IELTS™

Guide

For education institutions, governments, professional bodies and commercial organizations

ielts.org

IELTS. Ensuring 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 center management and facilities.

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

Contents

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

Lecturer in Academic English and Study Skills, Kings College London, UK

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

A choice of two tests to better meet your needs

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

The format of the test has remained consistent since 1995.

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

Both Academic and General Training tests 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 page 12.

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.

Listening* (30 minutes)
• Four recorded monologues and conversations

Reading (60 minutes)

• Three long reading passages with tasks

• Texts range from the descriptive and factual to the discursive and analytical

• Includes non-verbal materials such as diagrams, graphs or illustrations

• Texts are authentic (e.g. taken from books, journals, magazines and newspapers)

Writing (60 minutes)
• Writing task of at least 150 words where the test taker must summarize, describe or explain a table, graph, chart or diagram

• Short essay task of at least 250 words

Speaking* (11 to 14 minutes)
• Face-to-face interview

• Includes short questions, speaking at length about a familiar topic and a structured discussion

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.

Listening* (30 minutes)
• Four recorded monologues and conversations

Reading (60 minutes)

• Five or six texts of varying length with tasks

• Section 1 contains two or three short factual texts

• Section 2 contains two short, work-related, factual texts

• Section 3 contains one longer text on a topic of general interest

• Texts are authentic (e.g. taken from notices, advertisements, company handbooks, official documents, books and newspapers)

Writing (60 minutes)
• Letter writing task of at least 150 words

• Short essay task of at least 250 words

Speaking* (11 to 14 minutes)
• Face-to-face interview

• Includes short questions, speaking at length about a familiar topic and a structured discussion

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

IELTS on Paper or Computer

IELTS can be taken on paper or computer

Paper-based IELTS

This test requires test takers to sit at a desk with the question papers and answer sheets for the Reading, Listening and Writing tests in an official IELTS test center. Test takers will write their answers in either pen or HB-pencil.

Computer-delivered IELTS

This test requires test takers to sit the Reading, Listening and Writing tests in front of a computer with the questions presented on the screen in an official IELTS test center. The test takers then submit their answers through the use of a keyboard and a mouse. The Speaking test is not on computer and is carried out face-to-face with a trained IELTS examiner.

Face-to-face Speaking test

The Speaking test for both paper-based and computer-delivered IELTS is carried out face-to-face with a trained IELTS examiner.

We believe a face-to-face speaking test is the most effective way of assessing a test taker speaking skills and prompts a more lifelike performance.

Introducing computer-delivered IELTS

Computer-delivered IELTS is here, with faster results and more test availability

- Results in 5-7 days

- More tests, more days of the week

- Speaking test remains face-to-face

Test takers now have the choice between taking IELTS on paper or on computer.

The test content and structure remain the same in both options and, importantly, the Speaking test remains face-to-face with a certified IELTS Examiner.

With computer-delivered IELTS there are more test dates and sessions available, allowing test takers to choose a test time most convenient for them.

With this new option, the test results will be available in 5-7 days.

Still the same trusted IELTS test

Whether test takers take IELTS on paper or computer, they can be confident that they are taking the same trusted English language test, with no differences in:

- Content
- Test timings*
- Structure
- Marking

- Question types
- Security
- Speaking test
- Test Report Form

*In the computer-delivered Listening test, the timings are slightly different from the paper-based test.

This is because the paper-based test requires users to transfer answers to an answer sheet.

This step becomes redundant when answering directly on a computer.

- Before the start of each part of the Listening test, users will have some time to read the questions.
- After the end of each part of the Listening test, users will have some time to review their answers.
- At the end of the Listening test, users will have 2 minutes to check their answers.

The timing of the Listening test is between 30 – 34 minutes.

Helping test takers prepare for computer-delivered IELTS

There are many practice questions and test support materials online to help test takers prepare.

Try the free sample test questions and watch tutorial videos on **ielts.org/oncomputer**

> **"I really wanted my results quicker, so that's why I took IELTS on a computer. The test was otherwise the same."**
>
> *Tom, Germany*

Helping you select the right people from around the world

Over 10,000 organizations in over 140 countries rely on IELTS to help select the right people. These organizations 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

Reach new test takers
Let test takers know that you accept IELTS results by listing the entry requirements of your institution/organization on the IELTS website ielts.org/recognition/signup. *See page 8 for details.*

The international English language test

International partners
IELTS is owned by a global partnership of education and language experts: the British Council, IDP: IELTS Australia and Cambridge Assessment English. These organizations 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.

International content
The IELTS approach is recognized 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.

IELTS for UK Visas and Immigration

Find out how the IELTS result can be used for this purpose at **ielts.org/unitedkingdom.** For more information on going to or staying in the UK, visit **gov.uk.**

International delivery and accessibility
IELTS tests are offered up to four times a month in over 1,600 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. Results are issued to test takers on the 13th day after the paper-based test or within 5-7 days after the computer-delivered test.

