

Agenda Item 8

Enclosure 5

Paper RC 22 / 03

REGISTRATION COMMITTEE

**International English Language Testing System
(IELTS)**

From : the Executive

FOR DISCUSSION

At its last meeting the Committee discussed this issue and recommended to the Education and Training Committee that for the Speech and Language Therapy profession the minimum requirement should be IELTS grade 8 and for the other professions the IELTS grade would be 5.

This recommendation was discussed at Council at its meeting on 2 April and it was felt that an IELTS grade 5 was too low. It was felt that a grade of 6.5 should be adopted.

It was agreed that this matter should be referred to the Registration Committee for further discussion and review.

A full list of centres is available [here](#).

Test centres run regular test administrations, according to local need and results are available within two weeks. Candidates are not allowed to repeat the test within 90 days at any centre.

Academic and General Training

IELTS is available in two formats – Academic and General Training.

The Academic Reading and Writing Modules assess whether a candidate is ready to study or train in the medium of English at an undergraduate or postgraduate level. Admission to undergraduate and postgraduate courses should be based on the results of these Modules.

The General Training Reading and Writing Modules are not designed to test the full range of formal language skills required for academic purposes, but emphasise basic survival skills in a broad social and educational context. General Training is suitable for candidates who are going to English speaking countries to complete their secondary education, to undertake work experience or training programmes not at degree level, or for immigration purposes to Australia, Canada and New Zealand. It is the responsibility of the candidate to inform the test centre whether they wish to take the Academic or General Training Modules. Centres are not responsible for providing this information.

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Test Format

Candidates are tested in listening, reading, writing and speaking. All candidates take the same Listening and Speaking Modules. There is a choice between Academic and General Training in the Reading and Writing Modules.

The tests are designed to cover the full range of ability from nonuser to expert user.

The first three modules – Listening, Reading and Writing – must be completed in one day. The Speaking Module may be taken, at the discretion of the test centre, in the period seven days before or after the other modules.

A computerised version of IELTS Listening, Reading and Writing Modules (CBIELTS) is available at selected centres, but all centres will continue to offer paper-based IELTS and candidates will be given the choice of the medium in which they wish to take the test.

Preparing for the test
It is not necessary to attend an IELTS preparation course though it is, of course, a good idea to prepare thoroughly for the test.

An [order form](#) is available [here](#) for a Specimen Materials Pack. This includes a full

<p>Listening Time: 30 minutes</p> <p>Candidates listen to a number of recorded texts, which increase in difficulty as the test progresses. These include a mixture of monologues and conversations and feature a variety of English accents and dialects. The recording is heard only once, but candidates are given time to read the questions and record their answers.</p>
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<p>Academic Reading Time: 60 minutes</p> <p>There are three reading passages with tasks. Texts are taken from books, magazines, journals and newspapers, all written for a nonspecialist audience. At least one of the texts contains a detailed argument.</p>	<p>General Training Reading Time: 60 minutes</p> <p>The texts are based on the type of material candidates would be expected to encounter on a daily basis in an English speaking country. They are taken from sources such as newspapers, advertisements, instruction manuals and books, and test the candidate's ability to understand and use information. The test includes one longer text, which is descriptive rather than argumentative.</p>
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<p>Academic Writing Time: 60 minutes</p> <p>For the first task, candidates write a report of around 150 words based on material found in a table or diagram, demonstrating their ability to describe and explain data.</p>	<p>General Training Writing Time: 60 minutes</p> <p>The first task requires candidates to write a letter of around 150 words either asking for information or explaining a situation.</p>
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practice test with an answer key and a CD of the listening test, so that candidates can get some idea of their level and familiarise themselves with the format of the test.

There is also a wide range of published preparation materials.

For the second task candidates write a short essay of around 250 words in response to an opinion or a problem. They are expected to demonstrate an ability to discuss issues, construct an argument and use the appropriate tone and register.

The second task is a short essay of around 250 words, and is written in response to a given point of view or problem. Candidates are expected to be able to present their own ideas and challenge other ideas, using appropriate tone and register.

Speaking
Time: 11-14 minutes

The test takes the form of a face to face interview. Candidates are assessed on their use of spoken English to answer short questions, speak at length on a familiar topic, and also to interact with the examiner.

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IELTS Test Results

Marking is carried out at the test centre by trained examiners whose work is closely monitored. This ensures that test results are available without any administrative delay.

Results are available within two weeks of the test and Test Report Forms are sent to the candidates and to the sponsor(s)/receiving institution(s). Test centres are not permitted to give results out over the phone, nor by fax or e-mail.

