

Guide for organisations



**The world's most
trusted English test**

IELTS

IELTS ensures quality, consistency and fairness in international language testing

The International English Language Testing System (IELTS) is a test that measures the language proficiency of people who want to study or work in environments where English is used as a language of communication.

IELTS provides a valid and accurate assessment of the four language skills: listening, reading, writing, and speaking. An easy-to-use 9-band scale clearly identifies proficiency level, from non-user (band score 1) through to expert (band score 9).

IELTS treats all test takers with the utmost fairness and respect by actively avoiding cultural bias and by accepting all

standard varieties of native-speaker English, including North American, British, Australian and New Zealand English.

Fair and consistent delivery of the test is ensured by secure technology and the continual monitoring of examiners and test results as well as test centre management and facilities.

This high-quality and secure test helps organisations like yours (whether an educational institution, government professional body or commercial organisation) identify people with the appropriate level of English language proficiency.

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“IELTS gives us a reliable indication of entry level. Other tests are less satisfactory at providing this.”

Lecturer in Academic English and Study Skills, King's College London, UK

Each year, more IELTS tests are taken than any other high-stakes English language test.

A choice of two tests to better meet your needs

IELTS is the four-skills test that has become the world's most trusted high-stakes English language proficiency test for study, work and global migration.

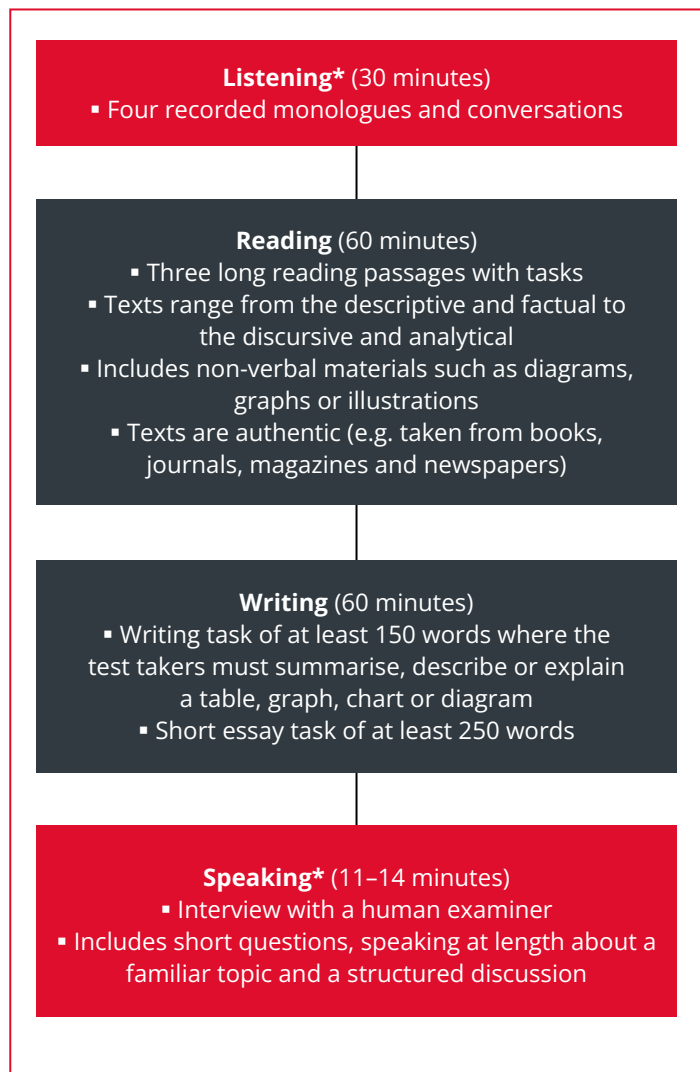
You can select the test that best suits the needs of your organisation.

Both IELTS Academic and IELTS General Training are graded using the same criteria. The distinction between the Academic and the General Training tests lies in the subject matter of the Reading and Writing sections.

For a detailed breakdown of IELTS test sections, please refer to pages 13 and 14.

