



International English Language Testing System

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.

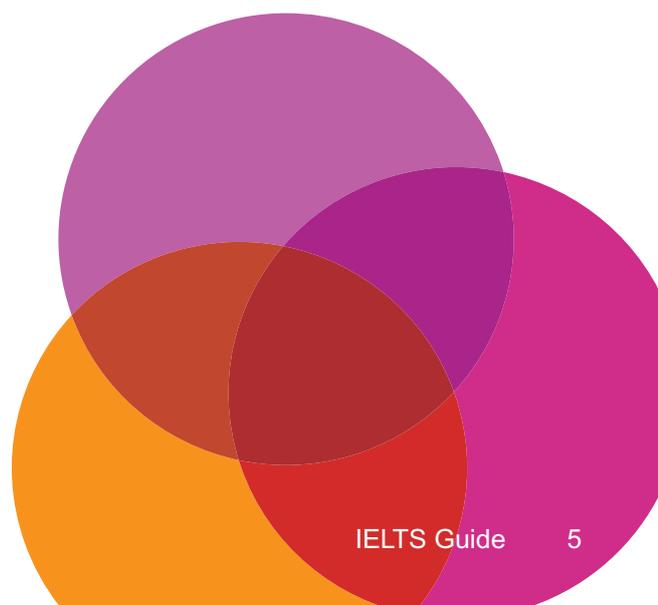
A similarly rigorous recruitment, training and monitoring system is in place for the markers of the Listening and Reading components. The reliability of marking is also enhanced by the double-marking of a proportion of Listening and Reading answer sheets at every test session.

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 trialed 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.

IELTS Band Scores	
9	Expert user
8	Very good user
7	Good user
6	Competent user
5	Modest user
4	Limited user
3	Extremely limited user
2	Intermittent user
1	Non user
0	Did not attempt the test

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.

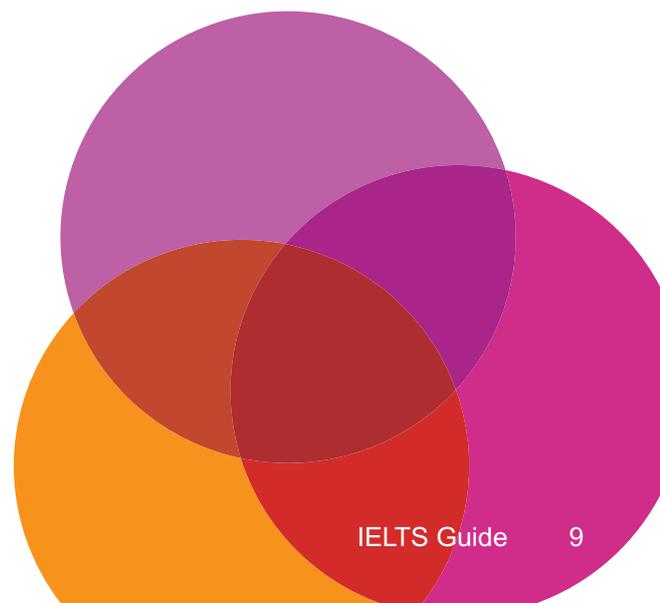
Band	Linguistically demanding academic courses e.g. Medicine, Law, Linguistics, Journalism	Linguistically less demanding academic courses e.g. Agriculture, Pure Mathematics, Technology, IT and Telecommunications	Linguistically demanding training courses e.g. Air Traffic Control, Engineering, Pure/Applied Sciences, Industrial Safety	Linguistically less demanding training courses e.g. Catering, Fire Services
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

