

## INFORMATION FOR PROSPECTIVE IELTS TEST CENTERS IN THE USA 2011

*This information relates only to organizations interested in opening an IELTS test center in the USA, the test network administered by IELTS International. Organizations who wish to open an IELTS test center in another country should contact the respective IELTS Test Partner, IDP Education Australia or British Council*

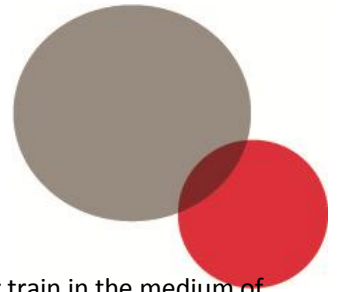
<b>Contents</b>	<b>Page</b>
<b>INTRODUCTION TO IELTS</b>	2
<i>Recognition</i>	2
<i>Test Structure</i>	2
<b>TEST ADMINISTRATION</b>	3
<i>IELTS Administrator</i>	3
<i>Systems</i>	3
<i>Service Agreement</i>	3
<b>TEST DELIVERY</b>	4
<b>TEST FREQUENCY</b>	4
<b>MARKING</b>	4
<i>Clerical Markers</i>	4
<i>Examiners</i>	5
<i>Re-marking</i>	5
<b>TEST SECURITY</b>	5
<i>Auditing</i>	6
<b>MARKETING AND PROMOTION</b>	6
<i>Test preparation material for re-sale</i>	6
<b>FINANCES</b>	6
<b>FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS</b>	7
<i>Test center application and set up</i>	7
<i>Staffing and costs</i>	8
<i>Further information</i>	9

### **IELTS International**

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IELTS is jointly owned by the British Council, IDP:  
IELTS Australia and University of Cambridge  
ESOL Examinations.

[www.ielts.org](http://www.ielts.org)



## INTRODUCTION TO IELTS

The International English Language Testing System (IELTS) assesses a test taker's readiness to study or train in the medium of English. It is delivered in a network over 500 testing locations around the world. The test was first conducted in 1990 and has since grown to an annual global candidature in excess of 1,000,000.

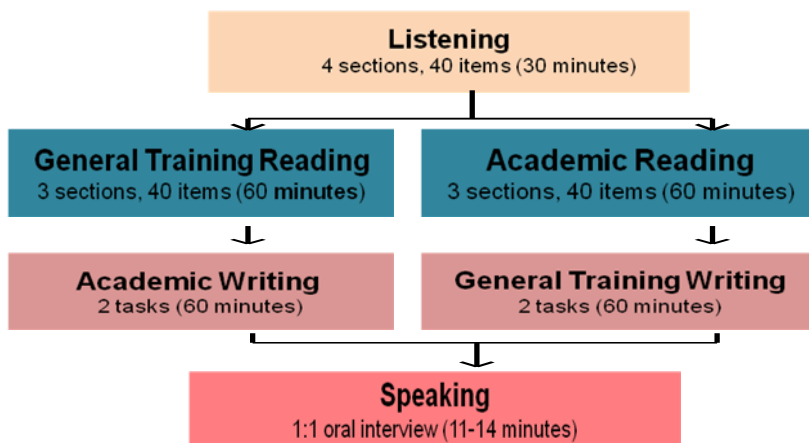
### Recognition

Educational institutions in the United States, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and the United Kingdom use IELTS to assess the English proficiency of international students. Over 3,000 undergraduate, graduate, and professional school faculties in the US accept IELTS for matriculation purposes. The use of IELTS is also approved by:

- the Secretary of the US Department of Health and Human Services.
- the US Citizenship and Immigration and Service (USCIS), to satisfy English language proficiency requirements for non-native speaker healthcare professionals entering the US as non-immigrants.
- the Commission on Graduates of Foreign Nursing Schools (CGFNS) for non-native speakers for Visa Screen requirements. Score minimums have also been published by the National Council of State Boards of Nursing for RN licensure, and a growing number of State Boards of Nursing have approved IELTS.
- Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC), the Australian Department of Immigration and Citizenship, and the New Zealand Immigration Service, which use the General module of IELTS as the preferred test for **immigrants** to demonstrate their English abilities.
- Professional bodies in other countries, such as the National Medical and Nursing Councils (UK, Australia, and New Zealand), which use the Academic module of IELTS.