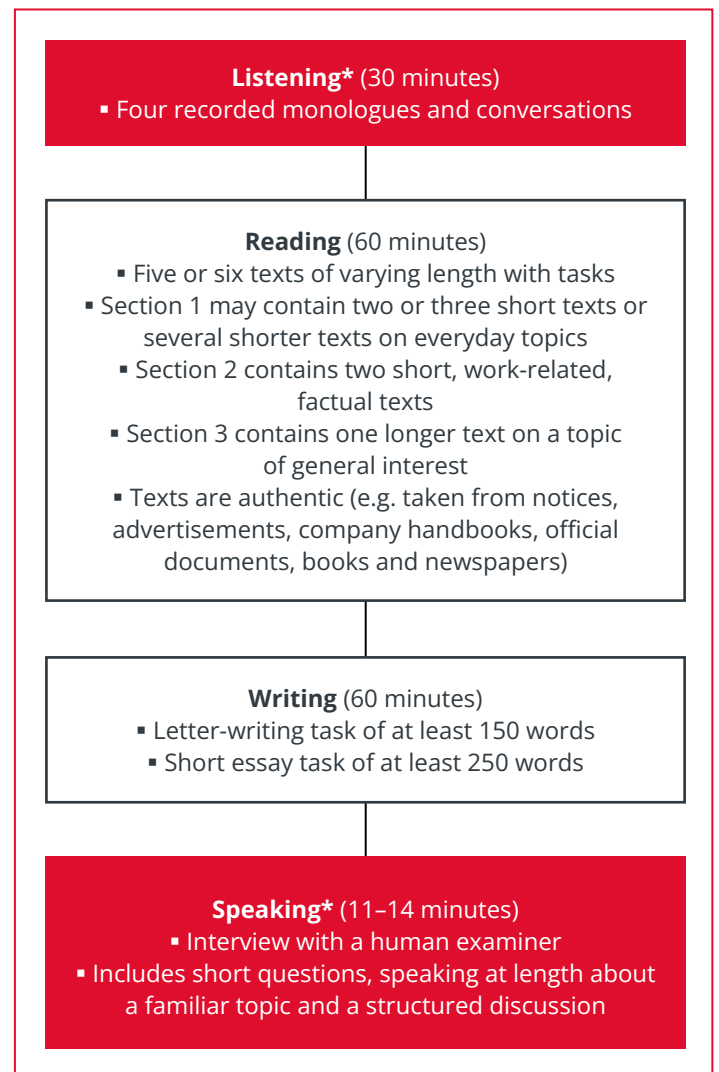
IELTS Academic

IELTS Academic measures English language proficiency needed for an academic, higher learning environment. The tasks and texts are accessible to all test takers, irrespective of the focus of each student's studies to date.



IELTS General Training

IELTS General Training measures English language proficiency in a practical, everyday context. The tasks and texts reflect both workplace and social situations.



*The Listening and Speaking sections are the same for both tests.

Ways to take IELTS

IELTS at a test centre



IELTS on paper

Test takers sit at a desk with the question papers and answer sheets for the Reading, Listening and Writing tests. Test takers will write their answers in either pen or pencil.



IELTS on computer

Test takers sit the Reading, Listening and Writing tests in front of a computer with the questions presented on the screen. Test takers use a keyboard and a mouse to submit their answers.

Remote testing



IELTS Online

Test takers sit their test at home or in a suitable private location on a computer with a stable internet connection. Test takers submit their answers using a keyboard and a mouse.



Speaking test with a human examiner

The Speaking test is carried out with a trained IELTS examiner, either in person or via a video call in real time.

We believe a Speaking test with a human examiner is the most effective way of assessing a test taker's speaking skills and prompts a more lifelike performance.



Compare the ways to take IELTS

| Feature | In a test centre | | Remote testing |
|--|--|---|--|
| |  IELTS on paper |  IELTS on computer |  IELTS Online |
| Covers all four English skills: listening, reading, writing, and speaking | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| Speaking test with a human examiner | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ Online |
| Available for IELTS Academic test | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| Available for IELTS General Training test | ✓ | ✓ | ✗ |
| Available for UKVI (UK Visas and Immigration) and other migration purposes | ✓ | ✓ | ✗ |
| Results within | 13 days after the test | 3-5 days after the test | 3-6 days after the test |
| Safeguards results with multi-layered test security | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| Globally accepted | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ Not for immigration |
| IELTS Results Service | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| Listening and Reading tests marked electronically | ✗ | ✓ | ✓ |
| Writing and Speaking tests marked by official IELTS examiners | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| Globally available | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| Can be taken anywhere | ✗ Must be taken in a test centre | ✗ Must be taken in a test centre | ✓ Private room with stable internet connection |

IELTS One Skill Retake

What is IELTS One Skill Retake?

To help our recognising organisations attract the broadest range of high-quality applicants, and our test takers achieve their global goals, we've developed IELTS One Skill Retake.

IELTS One Skill Retake allows test takers to re-attempt one of the four skills from the complete IELTS test: Listening, Reading, Writing, or Speaking.

This gives your applicants another opportunity to meet your English language requirements without the need to take a complete IELTS test again and without compromising our gold-standard test quality.

Want to know more? Visit our website or speak to your local representative:
IELTS.org/One-Skill-Retake

How IELTS One Skill Retake can benefit your organisation



Flexibility

- Allows organisations to offer flexibility to test takers who may not have performed at their best on test day.



Quality

- Same format and task types.
- Uses the same marking and scoring procedures.
- Uses the same 9-band scale.



Security

- Same security features that organisations have known and trusted for over 30 years.
- Tests are marked through the same post-test reviews and analysis.



More applicants

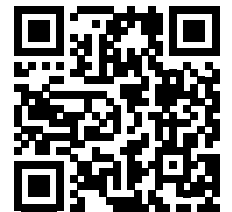
- Organisations can access a wider pool of applicants who meet their English language requirements.