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

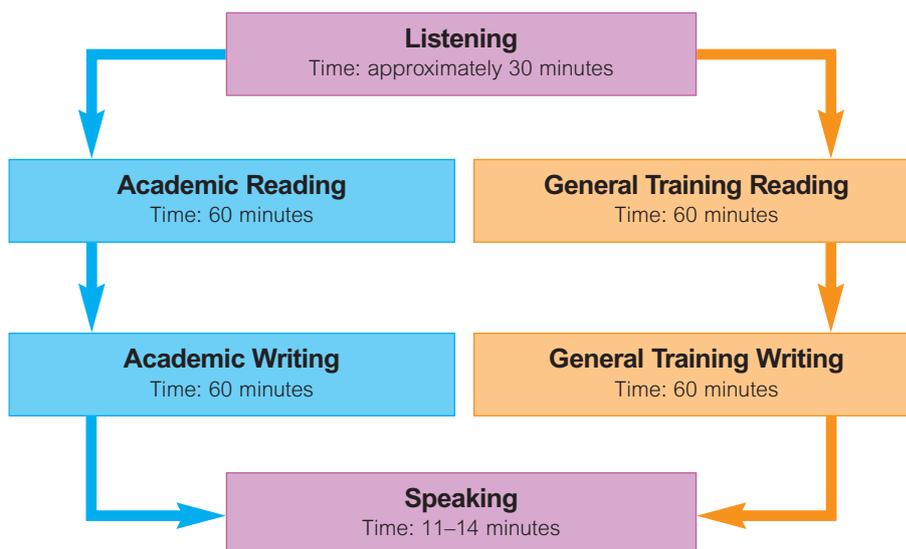
The IELTS test provides an accurate picture of a candidate's language skills at a given moment. For this reason, the validity of a score as a precise representation of a candidate's abilities will inevitably diminish in time. As a rule, we recommend that a Test Report Form which is more than two years old should only be accepted if it is accompanied by proof that a candidate has actively maintained or tried to improve their English.



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.



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.

Listening Task Section 3 (example)

SECTION 3

Questions 21 – 30

Questions 21 and 22

Complete the sentences below.

Write **NO MORE THAN TWO WORDS** for each answer.

Environmental Project

- Harry and Katy have to concentrate on coastal change for their next project.
- 21 Their work could be delayed by the
- They plan to get help from the Marine Biology Unit.
- 22 Before they go to the beach, they need to visit the

Questions 23 – 26

Who will do each of the following tasks?

- | | |
|---|---------------------|
| A | Katy |
| B | Harry |
| C | Both Katy and Harry |

Write the correct letter, **A, B or C**, next to questions 23-26.

Tasks

- | | | |
|----|------------------|-------|
| 23 | take photographs | |
| 24 | collect samples | |
| 25 | interview people | |
| 26 | analyse data | |

Questions 27 – 30

Choose the correct letter, **A, B or C**.

- 27 Why does Harry want to do the presentation?
- A to practise skills for his future career
 - B to catch up with his course requirements
 - C to get a better mark than for his last presentation
- 28 What is Katy's attitude to writing up the project?
- A She is worried about the time available for writing.
 - B She thinks it is unfair if she has to do all the writing.
 - C She is concerned that some parts will be difficult.
- 29 Why does Harry want to involve the other students at the end of the presentation?
- A to get their opinions about the conclusions
 - B to help him and Katy reach firm conclusions
 - C to see if they have reached similar conclusions
- 30 Katy agrees to deal with any questions because
- A she feels she will be confident about the material.
 - B Harry will be doing the main presentation.
 - C she has already told Dr Smith she will do this.

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.

Academic Reading (example)

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 **33** in engineering design and thus innovation. Among them were the development costs associated with high-tech products, globalisation and **34** justified on safety grounds, all of which inhibit the freedom of designers to design. The trend towards inter-company **35** on the subject of, for example, patents gives further cause for concern. On the other hand, some respondents deny that there is any great problem, welcoming an improved system of **36** For this reason, there is, these respondents argue, the possibility that innovation is on the increase. Certainly they would not be surprised if that was so.