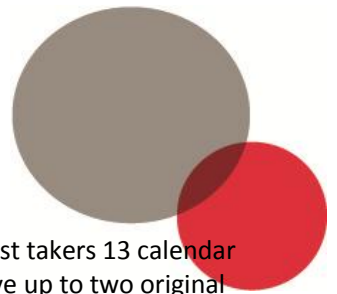
The test is developed, owned and managed by three international **Partners**: Cambridge ESOL, British Council, and IDP Education Australia: IELTS Australia. Cambridge ESOL is responsible for test development and production, transmission of test materials, monitoring of results, and an extensive range of test research. The worldwide network of centers is administered by the British Council and IELTS Australia. IELTS International manages the IELTS test center network in the US.

### Test Structure



The IELTS test has four components: Listening, Reading, Writing and Speaking. All test takers must take all components each time they take the test. All candidates taking the Academic or General modules take the test at the same time.

The **two modules** of the IELTS test are Academic and General Training (GT). The Academic module is taken for matriculation into higher education institutions and certification by professional bodies. The General module is taken by immigration, secondary education, and vocational training candidates and applicants.



Test taker **results** are provided in the form of a paper Test Report Form (TRF). Results are issued to test takers 13 calendar days after the test, and test takers can also preview their results online at this time. Test takers receive up to two original TRFs and up to five original TRFs are sent to receiving organizations directly on the test taker's request. Additional TRFs can be sent to receiving organizations at a nominal cost up to two years from the test date. Recognizing organizations can also download test scores electronically. IELTS is not recommended for test takers younger than 16 years. Test takers may repeat the test at any center worldwide, at any time. The results are regarded as valid for two years.

## TEST ADMINISTRATION

### The IELTS Administrator

Each test center appoints an **IELTS Administrator** who is responsible to IELTS International for the security and delivery of the test. The Administrator must have very good written and spoken English skills and some familiarity with the international academic arena is desirable.

The IELTS Administrator has these main **responsibilities**:

- Informing and ensuring compliance of all those involved with IELTS (Examiners, Clerical Markers, Invigilators) with all areas covered in the Administrators' Manual, the Clerical Marking Standardization Manual, the Professional Support Network (PSN) Manual, Cambridge ESOL communication, and any updates from IELTS International, the British Council, or IDP: IELTS Australia.
- Appointment, coordination of training and general management of Examiners, Clerical Markers and Invigilators.
- Security, storage, ordering and return of test materials from / to Cambridge ESOL in the UK.
- Management of test taker inquiries by email, phone and in person; processing online registrations.
- Collection of test fee from candidates and monthly fee returns to IELTS International.
- Pre-test planning, test day administration, and dealing with any test taker complaints.
- Organizing off-site tests as appropriate and marketing IELTS locally.

The Administrator may delegate these tasks to staff members, but ultimate responsibility rests with the Administrator. Instructions for managing the test center are detailed in the IELTS Administrators' Manual.

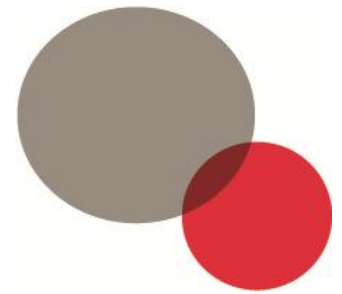
### Systems

A **web based administration system** – known as IWAS (IELTS Web Administration System) - is operated by all US test centers. This system is used to register test takers online, record test scores, maintain the examiner details, and print Test Report Forms. Minimum computer specifications are a minimum internet connection of 256KB or above and Internet Explorer v6.1 or above. Centers also need to provide a **scanner** (for scanning candidate photographs) and a black and white **printer** (for printing Test Report Forms and other documentation) connected to the computer that is used to access IWAS. Currently the IELTS test is taken as a **pencil / pen and paper** test.

**Email** is the standard method of contact between IELTS International, Cambridge ESOL, and centers and rapid response times are expected. A center reports monthly test statistics to IELTS International and centers are invoiced by IELTS International for the candidature tested of the previous calendar month.

### Service Agreement

Each IELTS test center is required to sign a Service Agreement which describes the legal relationship between IELTS International and the center and establishes the responsibilities of each party.



## TEST DELIVERY

The written components of the test – **Listening, Reading and Writing** – are conducted consecutively from 09:00am on test day. There is no break and the session ends around 11:50am. There must be a minimum of one Invigilator for every 25 test takers in one test room and in addition one ‘floating’ Invigilator to accompany test takers to the restroom. Invigilators perform a candidate ID check on arrival, a candidate belongings check, and further ID checks during the test.