Receiving IELTS One Skill Retake results is simple

As long as you've registered to receive IELTS One Skill Retake results, you'll receive them in the usual way, either via the IELTS Results Service or directly from your applicants. And as always, we encourage you to verify your results using the IELTS Results Service.

Register

to receive and verify
IELTS One Skill Retake results



Helping you select the right people from around the world

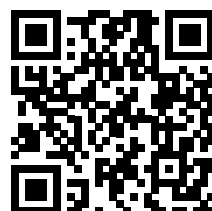
Over 11,500 organisations in over 140 countries trust IELTS to help select the right people. These organisations include:

- all universities and the vast majority of education providers in Australia, New Zealand and the UK, as well as most universities in Canada
- over 3,400 institutions in the US
- immigration authorities in Australia, Canada, New Zealand and the UK
- professional registration bodies worldwide, covering areas such as accounting, engineering, law, medicine and nursing
- a wide range of employers from sectors such as banking and finance, government, construction, energy and natural resources, aviation, health and tourism
- universities in non-English speaking countries where English is the language of instruction.

Access millions of test takers

Let test takers know that you accept IELTS results. As an IELTS Recognising Organisation, you will be listed on our website that is visited by millions of test takers every year.

Check if you are listed



The international English language test

International partners

IELTS is owned by a global partnership of education and language experts: the British Council; IDP IELTS; Cambridge University Press & Assessment. These organisations are dedicated to academic excellence, cultural understanding, student placement and enabling success worldwide.

International consultation

IELTS has been developed in close consultation with academics, professional bodies and immigration authorities from around the world.

IELTS for UK Visas and Immigration

Find out how your clients can use an IELTS result for this purpose at [IELTS.org/unitedkingdom](https://www.ielts.org/unitedkingdom)

For more information on going to or staying in the UK, visit www.gov.uk

International content

The IELTS approach is recognised as being fair, reliable and valid to all test takers, whatever their nationality, cultural background, gender or special needs. The test questions are developed by a network of IELTS test material writers in Australia, Canada, New Zealand, UK and US.

International delivery and accessibility


IELTS tests are available in over 4,000 test venues in more than 140 countries. The cost of taking the test is set locally and payable in the local currency, making registration more convenient for test takers.

IELTS test centres can send Test Report Forms directly to your organisation or institution (provided it has been nominated by the test taker), either by mail or by E-Delivery using the IELTS Results Service.

View the worldwide list of IELTS test centres at [IELTS.org/testcentres](https://www.ielts.org/testcentres)

International English

IELTS accepts all standard varieties of native-speaker English, including North American, British and Australian. The Listening component also includes a variety of native speaker accents from Australia, Canada, New Zealand, UK and US.



“IELTS makes the world a bigger, more open place. Learning English has transformed me into a citizen of the world.”

Analyst at global accounting firm

Relevant test content

Over the past three decades, feedback provided by organisations and institutions which recognise IELTS has been instrumental in developing the IELTS test to better meet your needs. One such development was to introduce a choice of two IELTS tests: Academic or General Training (*see page 1*).

IELTS General Training is recognised by employers, professional bodies and immigration authorities, and their feedback has influenced the content sources used. For example, in the IELTS General Training Reading test, Section 2 was changed to focus more on a work context (e.g. applying for jobs, company policies, pay and conditions, workplace facilities, staff development).

Real-life contexts

The IELTS test consists of questions that are relevant to the way test takers need to use English in their studies or working lives. IELTS has always included a Speaking test with a human examiner which prompts the most realistic performance from test takers. Using this in a high-stakes test is supported by a body of current academic research and continues to set IELTS apart from some other English language tests.

The test you can trust

Setting the standard

First released in 1989, IELTS is a test of all four language skills. The IELTS test has established strong credentials for consistently assessing proficiency in listening, reading, writing and speaking. The effectiveness of IELTS rests on four key test qualities:

- validity – the extent to which test results can be considered a true measure of underlying ability
- reliability – the extent to which test results are both consistent and accurate, and therefore dependable
- impact – the positive effect of a test on test takers and society as a whole
- practicality – the extent to which a test is workable in terms of the resources needed.

Evidence based

The ongoing development, improvement and validation of the IELTS test is supported by research encompassing applied linguistics, language pedagogy and language assessment.

You can read more about IELTS-related research initiatives on page 11.

Strength in partnership

IELTS is jointly owned by a partnership of education and language testing experts: the British Council; IDP IELTS; Cambridge University Press & Assessment. Benefitting from the shared expertise of these three global partners, the IELTS test combines the world-renowned language and research expertise of Cambridge University Press & Assessment and the international delivery, evaluation and security expertise of the British Council and IDP IELTS.