Test Scores

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

Candidates receive scores on a Band Scale from 1 to 9.

A score is reported for each module of the test. The individual module scores are then averaged and rounded to produce an Overall Band Score. Overall Band Scores and Listening and Reading scores are reported in whole and half Bands; Writing and Speaking Band Scores are reported in whole Bands only.

Test Report Form

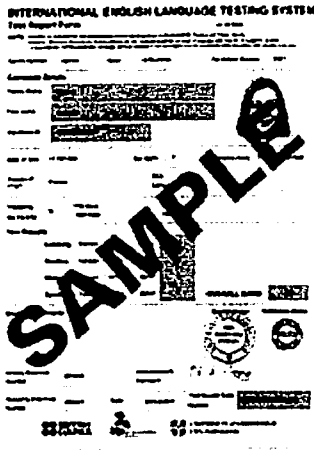
An example of the Test Report Form is shown below. Each module is reported separately as a Band Score, together with an Overall Band Score reported as a whole band or a half band. A descriptive statement giving a summary of the English of a candidate classified at each band level is provided opposite and is included on the reverse of the Test Report Form.

The completed Test Report Form bears a centre stamp, a validation stamp, the candidate's photograph

Band 9 - Expert User
Has fully operational command of the language: appropriate, accurate and fluent with complete understanding.
Band 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.
Band 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.
Band 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.
Band 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.
Band 4 - Limited User
Basic competence is limited to familiar situations. Has frequent problems in understanding and expression. Is not able to use complex language.
Band 3 - Extremely Limited User
Conveys and understands only general

(from early 2003 onwards) and the authorised centre representative's signature, and the authenticity of any Test Report Form can be verified by Cambridge ESOL, IELTS Australia and British Council.

Cambridge ESOL, British Council and IDP: IELTS Australia reserve the right to cancel any Test Report Form in the event of any attempt to tamper with or misuse the information contained in it.



meaning in very familiar situations. Frequent breakdowns in communication occur.
Band 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 in understanding spoken and written English.
Band 1 - Non User
Essentially has no ability to use the language beyond possibly a few isolated words.
Band 0 - Did not attempt the test
No assessable information provided.

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Interpretation of Results

Assessment of performance in IELTS depends on how the candidate's ability in English relates to the language demands of courses of study or training, not on reaching a fixed pass mark. The appropriate level required for a given course of study or training is ultimately something which institutions/departments/ colleges must decide in the light of knowledge of their own courses and their experience of overseas students taking them.

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

Receiving institutions are advised to consider both the Overall Band Score and the Bands recorded for each individual module, which indicate the candidate's particular strengths or weaknesses. Language skills can be matched to particular courses. For example, if a course has a lot of reading and writing, but no lectures, listening comprehension might not be quite as important and a score of, perhaps, 5.5/ 6 in Listening might be acceptable if the Overall Band Score was 7. However, for a course where there are lots of lectures and spoken instructions a score of 5.5/ 6 in Listening might be unacceptable even though the Overall Band Score was 7. Receiving institutions should also consider a candidate's IELTS results in the context of a number of factors, including age and motivation, educational and cultural background, first language and language learning history.

For how long is a test score valid?

There are a number of variables affecting the length of time over which an IELTS score remains valid. As a general rule it is recommended that a Test Report Form that is more than two years old should only be accepted as evidence of present level of ability if accompanied by proof that a candidate has actively maintained or tried to improve their English language proficiency.

What happens if a candidate loses their Test Report Form or requires further copies?

At any time within two years of the test administration a candidate can apply to the centre where they took the test for further copies of the Test Report Form. There may be a small administrative charge.

What can a candidate do if they are unhappy with their results?

Candidates may apply for an enquiry on results procedure at the centre at which they took their test within four weeks of receipt of results. All the candidate's test material is re-marked. There is a fee for this which is refunded should the band score be increased.

Band	Linguistically demanding academic courses e.g. Medicine, Law, Linguistics, Journalism, Library Studies	Linguistically less demanding academic courses e.g. Agriculture, Pure Mathematics, Technology, Computer-based work, Telecommunications	Linguistically demanding training courses e.g. Air Traffic Control, Engineering, Pure Applied Sciences, Industrial Safety	Linguistically less demanding training courses e.g. Animal Husbandry, Catering, Fire Services
9.0-7.5	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

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Test Modules

Each candidate takes four IELTS test modules, one in each of the four skills, Listening, Reading, Writing and Speaking.

