Guide
for educational institutions, governments, professional bodies and commercial organisations
IELTS – the International English Language Testing System – serves educational institutions, governments, professional bodies and commercial organisations around the world. It helps you recruit applicants who are able to communicate effectively in English. Wherever you are based, our high-quality, practical and secure test ensures you only take on people who can actively engage in all aspects of work, study and training.

Over one million people take the IELTS test each year. Selecting applicants with the right level of English has never been easier.
The international test

Global recognition
IELTS is already trusted and used by over 6,000 institutions worldwide, including universities, employers, professional bodies and immigration authorities. It is the test that sets the standard around the world.

- Almost all universities in Australia, Canada, New Zealand and the UK accept IELTS.

- In the USA, IELTS is accepted by over 2,000 universities, colleges and faculties, including Ivy League and other top institutions.

- IELTS is used for immigration to Australia, Canada, New Zealand and the UK.

- Employers in English-speaking countries and beyond accept IELTS scores.

- Professional bodies and training bodies in areas such as law and medicine use IELTS.

Accessible and convenient
IELTS is one of the most widely available English language tests in the world. It is offered up to four times a month in more than 125 countries. Our test centres have a greater testing capacity than most other tests. For a full list of IELTS centres worldwide, visit www.ielts.org

The cost of taking the test is set locally, payable in local currency. This makes IELTS accessible to all candidates, wherever they take the test.
Fit for purpose

The IELTS test has been designed by world leaders in language assessment in close consultation with academics, professional bodies and immigration authorities. It is backed by an extensive programme of world-class research and validation. The test is continually developed to take into consideration the needs of all users and to ensure it is truly fit for purpose. As a result, there are two different test modules – Academic and General Training. This makes IELTS directly relevant and appealing to a wide range of test users.

The test content is also internationally focused, thanks to our network of test materials writers in the USA, Australia, New Zealand and the UK. We use a range of native-speaker accents in the Listening component (North American, Australian, New Zealand and British English), and all the standard varieties of English are accepted in candidates’ responses.

The truly international nature of IELTS makes it the preferred choice of candidates and institutions worldwide.

The quality test

The effectiveness of IELTS has been proven since 1989. Leading experts in language assessment have designed the test to be fair, accurate and relevant wherever and whenever it is taken.

Face-to-face speaking assessment

The most effective way to assess speaking skills is through direct interaction with the test taker. We want to judge their ability to communicate in a real-life situation, not just respond to recorded prompts. That is why trained examiners conduct a face-to-face assessment with each IELTS candidate individually. The face-to-face Speaking assessment remains an essential part of IELTS, setting it apart from other English language tests.

Continual research-driven improvement

IELTS is at the cutting edge of English language testing. Our approach to test design, delivery and evaluation is constantly refined to incorporate advances in applied linguistics, language pedagogy, language assessment and technology. The steady evolution of IELTS in response to such advances has ensured its contemporary relevance and continued usefulness for all test stakeholders.

Although IELTS has benefited from decades of progressive change, we have always maintained our core commitment to assessing all four language skills – reading, writing, listening and speaking – to the highest of standards.
Expert raters

Candidate performances in the Writing and Speaking components are assessed by qualified examiners rather than computers. This provides a more reliable assessment of real-world communication skills.

Examiners are recruited, trained and monitored in line with the highest quality standards. They work to clearly defined criteria and are subject to extensive and detailed quality control procedures which ensure consistency in assessment no matter where the test is taken in the world. Examiners are required to demonstrate that they are rating to standard every two years, in addition to regular ongoing monitoring and standardisation of their performance.

A similarly rigorous recruitment, training and monitoring system is in place for the markers of the Listening and Reading components. The reliability of marking is also enhanced by the double-marking of a proportion of Listening and Reading answer sheets at every test session.

Production of test materials

Every test version is unique, so no candidate will ever receive the same test paper twice.

The production of IELTS involves an extensive and scrupulous process. We use the highest qualitative standards as well as quantitative statistical data to ensure that test materials are suitable and test to the same level of difficulty every time.