IELTS examiners

All IELTS examiner applicants must have:

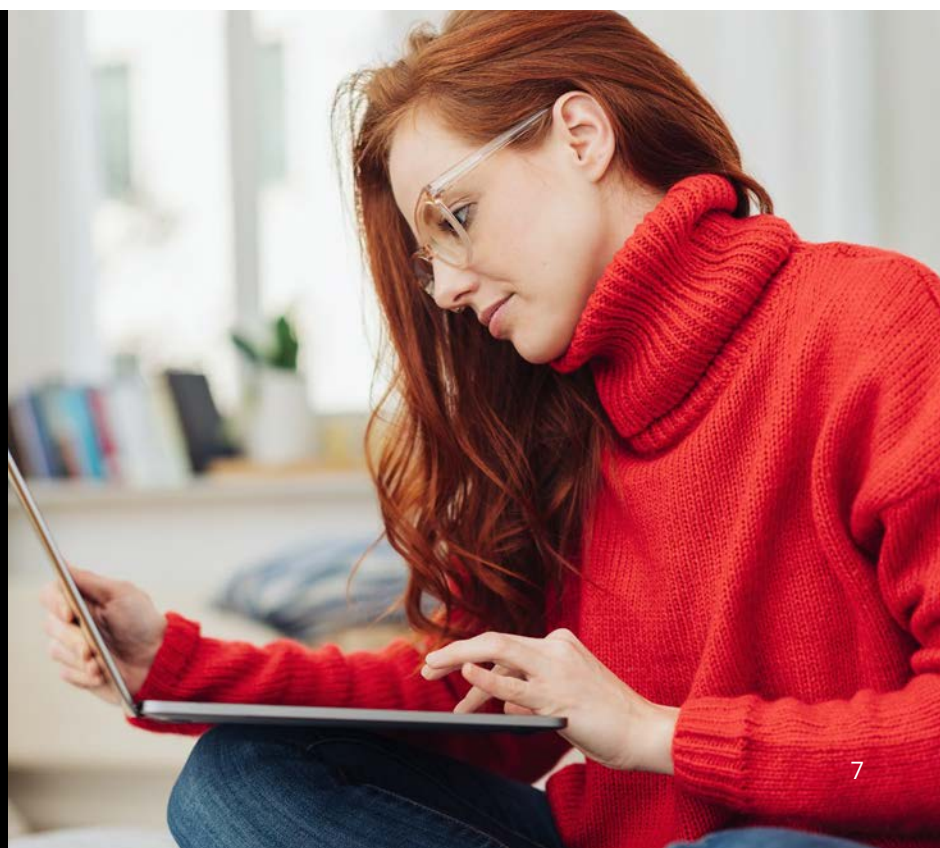
- an undergraduate degree or qualification(s) that can be demonstrated to be equivalent to an undergraduate degree
- a TEFL/TESOL qualification from a recognised institution
- substantial relevant teaching experience. experience (the majority of this teaching experience must relate to adult students aged 16 and over).

Applicants fulfilling the above minimum professional requirements to become an examiner undergo a comprehensive and systematic recruitment process which includes the following stages: interview, induction, training, standardisation and certification.

Examiners attend regular training sessions and are required to formally demonstrate their marking proficiency through a recertification process. The marking performance of IELTS examiners is systematically and regularly monitored. Examiner marking standards are maintained through the IELTS Professional Support Network, a quality assurance system designed and managed by the British Council and IDP IELTS.

“We want qualified applicants who can communicate effectively. The IELTS examination is a strong, well-constructed test that caters to this demand.”

*Graduate Program Administrator,
Brigham Young University, USA*





Rigorous test development

The IELTS test is developed to provide a fair, accurate and reliable assessment of English language proficiency for non-native speakers. The IELTS test development process ensures test consistency and fairness to all test takers regardless of their culture or where the test is taken.

Every IELTS test includes a unique combination of questions – no two versions of the test are the same.

Every test is carefully constructed to ensure a consistent level of difficulty. This involves pre-testing (or trialling) each question on a culturally diverse range of language students to determine its suitability and fairness. Statistical analysis is then undertaken to ensure every question performs as designed.

Strict security

IELTS is a high-stakes test which leads to local and international opportunity. Therefore, test integrity is of paramount importance to recognising organisations and to test takers alike. The IELTS Partners are scrupulous in the management of test delivery. The British Council and IDP IELTS manage the security and quality control of IELTS test centres globally, and are highly selective in the identification of prospective test centres.

Each prospective IELTS test centre must undergo a demanding selection process and agree to a stringent set of contractual conditions. IELTS test centres adhere to a detailed code of practice and strict test centre operating conditions, including a comprehensive audit programme involving onsite scheduled and/or spot audits.

▪ Biometric systems

Biometric systems are used to capture and record each test taker's finger scan at test registration and before entry to the test. This finger scan is checked on test day to verify test taker identity and ensure that the same person sits all four components of the test. A high-resolution photograph of each test taker is taken at the time of registering for the test. This photograph is used to verify that the person who sits the test is the person that registered.

▪ Checking the result

The IELTS Partners strongly recommend you use the IELTS Results Service to verify results. *For more information about the IELTS Results Service see page 9.*

More information relating to IELTS security protocols can be obtained by attending information sessions and face-to-face meetings organised by the IELTS Partners for recognising organisations. If you have any questions, or would like to find out about information sessions in your region, please contact the stakeholder relations teams at the British Council, IDP IELTS, and IELTS USA.