IELTS test centers can send Test Report Forms directly to your organization or institution (provided it has been nominated by the test taker), either by mail or as an electronic download.

IELTS USA
IELTS supports organizations in the United States that use IELTS to measure the English language proficiency of international applicants. IELTS USA also manages the administration of IELTS test operations across the United States.

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

View the worldwide list of IELTS test centers at ielts.org/testcenters

> "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 organizations and institutions which recognize 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 recognized by employers, professional bodies and immigration authorities and their feedback has influenced the content sources used. For example, section two of the Reading section of IELTS General Training 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 face-to-face Speaking section which prompts the most realistic performance from test takers. The use of the face-to-face section 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 10.

Strength in partnership

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

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 recognized institution

• substantial relevant teaching experience. The majority of this teaching experience must relate to adult students (16 years 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, standardization and certification.

Examiners attend regular training sessions and are required to formally demonstrate their marking proficiency through a re-certification 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 British Council and IDP: IELTS Australia.

"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

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

Each IELTS test contains a unique combination of questions.

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 organizations and to test takers alike. The IELTS partners are scrupulous in the management of test delivery. British Council and IDP: IELTS Australia manage the security and quality control of IELTS test centers globally, and are highly selective in the identification of prospective test centers.

Each prospective IELTS test center must undergo a demanding selection process and agree to a stringent set of contractual conditions. IELTS test centers adhere to a detailed code of practice and strict test center operating conditions, including a comprehensive audit program 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 sections 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 online results verification service. This allows you to check the authenticity of paper Test Report Form results. If you have any questions regarding a test result, follow the links as instructed by the verification service. *For more information about the IELTS Verification Service see page 8.*

More information relating to IELTS security protocols can be obtained by attending information sessions and face-to-face meetings organized by the IELTS partners for recognising organizations. 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 Australia and IELTS USA.

Contact details are listed on the outside back cover.

Meeting your needs

Dedicated team

British Council, IDP: IELTS Australia, 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

Reach out to more test takers with IELTS

In the last 12 months, ielts.org received more than ten million unique visitors from more than 200 countries. Benefit from this interest by listing your organization or institution at ielts.org/recognition. This online database lists the thousands of organizations around the world which accept IELTS results.

Displaying your organization's URL and minimum band score requirements on ielts.org/recognition 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 organizations around the world.

Registering your organization is easy and free at ielts.org/recognition/signup

To register you will simply need to provide the following information via the online registration form:

- contact details for your organization

- minimum IELTS band scores required for entry to your organization

- a relevant URL for your organization (e.g. admissions page, international student page).

Have your IELTS minimum entry requirements changed?

If so, update your organization's listing on the IELTS website by completing the 'IELTS Recognition Form' which can be downloaded at ielts.org/recognition

Setting IELTS band score requirements for your organization

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

For more band score setting advice, see page 14.

IELTS Scores Guide
This Scores Guide includes examples of test takers' writing specimens and filmed footage of test takers' speaking performances at different band score levels. The Scores Guide can be ordered via ielts.org

Verify IELTS results online

The IELTS Verification 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.

Please note: The IELTS partners recommend that a Test Report Form which is more than two years old should only be accepted if it is accompanied by proof that a test taker has actively maintained or tried to improve their English.

Gain access to the IELTS Verification Service at ielts.org/verify

Once your organization is listed on ielts.org/recognition, you can request access to the IELTS Results Verification Service by downloading and completing the Administrator Application Form at ielts.org/verify

For further information please refer to the *IELTS Results Verification Service* brochure, available at ielts.org/institutions
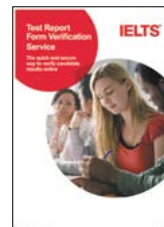
> "To avoid the risk of accepting fraudulent documents, we use the IELTS Verification service."
>
> *International Section Manager and Registered Nurse, Australian Nursing and Midwifery Council, Australia*

Support materials

A range of support tools for organizations can be found at ielts.org/institutions including:

* *Ensuring Quality and Fairness in international English language testing*

* *IELTS Guide for Teachers*

* *IELTS Guide for Agents*

* *IELTS Results Verification Service*

* Analysis of test data and test taker performance at ielts.org/data

Support for test takers and teachers

Test takers and teachers can access the official IELTS support materials from ielts.org/prepare

The *Official Practice Materials* books (two volumes available) can be purchased at IELTS Test Centers.

The *Information for Candidate*s booklet and sample test materials can be accessed, free of charge, from ielts.org.

The *IELTS Progress Check*, an official IELTS practice test online at ieltsprogresscheck.com can be purchased by test takers or teachers to check test takers' IELTS progress.

Research

IELTS related research can be found at 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.

The steady evolution of IELTS is in parallel with advances in applied linguistics, language pedagogy, language assessment and technology. This ensures the ongoing validity, reliability, positive impact and practicality of the test. Adherence to these four qualities is supported by two streams of research.

Internal research

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

The Research and Validation teams bring 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.