**Test rooms** are quiet and should have suitable lighting, ventilation, and heating/air conditioning. Each test taker must have a desk and a chair (or a desk-chair) with at least 1.25 meters (50”) of space in all directions between the center of each test taker’s position to that of the nearest test taker. The acoustics and CD playing equipment must enable the clear playing at suitable volume of the Listening component recorded on a CD.

The **Speaking test** is a one-to-one interview between a test taker and an Examiner. Speaking tests are conducted simultaneously in separate rooms, one for each Speaking Examiner. All interviews are digitally recorded. The Speaking test can be conducted up to 7 days before or 7 days after the other three test components. Interview time slots are 20 minutes, with a 20 minute break after each 6 interviews held. A Speaking test **waiting room** is required close to the Speaking test rooms and a test day supervisor (who can be an Invigilator) must check ID and accompany test takers from the waiting area to the Speaking test rooms. The test day supervisor also ensures that those waiting for the interview do not have contact with those just interviewed, and monitors candidates’ belongings.

## TEST FREQUENCY

An IELTS test center offers a minimum of **one test session per month**. Special arrangements can be made to test less frequently in areas of less demand. The maximum number of test administrations to be offered in a month is dictated by the market and the designated size of the center (small, medium, and large), and currently no more than four test dates in any one month can be given by one center. Centers choose from **four fixed test dates per month (3 Saturdays and 1 Thursday)**. After an introductory period to establish the market, a center is expected to test a minimum number of test takers annually, as agreed with IELTS International. The center must be committed to developing as rapid a growth of candidature over time as possible. The test center application includes consideration and analysis of the potential market. Growth is also possible by increasing individual test session capacity and/or by adding more test dates, particularly at certain ‘peak’ times of year.

Test takers should not have to wait longer than **one month** to take a test from the date of inquiry at any one center. If necessary, test centers should arrange additional testing space outside their organization or additional test sessions to cater to demand.

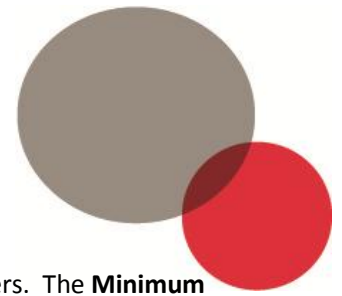
Centers are able to conduct **off-site testing** in a regional location (such as a local university campus). All off-site testing can only be performed on regularly scheduled IELTS test dates and must have prior approval from IELTS International. Centers may be asked by IELTS International to offer off-site testing in specific locations based on need.

## MARKING OF TEST COMPONENTS

All marking of IELTS test modules must be conducted **at the test center** under the control of the IELTS Administrator, including the completion of sign out/in sheets. No test material can be removed from the test center.

### Listening and Reading: Clerical Marking

The Listening and Reading modules of the test are marked by Clerical Markers using answer keys provided. These markers must have a good command of English. Clerical Markers must complete training led by the IELTS Administrator (or the certified Clerical Marker Trainer), complete a marking standardization exercise, and pass a certification test. Clerical Marker performance is monitored at every test session.



### Writing and Speaking: Examiner Marking

The Writing and Speaking modules of the IELTS test are marked by trained, certificated IELTS Examiners. The **Minimum Professional Requirements** for an examiner are:

- an undergraduate degree
- a recognized TEFL/TESOL qualification at certificate or higher level
- three years full-time TESOL teaching experience to adults
- demonstrated personal attributes and interpersonal skills.

All applications for Examiners are assessed against these requirements and interviewed by an **Examiner Trainer** prior to training. Training is an intensive, four-day program conducted by the Examiner Trainer normally held over two consecutive weekends (two days for Writing training and certification and two days for Speaking training and certification). IELTS International will allocate an Examiner Trainer to the center, and the Administrator makes all training arrangements directly with the Examiner Trainer.

After training, Examiner trainees must successfully pass Writing and Speaking certification. All Examiners must standardize and re-certificate every two years in order to continue as an Examiner and are monitored by the Examiner Trainer a minimum of once a year. In order to maintain status, Examiners must test at least **once every three months**.

New centers are required to recruit and train their own pool of Examiners. Examiners need not be existing members of staff and centers are encouraged to develop a pool of Examiners from a range of local institutions. Examiners are not permitted to examine test takers known to them, and therefore Examiners should be recruited from a range of sources if possible. It is important for a college-based testing department to liaise successfully with their ESL department in order to generate suitable applicants. A minimum of 5 Examiners at any one center is required to begin IELTS testing.