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

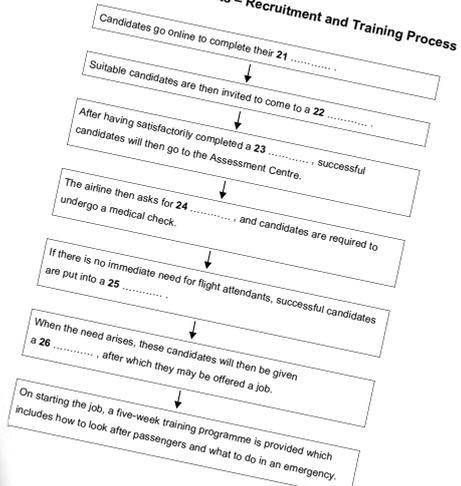
Questions 37 – 40
Do the following statements agree with the views of the writer in Reading Passage 3?
In boxes 37-40 on your answer sheet, write
YES if the statement agrees with the views of the writer
NO if the statement contradicts the views of the writer
NOT GIVEN if it is impossible to say what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

37 It is debatable whether levels of innovation are increasing or decreasing.
38 Governments can exert an unhelpful 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.

General Training Reading (example)

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



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.

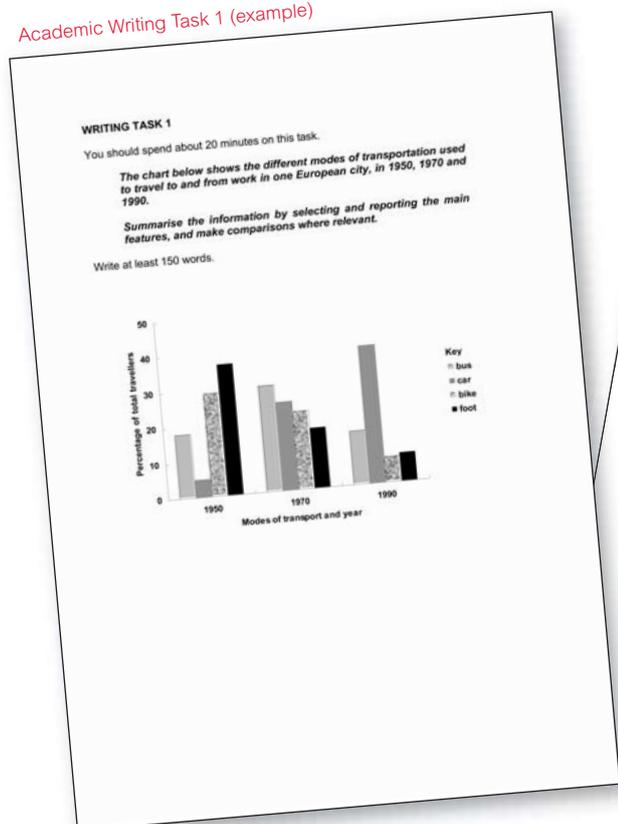
Candidates are required to write in a formal style for both tasks.

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.

Academic Writing Task 1 (example)



General Training Writing Task 1 (example)

WRITING TASK 1
You should spend about 20 minutes on this task.

You are interested in doing a computer course at your local college.

Write a letter to the college. In your letter

- explain why you want to do this course
- give information about your educational background and computer skills
- ask some questions about the course

Write at least 150 words.

You do **NOT** need to write any addresses.

Begin your letter as follows:

Dear Sir or Madam,

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.

Speaking Test Part 2 (example)

Example Part 2 task

Candidate task card:

Describe a teacher who has greatly influenced you in your education.

You should say:

where you met them
what subject they taught
what was special about them

and explain why this person influenced you so much.

You will have to talk about the topic for 1 to 2 minutes.
You have 1 minute to think about what you are going to say.
You can make some notes to help you if you wish.

Speaking Test Part 3 (example)

Example Part 3 (extract)

Let's consider first of all animals and conservation ...

- In your opinion, what are the advantages and disadvantages of keeping animals in zoos? Why?
- Apart from keeping animals in zoos, how do you think humans can protect animals from extinction?
- Some people think that governments should spend more money on helping human beings rather than trying to protect animals? Do you agree? Why?

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

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>

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

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UNIVERSITY of CAMBRIDGE
ESOL Examinations

IELTS is jointly managed by British Council, University of Cambridge ESOL Examinations (Cambridge ESOL) and IDP: IELTS Australia. The IELTS test is designed and set by some of the world's leading experts in language assessment to give a true picture of a candidate's language skills.

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