Through publications and presentations in the public domain the division makes a valuable contribution to the wider field of language assessment more generally. In particular, *Studies in Language Testing* is a series of academic volumes edited by Dr Nick Saville (Director of Research and Thought Leadership at Cambridge Assessment English) and until 2018 the late Prof Cyril J Weir of the University of Bedfordshire.

It is published jointly by Cambridge Assessment English and Cambridge University Press (CUP). The series addresses a wide range of important issues and new developments in language testing and assessment and is an indispensable resource for test users, developers and researchers. There are currently over 40 titles available; a number of these deal specifically with IELTS.

Research Notes

Research Notes is a quarterly publication that reports from Cambridge Assessment English research, test development and validation activities. You can download issues at
www.cambridgeenglish.org/researchnotes

Studies in Language Testing. Volumes include:

Volume 34:	*IELTS Collected Papers 2: Research in reading and listening assessment*
Volume 25:	*IELTS Washback in Context: Preparation for academic writing in higher education*
Volume 24:	*Impact Theory and Practice: Studies of the IELTS test and Progetto Lingue 2000*
Volume 23:	*Assessing Academic English: Testing English proficiency, 1950-1989 - the IELTS solution*
Volume 19:	*IELTS Collected Papers: Research in speaking and writing assessment*
Volume 4:	*The Development of IELTS: A study of the effect of background knowledge on reading comprehension*

External research

An external IELTS research scheme, funded by the British Council and IDP:IELTS Australia, 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 100 external studies by over 140 unique researchers from a wide cross-section of countries have attracted funding under this jointly-funded scheme.

Such research has become a key section in securing external validation of IELTS.

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

Title	Author/Organization	Volume and date of publication
IELTS: Student and supervisor perceptions of writing competencies for a Computer Science PhD	Alexandra L. Uitdenbogerd, Kath Lynch, James Harland, Charles Thevathayan, Margaret Hamilton, Daryl D'Souza and Sarah Zydervelt	Online series 1, 2018
An impact study into the use of IELTS by professional associations in the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia and New Zealand, 2014 to 2015	Glenys Merrifield, GBM & Associates	Online series 7, 2016
Investigating the use of IELTS in determining employment, migration and professional registration outcomes in healthcare and early childcare education in Australia	Cate Gribble, Jill Blackmore, Anne-Marie Morrissey and Tanja Capic, Deakin University	Online series 4, 2016
Investigating the language needs of international nurses: insiders' perspectives	Carole Sedgwick, Mark Garner and Isabel Vicente-Macia	Online series 2, 2016
Transitioning from university to the workplace: Stakeholder perceptions of academic and professional writing demands	Ute Knoch, Lyn May, Susy Macqueen, John Pill, Neomy Storch	Online series 1, 2016
Stakeholder perceptions of IELTS as a gateway to the professional workplace: The case of employers of overseas trained teachers	Jill C Murray, Judie L Cross and Ken Cruickshank	Online series 1, 2014
The quest for IELTS Band 7.0: Investigating English language proficiency development of international students at an Australian university	Elizabeth Craven University of Technology, Sydney	Volume 13, 2012
A case study evaluation of the English language progress of Chinese students on two UK postgraduate engineering courses	Gaynor Lloyd-Jones and Chris Binch Cranfield University	Volume 13, 2012
Investigating stakeholders' perceptions of IELTS as an entry requirement for higher education in the UK	David Hyatt, Greg Brooks, The University of Sheffield, UK	Volume 10, 2009
Determination of appropriate IELTS band score for admission into a program at a Canadian post-secondary polytechnic institution	Katherine Golder, British Columbia Institute of Technology, Kenneth Reeder, University of British Columbia and Sarah Fleming, Simon Fraser University, Canada	Volume 10, 2009

The four sections of IELTS

Listening
Duration: 30 minutes
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 section is heard only once.

Section 1
A conversation between two people set in an everyday social context, e.g. a conversation in an accommodation agency.

Section 2
A monologue set in an everyday social context, e.g. a speech about local facilities.

Section 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.

Section 4
A monologue on an academic subject, e.g. a university lecture.

For paper-based IELTS, there is a 10 minutes transfer time.

In the computer-delivered Listening test, the timings are slightly different from the paper-based test.

This is because the paper-based test 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 to 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, annuals, leaflets, timetables, books and magazines. These are materials test takers are likely to encounter on a daily basis in an English speaking environment.

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, summarize or explain the information in their own words. They may be asked to describe and explain data, describe the stages of a process, 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 to 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 section is the same for both IELTS Academic and General Training.

"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

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 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

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 fully operational command of the language, although 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 own field.
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	Not 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 program requirements.

Read more about band score setting on page 8 of this brochure and at ielts.org/institutions

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

Band score	Linguistically demanding **academic** courses	Linguistically less demanding **academic** courses	Linguistically demanding **training** courses	Linguistically less demanding **training** courses
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

ielts.org

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