

IELTS Test Score Guidance

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.

Institutions using IELTS scores need to consider both the individual band scores recorded for listening, academic reading, academic writing and speaking and the overall band score. A review of the official Test Report Form shows a test taker's particular strengths and weaknesses in the four skill areas. For example, if the test taker is applying for a major or field of study that requires considerable reading and writing but no lectures, the listening score may not be as important as the reading and writing scores.

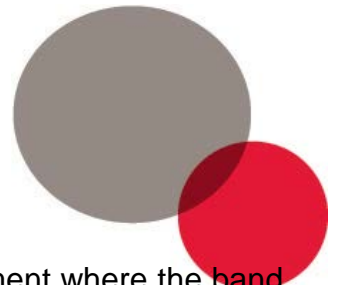
The table below gives guidance on overall IELTS scores based on linguistic demand. It should be noted, however, that many diverse variables affect academic performance and success, and English language ability is only one variable.

Band	Linguistically demanding academic curriculum	Linguistically less demanding academic curriculum
7.5 – 9.0	Optimal	Optimal
7.0	Acceptable	Optimal
6.5	May be acceptable; ESL study may be needed	Acceptable
6.0	ESL study needed	ESL study needed
5.5	ESL study needed	ESL study needed

Source: *IELTS Guide for Educational Institutions, Professional Bodies and Commercial Organizations*, 20011.

Guidance on setting appropriate band score requirements is also available in the “IELTS Scores Explained” DVD (email stakeholders@ieltsusa.org for a complimentary copy). The DVD contains detailed descriptions and test materials for each of the test modules, public rubrics and rating scales for the two writing tasks and the speaking component. Also included are a range of samples of writing and speaking performances at different band score levels with the accompanying scoring comments by IELTS examiners.

Upon request, IELTS USA is happy to provide current statistical information and advice on standard setting.



The IELTS Nine-band Scale

IELTS uses a nine-band scale. The Test Report Form (TRF) is the official document where the band scores are reported in whole or half bands for each of the four test modules, as well as an overall, mean band score. The nine bands correspond to a series of descriptions that relate to the test taker's English ability at that level. Below are overall band score descriptors.

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.

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