Contact details are listed on the outside back cover.

Meeting your needs

Dedicated team

The British Council, IDP IELTS and IELTS USA have stakeholder relations teams ready to respond to questions and provide further information. The IELTS Partners also deliver regular information sessions and newsletters to keep you up to date with the latest IELTS developments.

To keep updated with information sessions or to receive the newsletter, please complete the online enquiry form via [IELTS.org/contact](https://ielts.org/contact)

Join the IELTS network and access millions of test takers

Every year, [IELTS.org](https://ielts.org) has millions of unique visitors in countries worldwide. Become an IELTS recognising organisation and we will list your organisation or institution at [IELTS.org/recognition](https://ielts.org/recognition). Join our database of over 11,500 organisations across the globe who trust IELTS.

Displaying your organisation's URL and minimum band score requirements on our website will increase your reach to millions of existing and potential test takers. This system also makes it easy for you to compare your band score requirements with those of other organisations around the world.

Setting IELTS band score requirements for your organisation

IELTS test scores are just one element of your assessment of a test taker's suitability to join your institution or organisation. The level of English needed to perform effectively in study, work or training varies from one situation to another. Each individual organisation can therefore set its own minimum IELTS score, depending on its own specific requirements.

For more band score setting advice, see page 16.

IELTS Results Service

The IELTS Results Service is a free, secure online service which lets you:

- quickly verify that an applicant is presenting a genuine Test Report Form by checking that the results you receive match the results held on the IELTS database
- conveniently download electronic Test Report Forms in batches.

Validity period of IELTS test results

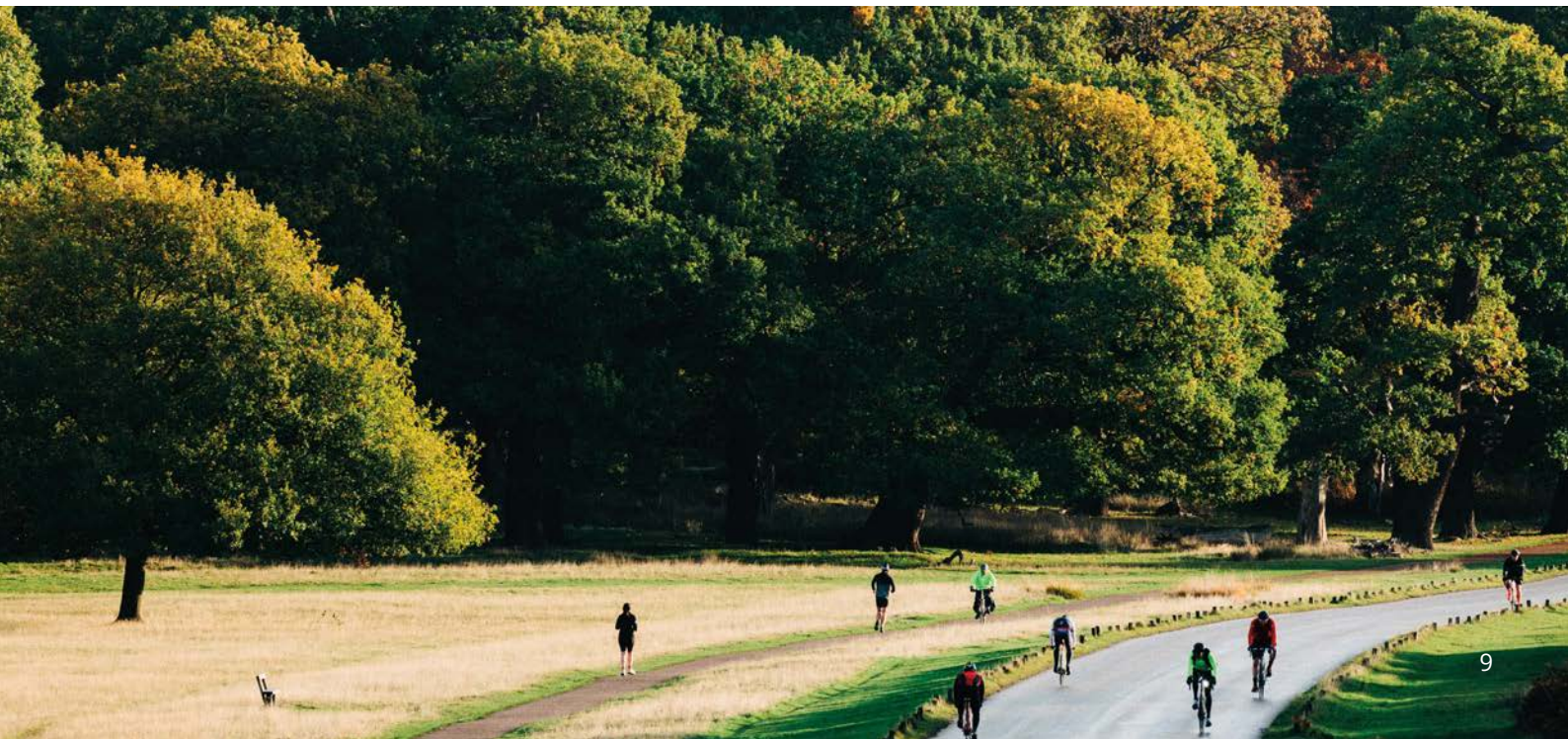
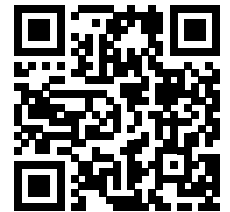
We recommend that an IELTS result demonstrates a test taker's English language ability for a maximum period of two years, based upon the well-documented phenomenon of second language loss or 'attrition'.