As part of the production process, writers in the USA, Australia, New Zealand and the UK are commissioned to provide test materials which are then measured against quality standards. These test materials are subjected to rigorous editing procedures and are trialled on representative groups of test takers to ensure that they are appropriately challenging and that they discriminate between more and less able candidates.
Test results you can trust

IELTS test results are used for admission to universities, colleges and professions, as well as for immigration to English-speaking countries. For this reason it is essential to ensure the security of candidate results. IELTS has a number of measures in place to safeguard against the falsification of results.

Test Report Forms are printed on security-enhanced paper. They are authenticated by a centre stamp, an IELTS validation stamp and a photograph of the candidate.

Test centre security

All IELTS test centres are required to follow a detailed code of practice which ensures the highest standards of security throughout the testing process, from registration to the recording of results. Candidates must provide photographic evidence of identity when they register and on the day of the test. In addition, every IELTS test centre administrator is trained to the level of immigration officials in order to ensure they can detect impostors and fraudulent documents.

Test Report Form Online Verification Service

The authenticity of any Test Report Form (TRF) you receive from applicants can be checked by using our free TRF Online Verification Service. This secure and easy-to-use feature is an invaluable tool for verifying test results. If you would like more information or to register for the free TRF Online Verification Service, visit www.ielts.org/trf
Test Report Forms issued in England and Wales

Please note that IELTS is accredited in the UK by the government's examinations regulator for England and Wales, Ofqual. As a condition of this accreditation, the information printed on the back of IELTS Test Report Forms issued in England and Wales is different from the information given on forms issued elsewhere in the world. For more information see www.ielts.org

Increasing your efficiency

IELTS results are issued to candidates just 13 days after they take the test. Centres can send Test Report Forms to you directly, so you can trust the results you receive.

Electronic downloads

In order to simplify the processing of applications and to make the verification of results more convenient, you can download the results of all candidates applying to your institution on a single file. This eliminates the need for you to process Test Report Forms individually. It also allows you to receive results faster and transfer them directly to your data system. Our free E-downloads service is available to all registered organisations that recognise IELTS scores. It is the most secure, practical and efficient way to receive results. To find out more about our free E-downloads service, contact us at ieltstrf@CambridgeESOL.org
Test scores

IELTS provides a profile of a candidate’s ability to use English.

Results are reported as band scores, on a scale from 1 (the lowest) to 9 (the highest), as shown.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>IELTS Band Scores</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Expert user</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Very good user</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Good user</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Competent user</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Modest user</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Limited user</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Extremely limited user</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Intermittent user</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Non user</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>Did not attempt the test</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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

Using IELTS test scores

The level of English needed for a candidate to perform effectively in study, work or training varies from one situation to another. That is why each individual organisation can set its own minimum IELTS score for applicants, depending on specific requirements.

Organisations using IELTS may consider the overall band score as well as the individual scores recorded for the four components of the test. These indicate a candidate’s particular strengths and weaknesses and allow you to assess their suitability for a specific situation. For example, if the candidate is applying for a course that has a lot of reading and writing assignments but no lectures, the Listening score may not be as important as the Reading and Writing scores.

The table below gives guidance on acceptable IELTS 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.
The appropriate level for entry to your institution is something that you decide. We will, however, provide any advice and assistance you may need.

Guidance on setting appropriate band score requirements is provided in the ‘IELTS Scores Explained’ DVD (available from www.ielts.org). The DVD also contains detailed descriptions of the test components, sample test materials and examples of candidates’ writing and speaking performances at different band levels.

### Test results validity period

The IELTS test provides an accurate picture of a candidate’s language skills at a given moment. For this reason, the validity of a score as a precise representation of a candidate’s abilities will inevitably diminish in time. As a rule, we 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 candidate has actively maintained or tried to improve their English.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Band</th>
<th>Linguistically demanding academic courses</th>
<th>Linguistically less demanding academic courses</th>
<th>Linguistically demanding training courses</th>
<th>Linguistically less demanding training courses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>e.g. Medicine, Law, Linguistics, Journalism</td>
<td>e.g. Agriculture, Pure Mathematics, Technology, IT and Telecommunications</td>
<td>e.g. Air Traffic Control, Engineering, Pure/Applied Sciences, Industrial Safety</td>
<td>e.g. Catering, Fire Services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.5 – 9.0</td>
<td>Acceptable</td>
<td>Acceptable</td>
<td>Acceptable</td>
<td>Acceptable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.0</td>
<td>Probably acceptable</td>
<td>Acceptable</td>
<td>Acceptable</td>
<td>Acceptable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.5</td>
<td>English study needed</td>
<td>Probably acceptable</td>
<td>Acceptable</td>
<td>Acceptable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>English study needed</td>
<td>English study needed</td>
<td>Probably acceptable</td>
<td>Acceptable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>English study needed</td>
<td>English study needed</td>
<td>English study needed</td>
<td>Probably acceptable</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
What does the test involve?

