

Exam Preparation Courses: IELTS

International English Language Testing System

The IELTS exam

IELTS is the International English Language Testing System. IELTS is recognised as a reliable means of assessing whether candidates are ready to study, train or work in the medium of English. It measures ability to communicate in English across all four language skills – listening, reading, writing and speaking. IELTS is recognised by universities and employers in many countries, including Australia, Canada, Ireland, New Zealand, the UK and the USA. It is also recognised by professional bodies, immigration authorities and other government agencies.

More than 1 million people a year are now using IELTS to open doors throughout the English-speaking world and beyond. IELTS is recognised by more than 6,000 organisations worldwide. The tests are available in more than 120 countries in over 500 locations, with test dates available up to four times a month.

What is involved in taking the IELTS exam?

IELTS consists four parts – reading, writing, listening and speaking. All candidates take the same listening and speaking modules. There is a choice of Reading and Writing modules according to whether a candidate is taking the Academic or General Training version of the test.

- Academic – tests a person’s ability to study in English at undergraduate or postgraduate level.
- General Training – this module is suitable for people who are going to an English-speaking country to work or train at below undergraduate level. It is also used for immigration purposes to Canada, Australia and New Zealand.

Reading: 60 minutes

Academic Reading	General Training Reading
3 sections (40 questions)	3 sections (40 questions)
3 reading sections taken from: Magazines, journals, books and newspapers.	3 reading sections taken from: Advertisements, leaflets, newspapers, instruction manuals, books and magazines.

Writing: 60 minutes

Academic Writing	General Training Writing
<p>2 tasks</p> <p>Task 1: approx. 20 minutes (at least 150 words) Task 2: approx. 40 minutes (at least 250 words)</p> <p><i>The assessment of Task 2 carries more weight in marking than Task 1.</i></p> <p>Task 1: requires students to look at a diagram or some data (graph, table or chart) and present this information in their own words.</p> <p>Task 2: candidates are presented with a point of view, argument or problem.</p>	<p>2 tasks</p> <p>Task 1: approx. 20 minutes (at least 150 words) Task 2: approx. 40 minutes (at least 250 words)</p> <p><i>The assessment of Task 2 carries more weight in marking than Task 1.</i></p> <p>Task 1: Candidates are asked to respond to a given problem with a letter requesting information or explaining a situation.</p> <p>Task 2: candidates are presented with a point of view, argument or problem</p>

Listening: 30 minutes

This module consists of four sections (each with 10 questions). Candidates hear the recording once only and answer the questions as they listen. Ten minutes are allowed at the end for candidates to transfer their answers to the answer sheet.

Speaking: 11 - 14 minutes

The oral exam consists of 3 parts:

Part 1: 4 – 5 minutes

General questions about the candidate – home / family, job / studies, interests as well as a wide range of familiar topic areas.

Part 2: 3 – 4 minutes

The candidate is given a task card which contains a topic and some prompts. The candidate has 1 minute to prepare and can make notes if they wish. The candidate speaks for 1 – 2 minutes on the topic. The examiner then asks one to two rounding-off questions.

Part 3: 4 – 5 minutes

The examiner and the candidate engage in a discussion of more abstract issues which are thematically linked to the topic prompt in Part 2.

The Speaking module assesses whether candidates can communicate effectively in English. The assessment takes into account Fluency and Coherence, Lexical Resource, Grammatical Range and Accuracy, and Pronunciation.

How is the IELTS exam graded?

The IELTS exam score ranges between 1 and 9. Half scores such as 6.5 are possible. Universities often demand an IELTS score of 6 or 7. They may also demand a minimum score in each of the 4 sections. Please refer to the [Mapping your Level / Grade grid \(www.kli.ie/map\)](http://www.kli.ie/map) for a breakdown of the results.

General Overview of Scoring:

The following grid provides a breakdown of the grades:

Grade	Comment
9	<i>Expert User</i>
8	<i>Very Good User</i>
7	<i>Good User</i>
6	<i>Competent User</i>
5	<i>Modest User</i>
4	<i>Limited User</i>
3	<i>Extremely Limited User</i>
2	<i>Intermittent User</i>
1	<i>Non User</i>
0	<i>Did not attempt the test</i>