Listening

Duration and format

The Listening Module takes around 30 minutes. There are 40 questions. There are four sections.

The Listening Module is recorded on a tape and is played ONCE only.

During the test, time is given for candidates to read the questions and write down and check their answers. Answers are written on the Question Paper as candidates listen. When the tape ends ten minutes are allowed for candidates to transfer their answers to an Answer Sheet.

Task types

The first two sections are concerned with social needs. There is a conversation between two speakers and then a monologue. For example – a conversation about travel arrangements or decisions on a night out, and a speech about student services on a University campus or arrangements for meals during a conference.

The final two sections are concerned with situations related

<p>SECTION 2 - Questions 11-20</p> <p>Questions 11-15 Circle the correct letters A-C.</p>
<p>11 The most important reason for a settlement at the Rocks was</p> <p>A fresh water. B flat rock. C a sea wall.</p>
<p>12 The plague was brought to Sydney by</p> <p>A rat-catchers. B convicts. C sailors</p>
<p>13 The Harbour Bridge was built</p> <p>A in 10 years with 7 deaths. B in 10 years with 17 deaths. C in 17 years with 10 deaths.</p>
<p>14 The Chinese community arrived in the Rocks in</p> <p>A 1825. B 1844.</p>

more closely to educational or training contexts. There is a conversation between up to four people and then a further monologue. For example – a conversation between a tutor and a student about an assignment or between three students planning a research project, and a lecture or talk of general academic interest.

A range of English accents and dialects are used in the recordings which reflects the international usage of IELTS.

A variety of questions are used, chosen from the following types:

- multiple choice
- short-answer questions
- sentence completion
- notes/summary/diagram/flow-chart/ table completion
- labelling a diagram which has numbered parts
- classification
- matching

Marking and Assessment

One mark is awarded for each correct answer in the 40 item test.

A Band Score conversion table is produced for each version of the Listening Module which translates scores out of 40 into the IELTS 9-band scale. Scores are reported as a whole band or a half band. Care should be taken when writing answers on the Answer Sheet as poor spelling and grammar are penalised.

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Reading

Duration and format

The Reading Module takes 60 minutes. There are 40 questions, based on three reading passages with a total of 2,000 to 2,750 words.

Texts and questions appear on a Question Paper which candidates can write on but not remove from the test room. All answers must be entered on an Answer Sheet during the 60-minute test. No extra time is allowed to transfer answers.

Task Types

A variety of questions are used, chosen from the following types:

- multiple choice
- short-answer questions
- sentence completion
- notes/summary/diagram/flow-chart/ table completion
- choosing from a 'heading bank' for identified paragraphs/sections of the text
- identification of writer's views/claims – yes, no or not given
- identification of information in the text – yes, no or not given/true, false or not given
- classification
- matching lists/phrases

Academic Reading

C 1870.

15 The Chinese shops were mainly

- A restaurants and laundries.
- B soap shops and general stores.
- C general stores and laundries.

SECTION 2 - Questions 16-20

Complete the table below.
Write NO MORE THAN THREE WORDS for each answer.

Number of convicts brought to NewSouth Wales	16
Date of last convict ship	17
Age of youngest convict	nine
Crime of youngest convict	18
Age of oldest convict	19
Crime of oldest convict telling lies	
Most serious crime	murder
Reason for most crimes	20

Questions 1 - 5

Complete the summary below using words from the box.

Write the correct answers in boxes 1-5 on your answer sheet.

Example

The failure during the late 1970s and early 1980s of an attempt to establish a widespread wind power industry in the United States resulted largely from the 1... in oil prices during this period. The industry is now experiencing a steady 2... due to improvements in technology and an increased awareness of the potential in the power of wind. The wind turbines that are now being made, based in part on the 3... of wide-ranging research in Europe, are easier to manufacture and maintain than their predecessors. This has led wind-turbine makers to be able to standardise and thus minimise 4... . There has been growing 5... of the importance of wind power as an energy source.

criticism	success
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Texts are taken from magazines, journals, books, and newspapers. Texts have been written for a non-specialist audience. All the topics are of general interest. They deal with issues which are interesting, recognisably appropriate and accessible to candidates entering postgraduate or undergraduate courses or seeking professional registration.

design costs	production costs
failure	stability
operating costs	fall
growth	recognition
scepticism	decisions
effects	decline
	results

At least one text contains detailed logical argument. One text may contain non-verbal materials such as diagrams, graphs or illustrations. If texts contain technical terms then a simple glossary is provided.