To cater for the specific language requirements of different institutions, IELTS comes in two modules – Academic and General Training.

Both the Academic and General Training modules cover the four language skills – listening, reading, writing and speaking. All candidates take the same Listening and Speaking components. There are different Reading and Writing components for the Academic and General Training modules.

- **Listening**
  - Time: approximately 30 minutes

- **Speaking**
  - Time: 11–14 minutes

- **Academic Reading**
  - Time: 60 minutes

- **General Training Reading**
  - Time: 60 minutes

- **Academic Writing**
  - Time: 60 minutes

- **General Training Writing**
  - Time: 60 minutes

Academic and General Training modules

The Academic module is for candidates wishing to study at undergraduate or postgraduate levels, and for those seeking professional registration.

The General Training module is for candidates wishing to migrate to an English-speaking country (Australia, Canada, New Zealand, UK), and for those wishing to train or study at below degree level.

Both modules are graded using exactly the same criteria, so there is no difference in the level of English. The distinction lies in the subject matter and type of vocabulary used. The General Training module is not designed to test the full range of formal language skills required for academic purposes.
The four test components

Listening

The Listening component takes around 30 minutes to complete. There are 40 questions in four sections. A variety of question types is used in order to test a wide range of listening skills. These include 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.

The first two sections deal with situations set in everyday social contexts. There is a conversation between two speakers in Section 1 and a monologue in Section 2.

The final two sections deal with situations set in educational or training contexts. In Section 3, there is a conversation between up to four speakers (for example, between a university tutor and some students), and Section 4 is a monologue on an academic subject.

There is a range of native-speaker accents in the recordings, which reflects the international nature of IELTS.
Reading

The Reading component takes 60 minutes to complete. There are 40 questions in three sections. A variety of question types is used in order to test a wide range of reading skills. These include reading for gist, reading for main ideas, reading for detail, skim reading, understanding detailed logical argument, recognising writers’ opinions, attitudes and inferences.

Academic Reading

The Academic Reading test includes three long texts (between 750 and 950 words each) which range from the descriptive and factual to the discursive and analytical. The texts are authentic and are taken from books, journals, magazines and newspapers. They are accessible to a non-specialist audience but are recognisably appropriate for candidates entering undergraduate or postgraduate courses or seeking professional registration.

General Training Reading

The General Training Reading component contains one long narrative or descriptive text and several shorter, more factual, texts. The texts are authentic and are taken from books, magazines, notices, advertisements, company handbooks and guidelines. Texts are based on the type of written material candidates are likely to encounter on a daily basis in an English-speaking country.

Questions 21 – 26

Complete the flow-chart below. Choose NO MORE THAN TWO WORDS from the text for each answer. Write your answers in boxes 21-26 on your answer sheet.

Air Flight Attendants – Recruitment and Training Process

Candidates go online to complete their .........

Suitable candidates are then invited to come to a .........

After having satisfactorily completed a ........, successful candidates will then go to the Assessment Centre.

The airline then asks for ........, and candidates are required to undergo a medical check.

If there is no immediate need for flight attendants, successful candidates are put into a .........

When the need arises, these candidates will then be given a ........, after which they may be offered a job.

On starting the job, a five-week training programme is provided which includes how to look after passengers and what to do in an emergency.

Questions 33 – 36

Complete the summary using the list of words, A-K, below. Write the correct letter, A-K, in boxes 33-36 on your answer sheet.

Respondents to the survey mentioned several factors they think reduce ........ in engineering design and thus innovation. Among them were the development costs associated with high-tech products, globalisation and ........ justified on safety grounds, all of which inhibit the freedom of designers to design. The trend towards ........ on the subject of, for example, patents gives further cause for concern. On the other hand, some respondents deny that ........ give rise to problems, while others argue that competition and the need to satisfy customers are in the overall benefit. Certainly, they would not be surprised if .........

