UN I & UN II Language Exam Pilot Report

An innovation project

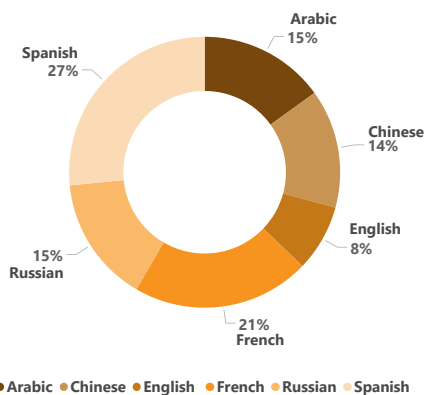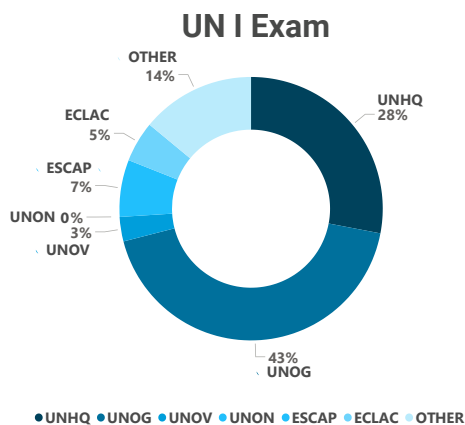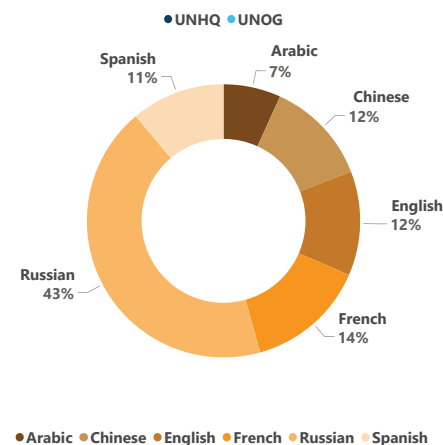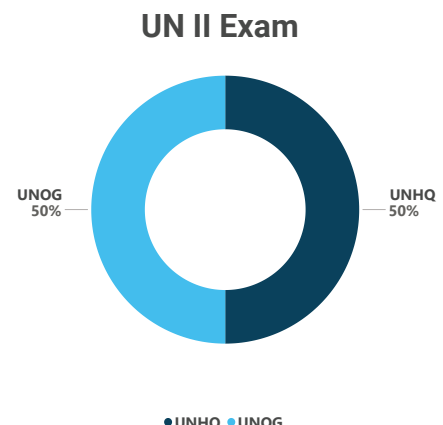# WHAT WE DELIVERED

The pilot exams for the UN I and UN II levels

- aligned to the UN Language Framework
- constructed in the six official languages
- offered online to candidates around the world

UN I Exam

OTHER 14%
ECLAC 5%
ESCAP 7%
UNON 0%
UNOV 3%
UNHQ 28%
43% UNOG

● UNHQ ● UNOG ● UNOV ● UNON ● ESCAP ● ECLAC ● OTHER

Spanish 27%
Russian 15%
French 21%
Arabic 15%
Chinese 14%
English 8%

● Arabic ● Chinese ● English ● French ● Russian ● Spanish

AR: 13 candidates
CH: 12 candidates
EN: 7 candidates
FR: 18 candidates
RU: 3 candidates
SP: 23 candidates
TOTAL: 76 candidates

The UN I Exams in the six languages were delivered in Spring 2021

UN II Exam

UNOG 50%
UNHQ 50%

● UNHQ ● UNOG

Spanish 11%
Russian 43%
French 14%
Arabic 7%
Chinese 12%
English 12%

● Arabic ● Chinese ● English ● French ● Russian ● Spanish

AR: 5 candidates
CH: 9 candidates
EN: 9 candidates
FR: 10 candidates
RU: 3 candidates
SP: 8 candidates
TOTAL: 44 candidates

The UN II Exams were delivered in Fall 2021, except for Arabic and English –Winter 2022

WHAT WE DELIVERED

The documents based on which the exams are designed, conducted, or taken

Online exams

Six exams for UN Level I
Basic language competence
Six exams for UN Level II
Intermediate language competence

Exam specifications

Instructions on how to construct exams in terms of task objectives, text types and lengths, item types and numbers, etc.

Booklet for examiners

Instructions on how to make appointments with candidates, conduct the oral exams, record and save the recordings, etc.

Booklet and scoring grids for graders

Instructions on how to score the spoken and written productions and interactions

Booklet for candidates

Information about the structure and components of the exam, its duration, the technical requirements, etc.

Task sheets

for candidates

Sets of instructions

for examiners

WHAT WE LEARNED

How we did

Survey respondents provided overwhelmingly positive feedback regarding exam content and delivery.

The vast majority of **candidates** considered the topics covered in the exams interesting and relevant to UN staff, and the tasks similar to what they might do at or outside work. Most found the instructions easy to follow and the oral exams easy to schedule.

"I enjoyed the overall experience [of the exam] – the

motivation it gave me to prepare, the organization of

the information shared,

the exam itself."

"The exam was well structured,

and it helped [me] to self-

assess knowledge so far."

Examiners and **graders** underlined how formative their experience had been. The expertise and collaborative skills developed through training in constructing, delivering, and grading exams bolstered team spirit and aspirations.

"I definitely benefitted from the entire process, as I can [have] a better picture

of the levels and the exams. I am more familiar with the Curriculum and the

Framework too. I am interested in pursuing my work as part of the team."

WHAT WE LEARNED

How we can improve

The feedback received from the team in charge of coordinating the exam construction and delivery helped gain insight into three main areas where improvement is needed for future exam editions.

- **Exam construction**: Exam templates as well as task/item banks would save time and resources. So would the support of veteran exam constructors. Many of them have actually expressed interest in further contributing to the project.

- **Logistics**: Streamlined communication would be needed to automate the major steps of the process, such as recruiting and screening candidates, organizing candidate data, updating exam documents, communicating exam results, etc.

- **Technological support**: A support line dedicated to ensuring a smooth exam delivery would ease candidates' and constructors' tasks. The assessment platform should be technologically functional to meet the exam requirements (e.g., controlling pop-up windows, managing recording setting, switching keyboards, etc.)

HOW
WE
CAN
IMPROVE

WHAT WE ENVISION

An Organization that values languages, honoring the investment of time and resources in the ability to overcome linguistic barriers, not only demonstrates its commitment to fostering multilingualism: it places diversity and inclusion at the heart of its mandate and recognizes languages as enabling skills for organizational impact.

By establishing the UN I and UN II exams, we, the Language Training Programme at UNOG and the Language and Communications Training Unit at UNHQ, will provide the means to acknowledge staff language skills at different levels of proficiency.

WHAT
WE
ENVISION