General Training Reading

Texts are taken from notices, advertisements, official documents, booklets, newspapers, instruction manuals, leaflets, timetables, books and magazines.

The first section, 'social survival', contains texts relevant to basic linguistic survival in English with tasks mainly about retrieving and providing general factual information.

'Training survival', the second section, focuses on the training context, for example on the training programme itself or on welfare needs. This section involves a text or texts of more complex language with some precise or elaborated expression.

The third section, 'general reading', involves reading more extended prose with a more complex structure but with the emphasis on descriptive and instructive rather than argumentative texts, in a general context relevant to the wide range of candidates involved.

Marking and assessment

One mark is awarded for each correct answer in the 40 item test. A Band Score conversion table is produced for each version of the Reading Module which translates scores out of 40 into the IELTS 9-band scale. Scores are reported as a whole band or a half band. Care should be taken when writing answers on the Answer Sheet as poor spelling and grammar are penalised.

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Writing

Duration and format

The Writing Module takes 60 minutes. There are two tasks to complete. It is suggested that about 20 minutes is spent on Task 1 which requires candidates to write at least 150 words. Task 2 requires at least 250 words and should take about 40 minutes.

Candidates may write on the Question Paper but this cannot be taken from the test room and will not be seen by the examiner.

Answers must be given on the Answer Sheet and must be written in full. Notes are not acceptable as answers.

Task Types

Academic Writing

In Task 1 candidates are asked to interpret a diagram or table, and to present the information in their own words. Depending on the type of input and the task suggested, candidates are assessed on their ability to:

- organise, present and possibly compare data

- describe the stages of a process or procedure
- describe an object or event or sequence of events
- explain how something works

In Task 2 candidates are presented with a point of view or argument or problem. Candidates are assessed on their ability to:

- present the solution to a problem
- present and justify an opinion
- compare and contrast evidence, opinions and implications
- evaluate and challenge ideas, evidence or an argument

Part of the task realisation is to respond appropriately in terms of register, rhetorical organisation, style and content. Appropriate responses are short essays or general reports, addressed to tutors or examiners.

The issues raised are of general interest to, suitable for and easily understood by candidates entering postgraduate or undergraduate studies or seeking professional registration.

General Training Writing

In Task 1 candidates are asked to respond to a given problem with a letter requesting information or explaining a situation.

Depending on the task suggested, candidates are assessed on their ability to:

- engage in personal correspondence
- elicit and provide general factual information
- express needs, wants, likes and dislikes
- express opinions (views, complaints etc.)

In Task 2 candidates are presented with a point of view or argument or problem.

Candidates are assessed on their ability to:

- provide general factual information
- outline a problem and present a solution
- present and possibly justify an opinion, assessment or hypothesis
- present and possibly evaluate and challenge ideas, evidence and argument

The topics are of general interest and it makes no difference what subjects candidates study. Part of the task realisation is to respond appropriately in terms of register, rhetorical organisation, style and content. Appropriate responses are personal semi-formal or formal correspondence (Task 1) and short essays or general reports, addressed to course tutors or examiners (Task 2).

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Marking and Assessment

Each task is assessed independently. The assessment of Task 2 carries more weight in marking than Task 1. Writing scripts are marked by trained and certificated IELTS examiners. Scores are reported as whole bands only.