### Re-marking

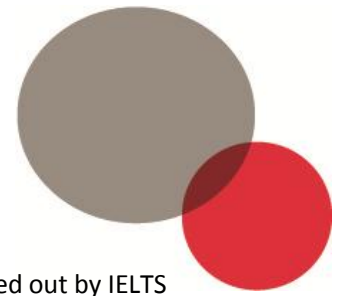
If a test taker is unhappy with their results, they may apply for an **'Enquiry on Results'** (EOR) at the center where the test was taken. The application must be submitted within six weeks of the test date. All EORs for US test takers are processed by IELTS Senior Examiners at the British Council London. Test takers receive a full refund from the center if any of their band scores improve as a result of the re-mark, as well as an updated TRF. If the score remains the same, the test taker receives no refund.

## TEST SECURITY

**Test security is a key requirement.** The development of a test version takes two years from initial commissioning to final release. It is vital that all test materials be held securely. *Any* security breach may result in the suspension or closure of a test center.

All live test material and other secure material must be kept under **double-tiered locking**: in a locked, secure container (such as a safe or filing cabinet) in another locked, secured location (such as a storage closet or an office). Lockable metal filing cabinets are suitable, and the additional use of locking bars and/or padlocks is recommended. The Administrator is responsible for monitoring all access to and return of test materials, including the completion of sign out/in sheets. Centers are required to keep comprehensive stock control documents up-to-date.

All staff involved with IELTS is required to sign a comprehensive Code of Practice and **Confidentiality Undertaking**.



### Auditing

All centers undergo either a scheduled or ‘spot’ audit (inspection) at least **once every two years** carried out by IELTS International. The full audit process normally takes 2 days and looks at all areas of the test center operation and delivery. The audit process is viewed as supportive, although it may be necessary to establish an action plan to remedy any issues that are seen as out of compliance. Some centers may be subject to further audit sooner than the two-year period. Centers are also asked to perform an **annual self-audit** which is submitted to IELTS International.

### MARKETING AND PROMOTION

Test centers are expected to **promote their testing services** within their institution, city and regional community. Examples of some past successful marketing efforts have been direct (e-)mailings to educational and other institutions in the area (such as universities, community colleges, private colleges, high schools, consulates, medical staffing agencies and immigration bodies) and making presentations at local conferences, such as NAFSA and TESOL regional conferences.

All centers are requested to provide a brief **annual marketing plan** to IELTS International for the up-coming year.

IELTS centers are provided with promotional materials (IELTS handbooks, leaflets and posters) at no charge. The details of all centers, including test dates, are listed on the [www.ielts.org](http://www.ielts.org) website and the online registration site, [ieltsregistration.org](http://ieltsregistration.org). All centers are required to use official IELTS branding in any publications produced in house and a **Brand Builder toolkit** is provided via intranet to assist in this.

### Test preparation material for re-sale

Cambridge ESOL currently produces the following publications and resource material. All material is available to centers for discounted bulk purchase for re-sale to candidates or for use in their center:

- *Official Practice Materials* and *Official Practice Materials 2*
- *Top Tips for IELTS Academic* and *Top Tips for IELTS General*
- *IELTS Scores Explained DVD*
- *IELTS Online Self-study and Blended Learning Courses*
- *Speaking Test Preparation Pack*

### FINANCES

#### Test fee

The **IELTS test fee** is set annually by the IELTS Partners for each country. The test fee is divided into a ‘local fee’ and a ‘central fee’. The **local fee** is retained at source by the center. The **central fee** is invoiced monthly in arrears by IELTS International. The center determines the form of payment they will accept from test takers (such as cash, personal check, money order, cashier’s check, credit card, online payment). The local fee covers all of the center’s operational costs.

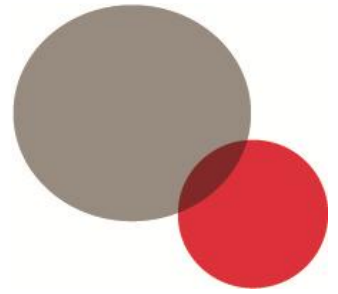
#### Staff payments

All payments to staff (Examiner Trainers, Examiners, Clerical Markers and Invigilators) are made locally by the test center from the local fee. There are no nationally set rates and it is necessary for the center to determine the local market rates.