A excellence  B standards  C production  D diversity  E communication  F regulations  G disputes  H specifications  I agreements  J selection  K rivalries

Questions 37 – 40

Do the following statements agree with the views of the writer in Reading Passage 3? In boxes 37-40 on your answer sheet, write YES if the statement agrees with the views of the writer NO if the statement contradicts the views of the writer NOT GIVEN if it is impossible to say what the writer thinks about this.

37 It is debatable whether levels of innovation are increasing or decreasing.

38 Governments can exert an unfriendly influence on innovation.

39 The focus of industry on older technologies gives the impression of declining innovation.

40 In the case of older technologies, feedback is of little importance.

Questions 52 – 49

Do the following statements agree with the views of the writer in Reading Passage 3? In boxes 52-49 on your answer sheet, circle YES, NO or NOT GIVEN.

52 They made the item despite the fact that ......

34 The focus of industry on older technologies gives the impression of declining innovation.

43 In their case of other technologies, feedback is of little importance.

Academic Reading (example)

General Training Reading (example)
Writing

The Writing component takes 60 minutes to complete and consists of two tasks. Task 1 requires candidates to write at least 150 words and Task 2 requires candidates to write at least 250 words. For both tasks, candidates need to demonstrate their ability to write a response which is appropriate in terms of content, vocabulary and the organisation of ideas.

**Academic Writing**

In Task 1, candidates are presented with a graph, table, chart or diagram. They 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, how something works or describe an object or event.

In Task 2, candidates are asked to write an essay in response to a point of view, argument or problem.

Candidates are required to write in a formal style for both tasks.

**General Training Writing**

In Task 1, candidates 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.

In Task 2, candidates are asked to write an essay in response to a point of view, argument or problem. The essay may be formal in style but the response may be slightly more personal than in Academic Writing Task 2.
Speaking

The Speaking component takes between 11 and 14 minutes to complete. Every IELTS candidate has a face-to-face oral interview with an examiner. The Speaking test is recorded.

There are three parts to the Speaking component.

In Part 1, candidates answer general questions about themselves and a range of familiar topics, such as their home, family, work, studies and interests. This part lasts between 4 and 5 minutes.

In Part 2, candidates are given a card which asks them to talk about a particular topic. They have 1 minute to prepare before speaking for up to 2 minutes. The examiner then asks one or two questions on the same topic to finish this part of the test.

In Part 3, candidates are asked further questions which are connected to the topic of Part 2. These questions give the candidate an opportunity to discuss more abstract issues and ideas. This part lasts between 4 and 5 minutes.
Candidates with special requirements

Test centres make every effort to cater for candidates with special requirements. It is our aim that the language level of all candidates should be assessed fairly and objectively. Modified versions of the test are available for candidates with visual or hearing difficulties. Special administrative arrangements can also be made to accommodate candidates with other difficulties, e.g. dyslexia. Full details of our comprehensive service for candidates with special requirements are given on [www.ielts.org](http://www.ielts.org).

Why IELTS?

- The original four-skills test that assesses real communication skills.
- Trusted by over 6,000 institutions worldwide.
- Proven to be fit for purpose since 1989.
- Guaranteed security with our unique Test Report Form Online Verification Service and a host of other security features.

How can IELTS help you?

- Relieve your institution of all the administration and cost involved in English language testing.
- Select candidates who already meet your English language requirements.
- Gain access to ongoing support from some of the world’s leading language assessment experts.
- Provide your applicants with a clearer understanding of the level of English they need.
- Process applications more efficiently – with quick, easy and direct access to verifiable results.

Next steps

Take advantage of all the benefits offered by IELTS in three simple steps:

Set a minimum IELTS score for your applicants. Use the ‘IELTS Scores Explained’ DVD or contact us for advice.

Include the minimum score in your recruitment and publicity literature.

Register your institution with us free of charge by completing the online form at [http://bandscore.ielts.org/form1.aspx](http://bandscore.ielts.org/form1.aspx)

We will then include you on our online global database, giving your organisation even greater exposure to millions of potential candidates worldwide.