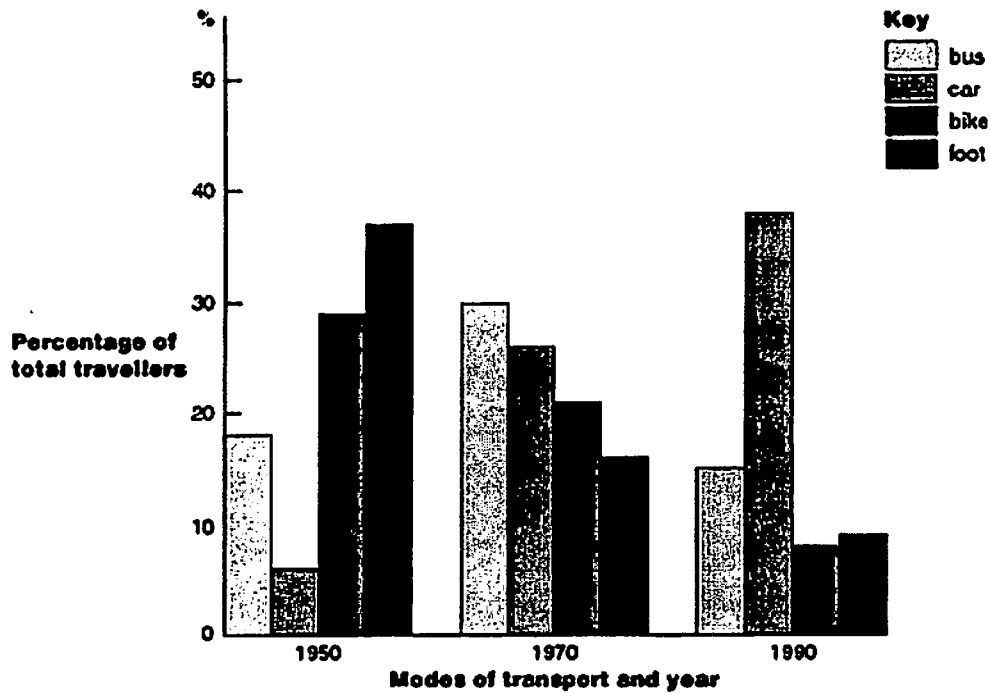
Detailed performance descriptors have been developed which describe written performance at the 9 IELTS bands. These descriptors are confidential. Task 1 scripts are assessed on the following criteria: Task Fulfilment, Coherence and Cohesion and Vocabulary and Sentence Structure. Task 2 scripts are assessed on performance in the following areas: Arguments, Ideas and Evidence, Communicative Quality and Vocabulary and Sentence Structure.

Scripts under the required minimum word limit will be penalised.

WRITING TASK 1

You should spend about 20 minutes on this task.
The graph below shows the different modes of transportation used to travel to and from work in one European city, in 1950, 1970 and 1990.

Write a report for a University lecturer describing the information shown below. You should write at least 150 words.



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Speaking

Duration and format

The Speaking Module takes between 11 and 14 minutes and consists of an oral interview between the candidate and an examiner.

All interviews are recorded on audio cassette.

The overall structure of the test is summarised below.

Task Types

There are three main parts. Each part fulfils a specific function in terms of interaction pattern, task input and candidate output.

In Part 1 candidates answer general questions about themselves, their homes/families, their jobs/studies, their interests, and a range of familiar topic areas. This part lasts between four and five minutes.

In Part 2 the candidate is given a verbal prompt on a card and is asked to talk on a particular topic. The candidate has one minute to prepare before speaking at length, for between one and two minutes. The examiner then asks one or two rounding-off questions.

In Part 3 the examiner and candidate engage in a discussion of more abstract issues and concepts which are thematically linked to the topic prompt in Part 2. The discussion lasts between four and five minutes.

The Speaking Module assesses whether candidates can communicate effectively in English.

Research has shown that the speech functions which occur regularly in a candidate's output during the Speaking Test are:

- Providing personal information
- Providing non-personal information
- Expressing opinions
- Explaining

- Expressing a preference
- Comparing
- Summarising
- Conversation repair

COMPETENCE IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE

There are a number of issues to consider in addressing the minimum level of competence in respect of admission to the Register.

- There appears to have been some misunderstanding over a period of time within the organisation, in respect to the categories. The CPSM standard was set at level 5 under the auspices of the Languages Lead Body at the Centre for Information on Language Teaching (CILT) which was the highest possible level under this Body. Level 5 applied across all the CPSM's regulated professions. This standard may have been lost in the transfer across to using the IELTS system where level 5 is an intermediate level, not the highest.
- The Dietitians Board had been pursuing the issue of IELTS level 5 and were about to build a case to ensure a higher level but this was put on hold with the move to HPC.
- Part of the rationale for ensuring more than an intermediate level of competence is that dietetic intervention is all based on direct, interactive communication with the patient/client. The aim of treatment is not one of basic instructions or education but is about facilitating change, behaviour modification and addressing barriers to change. This requires a complex level of dialogue and communication process to engage the patient. Without this ability the dietitian would be unable to achieve satisfactory outcome for their intervention, and is required right from the start as a student.
- There is a need - as in other healthcare professions - for detailed and regular liaison with a wide range of professionals in healthcare and/or social care and other spheres. Dietetics and other HPC regulated professions should be at least at the GMC equivalent which should, perhaps, be regarded as a guide rather than an absolute standard.
- Evidence from the approved HEIs which train dietetic students indicates that they all require a **minimum** of 6 at admission and many higher than this. In addition, there is the expectation that there will be a marked improvement on this level before the end of the course - probably to a comparable level of that required by the SLTs at 8.5.

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April 2003