#### Initial set-up costs

Initial set-up costs largely comprise of training costs. The Administrator, Clerical Markers and Invigilators are trained over one and a half days by IELTS International staff at no cost to the center. Centers may decide to buy a computer to operate the web based administration system, although this is not necessary, and will need to have a scanner and printer available. Digital recorders are needed to administer the Speaking tests – one per Examiner. Centers should modestly invest in a local marketing campaign to establish their name as the local IELTS test center, as simple as an email blast to local institutions.

Please contact [rhalstead@ieltsintl.org](mailto:rhalstead@ieltsintl.org) for information on generally accepted current national rates of staff payments, and a example of costs associated with one candidate and one test session.



## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ~ TEST CENTER APPLICATION AND OPERATION

### 1 What are the benefits of becoming an IELTS test center?

- Associate your organization with the authentic, global and customer-focused test of English language proficiency
- Benefit from unique professional development opportunities for your ESL teaching staff to become Examiners
- Provide a valuable service for your own students, other educational departments in your organization and residents of the local community by integrating IELTS into the curriculum
- Develop a healthy new income stream: centers retain 57% of candidate test fee
- Embrace a range of wrap around products including preparation material and preparation courses
- Open new markets and attract new students

### 2 What is involved in the application process?

- o Expression of interest
- o Submission of the full application:
  - Application form
  - Web Requirements Guide
  - Business Case Questionnaire

The estimated documentation completion time is 2 hours
- o Site visit
- o Signing of the Service Agreement
- o Administrative and Examiner training on-site

### 3 How long is the test center application process?

The estimated minimum time between submission of the expression of interest and the first test day is 3 ½ months. Variable factors are the speed at which application material and the Service Agreement are processed and returned by the test center, and the process of Examiner recruitment and training.

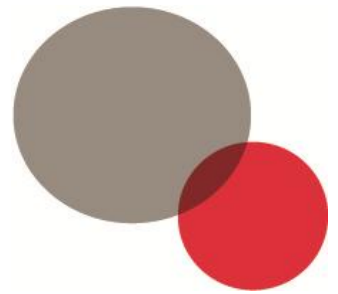
An ideal timeline is:

- Week 1 – expression of interest submitted. Full application material sent to test center
- Week 2 – full application material completed and returned to IELTS International
- Week 3 – review and approval of full application, Service Agreement sent to test center, and site visit arranged
- Week 5 – site visit and site approval
- Week 6 – Service Agreement to be returned. Center begins to advertise new Examiner training
- Week 9 – On-site administrative training - IELTS Administrator, Clerical Markers, Invigilators
- Week 10 - Closing date for new Examiner applications. New test center details go live on [www.ielts.org](http://www.ielts.org) and [ieltsregistration.org](http://ieltsregistration.org)
- Week 11 - All test administration material received from Cambridge ESOL
- Week 12 - New Examiner training on-site. 4 full days, normally held over two consecutive weekends
- Week 14 - First test date

### 4 What support is provided during the initial set-up process? Does IELTS provide training?

1 ½ days' administrative training is provided on-site by IELTS International staff to the IELTS Administrator, Clerical Markers and Invigilators, at no cost to the center. Four days' new Examiner training is provided on-site by the Examiner Trainer, at no cost to those centers that begin testing during 2011. IELTS does not train Examiners directly, and all arrangements are made between the center and the Examiner Trainer, who is an independent contractor.

IELTS International staff will attend the center's first test date, arriving ½ day before to ensure that all preparations for the test are in order. A full report with guidance notes will be provided on the first test date.



**5 What support is provided once we become an IELTS test center?**

California-based IELTS International staff is available 8.30am – 5.30pm Monday through Friday at 1-323-255 2771:

- Richard Halstead, Regional Manager US Test Center Network - [rhalstead@ieltsintl.org](mailto:rhalstead@ieltsintl.org)
- Amy Carter, Marketing Manager - [acarter@ieltsintl.org](mailto:acarter@ieltsintl.org)
- Erin Birath, Administrative Assistant – [ebirath@ieltsintl.org](mailto:ebirath@ieltsintl.org)

The Administrators’ Manual provides step-by-step guidance for running the test. New center Administrators will be added to an e-discussion forum which provides opportunities to learn and share best practices. Occasional webinar training is provided on new systems, or as a refresher.

