakdown of payments to examiners per candidate can be seen below (where 1 and 2 identify the two examiners involved in each

<b>IPA Fee 2015</b>	<b>£75</b>
WrEx 1	£15
WrEx 2	£15
Oral 1	£9
Oral 2	£9
Admin	£8.5
Accom	£12.5
IPA	£6

*Breakdown of payments made per candidate for 2015*

activity). The two main examiners receive £15 for each script that they mark, each oral examiner receives £9 for each 15-20 minute oral, and the administrative assistant (who books rooms and liaises with candidates regarding the examination schedule, results, etc.) receives £8.50 per candidate. A token £12.50 is paid to UCL who provide the

accommodation and the IPA itself than receives the residue – currently £6 per candidate. This does not take into account the examiners' expenses which can involve not only travel, but also accommodation. Examiners provide their own food! Their expenses are funded by the Association. Each examination session therefore runs at a small loss.

- Certificates in languages other than English

No further enquiries have been received regarding offering *Certificates* in languages other than English, nor – indeed – for an online examination. Interest in re-instituting the original French and German certificates was canvassed informally but there is insufficient support. It also appears to be the case that very many people regard the existing *Certificate* as a specifically English qualification that you would not want in other languages.

- Examination centres

There have also been no further requests for the examination to be held outside of London.

- **Other developments**

Current developments centre on the *Certificate* examination web page which now provides access to an archive of recent written examination papers (covering the past ten years). The plan is to keep this up to date but also to extend the archive by adding more, older papers, adding to its historical value.

A series of learning objects has also been started providing advice on how to answer the different questions in the written paper, and explaining how performance in different exercises is evaluated. The purpose is to give candidates a clearer idea before they sit the examination about what is expected. Many candidates today are self-taught, or taught by people who are not themselves phoneticians, and they are not properly prepared. This has resulted in an increasing fail rate. I would like to see the Association do what it can to reverse this trend. This work is ongoing.

- **The future of the *Certificate* examination**

The steady, if small, trickle of candidates demonstrate that there is still a market for the *Certificate* examination. Recently, a second, London-based, private language school has made the *Certificate* a required qualification for its staff and it is hoped that this will boost candidate numbers. Maintaining the examination also means that the Association continues to provide a benchmark for standards in the area of practical phonetics skills.

One or two suggestions have been received for changing the examination, but there is no evidence to show at present that there is a market for a different examination – no requests have been received for anything different.

Patricia Ashby  
Glasgow, August 2015