We recommend that an IELTS Test Report Form (TRF) which is more than two years old should only be accepted if it is accompanied by proof that the test taker has actively maintained, or tried to improve, their English.

You can, however, verify a TRF older than two years. The IELTS Results Service will display TRFs for the maximum amount of time possible according to relevant Data Protection legislation. We cannot further investigate TRFs that are more than three years old.

Become an IELTS recognising organisation

Registering your organisation is simple – sign up now



“To avoid the risk of accepting fraudulent documents, we use the IELTS Results Service.”

*International Section Manager
and Registered Nurse, Australian
Nursing and Midwifery
Council, Australia*

Further information and support tools

Further information and support tools are available for organisations, including academic institutions, agents, employers, governments, and teachers at [IELTS.org/organisations](https://ielts.org/organisations)

You can also access our latest test taker and test performance data at [IELTS.org/data](https://ielts.org/data)

Support for test takers

From apps and webinars to training courses and practice tests, we provide everything test takers need to succeed.

A variety of IELTS preparation resources are available at [IELTS.org/prepare](https://ielts.org/prepare)

IELTS Progress Check

Test takers can check to see if they're ready to take IELTS using our official preparation tool, IELTS Progress Check. It can be purchased online by test takers or teachers to check IELTS test takers' progress on [IELTS.org/progress-check](https://ielts.org/progress-check)

Research

IELTS-related research can be found at [IELTS.org/research](https://ielts.org/research)

Continual research-based development

The IELTS Partners have a longstanding commitment to remain at the forefront of developments in English language testing.

IELTS has evolved in parallel with advances in applied linguistics, language pedagogy, language assessment and technology. The two streams of research ensure the ongoing validity, reliability, positive impact and practicality of the test.

Research from Cambridge

Cambridge has been creating English examinations for speakers of other languages since 1913 and has unrivalled experience in the field. Research activities are managed by the Research and Validation unit at Cambridge University Press & Assessment.

The Research and Validation unit brings together specialists in testing and assessment, statistical analysis and item-banking, applied linguistics, corpus linguistics, and language learning/pedagogy, and provides rigorous quality assurance for the IELTS test at every stage of development.

As part of our commitment to sharing our research and promoting assessment literacy, we publish the series **Studies in Language Testing (SILT)**, which includes the following IELTS titles (see table on the right).

Research Notes

Research Notes reports on matters relating to research, test development, and validation within Cambridge University Press & Assessment and elsewhere.

You can download issues at cambridgeenglish.org/researchnotes

Studies in Language Testing volumes include:

| | |
|------------|---|
| Volume 54: | <i>On Topic Validity in Speaking Tests</i> |
| Volume 51: | <i>Research and Practice in Assessing Academic Reading: The Case of IELTS</i> |
| Volume 34: | <i>IELTS Collected Papers 2: Research in reading and listening assessment</i> |
| Volume 25: | <i>IELTS Washback in Context: Preparation for academic writing in higher education</i> |
| Volume 24: | <i>Impact Theory and Practice: Studies of the IELTS test and Progetto Lingue 2000</i> |
| Volume 23: | <i>Assessing Academic English: Testing English proficiency, 1950–1989 – the IELTS solution</i> |
| Volume 19: | <i>IELTS Collected Papers: Research in speaking and writing assessment</i> |
| Volume 4: | <i>The Development of IELTS: A study of the effect of background knowledge on reading comprehension</i> |

External research

An external IELTS research scheme, funded by IDP IELTS and the British Council, ensures an ongoing relationship with the broader linguistics and language testing community and demonstrates the partners' commitment to continuous improvement of the test.

Since 1995, over 140 external studies by over 350 individual researchers from a wide range of countries have been funded.

Such research has become a key factor in providing evidence to prove that IELTS is always fit for purpose.