An Administrators’ meeting and training session is held approximately once every 2 years to inform participants of any new policy or changes to test administration. Travel costs are the center’s responsibility and centers are obliged to send one representative. Accommodation and meal costs for this meeting are covered by IELTS International.

**6 What is the minimum staffing requirement to support a new center? Do we need to recruit new staff?**

A center must designate one person as the IELTS Administrator, who deals with the management of the test process and its delivery, and is responsible for the center’s overall performance. This role is not necessarily a full-time position depending on center size.

Sufficient administrative staff time needs to be allocated to the processing of candidate registrations; dealing with inquiries by email, phone, and face to face; entering test scores; issuing of results; stock control; marketing. The estimated processing time for dealing with all elements of one candidate’s registration is 15-20 minutes. Staff performing these administrative duties does not have to be the same as the designated IELTS Administrator. It can be advisable to allocate separate desk and computer for completion of these duties.

The center will need to recruit Examiners, Clerical Markers and Invigilators, who may come from existing staff if the minimum professional requirements are met. The Administrator should also be trained as a Clerical Marker.

**7 Can I see a more detailed breakdown of costing for an IELTS test?**

Please contact [Richard Halstead \(rhalstead@ieltsintl.org\)](mailto:rhalstead@ieltsintl.org), Regional Manager US Test Center Network, who will be happy to provide you with a clear one page summary detailing all costs, anticipated income and gross profit from a test session.

**8 Is there additional support provided for test delivered on Saturdays?**

The Administrators’ Manual details procedures for all circumstances during live test delivery. Emergency Saturday test day support is provided by calling the Regional Manager’s cell phone 1-626-399 8990. Any unusual incidents that occur on a test day must be reported to IELTS International the next business day.

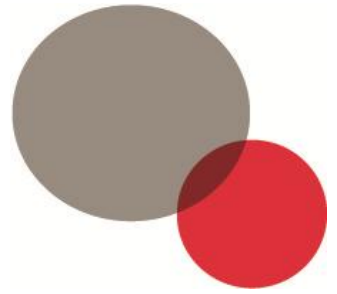
**9 Can centers choose when and where to hold a test?**

All tests take place either on a Thursday or a Saturday and test centers must choose from a published list of fixed IELTS global test dates. Saturday testing is the norm, and test centers must be prepared to deliver tests on Saturdays. The Speaking component can be held up to 7 days before and 7 days after the other components, which are always held on a fixed test date.

Test centers normally hold tests in classroom- or auditorium-type space(s) within their organization, although it may sometimes be necessary to use or hire other spaces - such as halls or conference rooms - depending on demand. Centers may also be required to hold off-sites tests in locations outside their city. In all cases, spaces must meet the requirements of the IELTS Code of Practice and the IELTS Administrators’ Manual.

**10 Is there a quality monitoring process?**

The test center audit process monitors all aspects of the IELTS test and its delivery at test center level. Scheduled audits are carried out once every two years by IELTS International staff and centers should also complete an internal self-audit



annually. Spot audits can be carried out by IELTS International at any time without prior notification given to the test center.

Examiners undergo constant monitoring of their performance, managed by the Administrator in conjunction with the Examiner Trainer allocated to the center. The Administrator can request additional monitoring of an Examiner if there is a specific concern. Full procedures for the recruitment, training, monitoring and recertification of Examiners are detailed in the Professional Support Network (PSN) Manual.

A Clerical Marker's marking is monitored each test session by another Clerical Marker or by the Clerical Marker Trainer in center before the release of test results, and full procedures are detailed in the Clerical Marking Standardisation Manual. IELTS International performs additional spot monitoring of Clerical Markers' work.

**11 Is there a computer-based version of IELTS?**

The IELTS Test Partners are currently developing a computer based IELTS test version to complement the paper based test. When the computer based test is launched, paper based delivery will continue, offering two methods of delivery to potential test takers.

**12 What do I do now?**

Please email [rhalstead@ieltsintl.org](mailto:rhalstead@ieltsintl.org) with details of:

- your name, contact details, role and organization
- brief history of your institution
- types of programs currently offered
- annual international student enrolment
- details of other tests offered
- details of institutional accreditation
- description of how organization is funded

All information will be kept completely confidential.

**13 Who do I contact with other questions?**

Please call 1-323 255 2771 or email Richard Halstead, Regional Manager, US Test Center Network, [rhalstead@ieltsintl.org](mailto:rhalstead@ieltsintl.org).

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