IELTS Research Reports

Below is a sample of the articles which have been published in *IELTS Research Reports*. The majority of IELTS-funded research is published in the *IELTS Research Reports* which can be accessed from [IELTS.org/research-reports](https://ielts.org/research-reports)

| Title | Author/organisation | Volume and date of publication |
|--|---|---|
| <i>IELTS Online: Overview</i> | Emma Bruce and Tony Clark | IELTS Research Group (February 2023) |
| <i>Investigating the effect of interactive videos on test-takers' performance on the listening section of IELTS</i> | Ruslan Suvorov and Zhi Li | IELTS Research Reports Online Series 2023/2 |
| <i>IELTS One Skill Retake: A Bias for Best Model</i> | Tony Clark, Emma Bruce, Jamie Dunlea | IELTS Research Group Position Statement (December 2022) |
| <i>Investigating linkages between international students' English language proficiency, social-contextual outcomes, and wellbeing in U.S. universities</i> | Nelson Brunsting, Qiaona Yu, Jon Smart and W Patrick Bingham | IELTS Research Reports Online Series 2022/4 |
| <i>Comparison of IELTS Academic and Duolingo English Test</i> | Sara T Cushing and Haoshan Ren, Georgia State University | IELTS Partnership Research Papers, 2022/1 |
| <i>IELTS Writing band scores 5.5-7.5: Grammatical error rates, stakeholder perceptions, and risk</i> | Amanda Muller and Weifeng Ha | IELTS Research Reports Online Series 2022/1 |
| <i>Japanese Stakeholders' Perceptions of IELTS Writing and Speaking Tests and their Impact on Communication and Achievement</i> | Noriko Iwashita, Miyuki Sasaki, Annita Stell and Megan Yucel | IELTS Research Reports Online Series 2021/4 |
| <i>How are IELTS scores set and used for university admissions selection: A cross-institutional case study</i> | Daniel M K Lam, Anthony Green, Neil Murray and Angela Gayton | IELTS Research Reports Online Series 2021/3 |
| <i>Stakeholder perceptions of IELTS as a gateway to the professional workplace: The case of employers of overseas trained teachers</i> | Jill C Murray and Judy Cross, Macquarie University, Australia; Ken Cruickshank University of Sydney, Australia | IELTS Research Report Series, No. 1, 2014 |
| <i>Investigating the use of IELTS in determining employment, migration and professional registration outcomes in healthcare and early childcare education in Australia</i> | Cate Gribble, Jill Blackmore, Anne-Marie Morrissey and Tanja Capic, Deakin University, Australia | IELTS Research Report Series, No. 4, 2016 |
| <i>Transitioning from university to the workplace: Stakeholder perceptions of academic and professional writing demands</i> | Ute Knoch, Susy Macqueen and Neomy Storch, University of Melbourne, Australia; Lyn May, Queensland University of Technology, Australia; John Pill, American University of Beirut, Lebanon | IELTS Research Report Series, No. 1, 2016 |

The four sections of IELTS

Listening

Duration: 30 minutes plus 10 minutes to transfer answers to the answer sheet*
Format: there are 40 questions

Test takers listen to four recorded texts, monologues and conversations by a range of native speakers, and write their answers to a series of questions.

These include questions which test the ability to understand main ideas and detailed factual information, ability to understand the opinions and attitudes of speakers, ability to understand the purpose of an utterance and ability to follow the development of ideas.

A variety of voices and native-speaker accents is used and each part is heard only once.

Part 1

A conversation between two people set in an everyday social context, e.g. a conversation in an accommodation agency.

Part 2

A monologue set in an everyday social context, e.g. a speech about local facilities.

Part 3

A conversation between up to four people set in an educational or training context, e.g. a university tutor and a student discussing an assignment.

Part 4

A monologue on an academic subject, e.g. a university lecture.

**In the IELTS on computer Listening test, the timings are slightly different from IELTS on paper. This is because IELTS on paper requires users to transfer answers to an answer sheet. This step becomes redundant when answering directly on a computer.*

Reading

Duration: 60 minutes
Format: there are 40 questions

A variety of question types are used in order to test a wide range of reading skills. These include reading for gist, reading for main ideas, reading for detail, skimming, understanding logical argument, understanding inferences and implied meaning, and recognising writers' opinions, attitudes and purpose.

The Academic and General Training Reading tests both contain three sections. Test takers are required to read a number of texts, with a total length of 2,150–2,750 words.

The General Training Reading test differs from the Academic Reading test in the choice of texts (topic, genre, length, number, etc.).

IELTS Academic

The Academic Reading test contains three long texts. The texts are authentic and are taken from books, journals, magazines and newspapers. They have been written for a non-specialist audience and are on academic topics of general interest. Texts are appropriate to, and accessible to, test takers entering undergraduate or postgraduate courses or seeking professional registration. Texts range from the descriptive and factual to the discursive and analytical. Texts may contain non-verbal materials such as diagrams, graphs or illustrations. If texts contain technical terms, then a simple glossary is provided.

IELTS General Training

Texts are taken from notices, advertisements, official documents, booklets, newspapers, instruction manuals, leaflets, timetables, books and magazines. These are materials test takers are likely to encounter on a daily basis in an English-speaking environment.

“IELTS provides a reliable and internationally accessible means for doctors coming from overseas to demonstrate their language proficiency before they start work.”

*Director of Registration and Education,
General Medical Council, UK*





Writing

Duration: 60 minutes
Format: there are two tasks –
to write 150 words and
to write 250 words

IELTS Academic

The Writing section of IELTS Academic includes two tasks. Topics are of general interest and suitable for test takers entering undergraduate or postgraduate studies or seeking professional registration.

Task 1

Test takers are presented with a graph, table, chart or diagram and are asked to describe, summarise or explain the information in their own words. They may be asked to describe and explain data, describe the stages of a process, describe how something works or describe an object or event.

Task 2

Test takers are asked to write an essay in response to a point of view, argument or problem. Responses to both tasks must be written in an academic or semi-formal/neutral style.

IELTS General Training

The Writing section of IELTS General Training includes two tasks which are based on topics of general interest.

Task 1

Test takers are presented with a situation and asked to write a letter requesting information or explaining the situation. The letter may be personal, semi-formal or formal in style.

Task 2

Test takers are asked to write an essay in response to a point of view, argument or problem. The essay can be slightly more personal in style than the Academic Writing Task 2 essay.

Speaking

Duration: 11–14 minutes

The Speaking test assesses the test taker's use of spoken English. The Speaking test is delivered in a way that does not allow test takers to rehearse set responses beforehand.

The Speaking test consists of three parts:

Part 1 (4–5 minutes)

Test takers answer general questions about themselves and a range of familiar topics, such as their home, family, work, studies and interests.

Part 2 (3–4 minutes)

Test takers are given a card which asks them to talk about a particular topic. They have one minute to prepare before speaking for up to two minutes. The examiner may then ask one or two questions on the same topic to finish this part of the test.

Part 3 (4–5 minutes)

Test takers are asked further questions connected to the topic in Part 2. These questions give the test taker an opportunity to discuss more abstract issues and ideas.

The Listening and Speaking sections are the same for both IELTS Academic and IELTS General Training.

The IELTS 9-band scale

There is no pass or fail in IELTS. Rather, all test results are reported on a clear 9-band scale (from 1, the lowest, to 9, the highest). The scale has remained a consistent and acquired currency around the world over the past three decades.

Test takers receive an overall band score as well as individual scores for each test section (Listening, Reading, Writing, and Speaking).

The IELTS test provides an accurate picture of a test taker's language skills at a certain point in time. Language ability diminishes over time if not actively maintained.

Read more about band scores, examiners, marking and assessment criteria at [IELTS.org/criteria](https://ielts.org/criteria)

| Band score | Skill level | Description |
|------------|---------------------------------|---|
| 9 | Expert user | Has fully operational command of the language: appropriate, accurate and fluent with complete understanding. |
| 8 | Very good user | Has fully operational command of the language with only occasional unsystematic inaccuracies and inappropriacies. Misunderstandings may occur in unfamiliar situations. Handles complex detailed argumentation well. |
| 7 | Good user | Has operational command of the language, though with occasional inaccuracies, inappropriacies and misunderstandings in some situations. Generally handles complex language well and understands detailed reasoning. |
| 6 | Competent user | Has generally effective command of the language despite some inaccuracies, inappropriacies and misunderstandings. Can use and understand fairly complex language, particularly in familiar situations. |
| 5 | Modest user | Has partial command of the language, coping with overall meaning in most situations, though is likely to make many mistakes. Should be able to handle basic communication in own field. |
| 4 | Limited user | Basic competence is limited to familiar situations. Has frequent problems in understanding and expression. Is not able to use complex language. |
| 3 | Extremely limited user | Conveys and understands only general meaning in very familiar situations. Frequent breakdowns in communication occur. |
| 2 | Intermittent user | No real communication is possible except for the most basic information using isolated words or short formulae in familiar situations and to meet immediate needs. Has great difficulty understanding spoken and written English. |
| 1 | Non-user | Essentially has no ability to use the language beyond possibly a few isolated words. |
| 0 | Did not attempt the test | No assessable information provided. |

IELTS test score guidance for educational institutions

The level of English needed for a non-native speaker student to perform effectively varies by situation and institution. That is why each individual institution should set its own minimum IELTS score for applicants, depending on specific institutional and programme requirements.

Please note: The table below gives guidance on acceptable IELTS band scores for different programmes. It should be noted, however, that many diverse variables can affect performance on programmes, of which language ability is but one.

Read more about band score setting at [IELTS.org/entry-scores](https://ielts.org/entry-scores)

| Band score | Linguistically demanding academic programmes | Linguistically less demanding academic programmes | Linguistically demanding training programmes | Linguistically less demanding training programmes |
|------------|--|---|--|---|
| 7.5–9.0 | Acceptable | Acceptable | Acceptable | Acceptable |
| 7.0 | Probably acceptable | Acceptable | Acceptable | Acceptable |
| 6.5 | English study needed | Probably acceptable | Acceptable | Acceptable |
| 6.0 | English study needed | English study needed | Probably acceptable | Acceptable |
| 5.5 | English study needed | English study needed | English study needed | Probably acceptable |



“We consider an IELTS qualification to be a reliable indication of a student’s English language competencies and of their ability to pursue their higher education in English.”

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