

Welcome

The last year has seen notable developments for IELTS, including a very significant increase in candidate numbers, the introduction of additional sophisticated security measures and a vast increase in the number of organisations around the world that recognise this quality English language test.

Growth in candidature has been particularly impressive in South Asia and the Middle East. Elsewhere candidate numbers continued to grow steadily in 2003.

The outstanding success of IELTS in 2003 was due in no small part to the commitment of our many IELTS centres around the world and our global network of IELTS examiners. We value their ongoing support and commitment.

We look forward to another successful year in 2004.



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Michael Milanovic".

Dr Michael Milanovic
Chief Executive
Cambridge ESOL



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "John Gildea".

John Gildea
Director, Examinations
British Council



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Lindy Hyam".

Lindy Hyam
Chief Executive
IDP Education Australia &
IELTS Australia

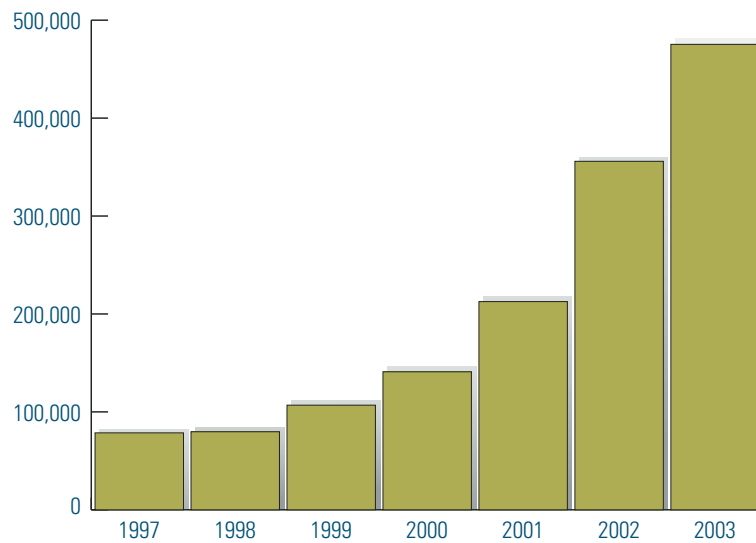
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International testing

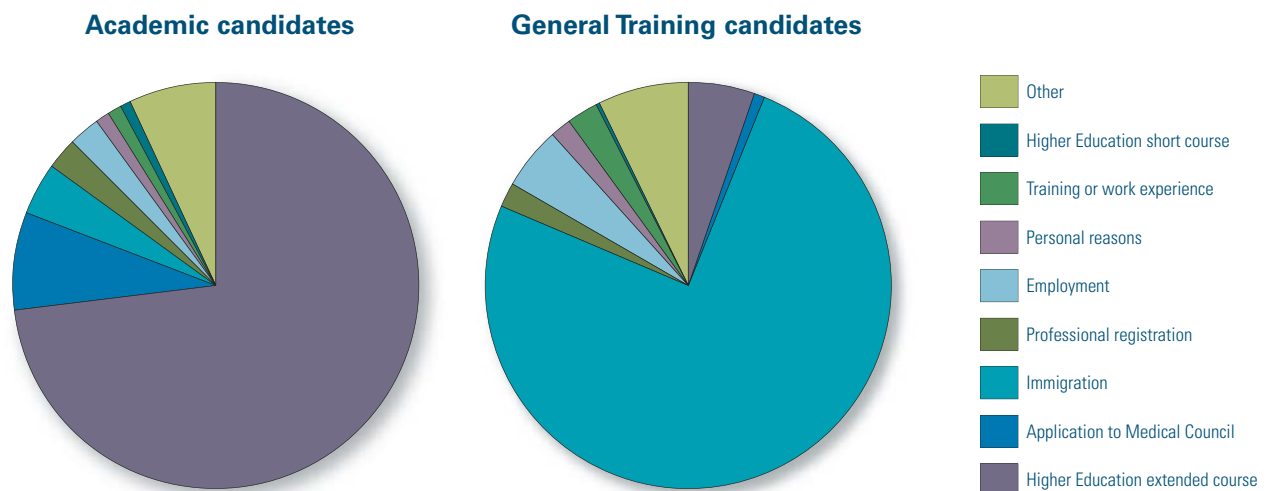
Significant increase in IELTS candidature

The number of candidates taking this high quality test increased again in 2003 from around 355,000 to well over 475,000 – a rise of 34%.



Why candidates choose IELTS

IELTS candidates are asked to indicate their reason for taking the test. In 2003, the stated purposes were:





Key milestones for 2003

A new IELTS website

An important step forward for IELTS in 2003 was the development of a new website, with a fresh design and fast loading content to service increasing demand. The site features more resources for students, researchers and partners and information is given in plain and simple English. There is clear navigation for all users, with five directions to explore:

- Candidates
- Test Centres and Examiners
- Teachers and Researchers
- Organisations recognising IELTS
- Media Centre.

The new site was launched early in 2004 and users can expect to see much more news-based content, with links to interesting commentaries and articles concerning English language testing.

Surge in USA recognition for IELTS

In 2003, growth in recognition by universities and colleges was particularly impressive in the USA, where IELTS is rapidly gaining recognition as the test of choice for academic entry. In 2003 alone the number of educational institutions in the USA that accept IELTS results grew by 25% to 308.

Prestigious institutions, including Northwestern University and the graduate schools of Princeton and Duke universities, have confirmed their endorsement of IELTS, as has the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education.

The University of California also announced official recognition of IELTS for undergraduate admissions. All nine campuses accepting undergraduate students (Berkeley, Davis, Irvine, Los Angeles, Riverside, Santa Barbara, Santa Cruz, San Diego, San Francisco) and the new Merced campus will accept IELTS scores for admission purposes for students entering the university from Autumn 2004.

Computerised testing

Work continued during 2003 to refine the computer-based version of IELTS (CB IELTS), which is set to become available early in 2005. The final stages of trialling are nearing completion and feedback from centres has been extremely positive.

There are no plans to withdraw the pen and paper version of the test and the same 9-band scale will be used to report scores in the computer-based test. Providing a computer-based version simply gives candidates more choice in how they take IELTS.

Test results you can trust

IELTS is a high stakes test – an IELTS result has the potential to impact on the career, study or migration ambitions of candidates. To maintain the test’s high quality reputation, the IELTS test partners invest considerable resources into the development of test materials, examiner training, centre management, ongoing research and security management.

Test reliability

Test reliability is one of the hallmarks of the IELTS system. In order to achieve standardisation across versions, the partners use a number of controls. These include extensive pretesting, the use of anchor tests and the recycling of a small amount of test material.

A large quantity of new test material is introduced on an ongoing basis and, in 2003, IELTS moved to a fixed test dates format. Unique versions of the test are now taken on 48 dates in the year at centres in more than 110 countries.

On-line verification service

All Test Report Forms now include a scanned photo of the candidate to make it easier for organisations using IELTS scores to match the original candidate to the person applying for a job or course of study.

A further security enhancement to IELTS was introduced in July 2003. The on-line verification service provides fast confirmation of the authenticity of IELTS Test Report Forms. Once registered for the service, organisations that officially recognise IELTS can simply enter the Test Report Form number (which appears on the Test Report Form) and an electronic version of the form is produced that includes the photo. The two versions can then be checked for any discrepancies. More information about this service can be found at <https://ielts.ucles.org.uk>

‘Our experience is IELTS is a better measure of English proficiency and students who use IELTS consistently perform at the level we expected based on their test results’, explains Don Buegel, Director of International Student Recruiting and Support at Concordia College, Minnesota, USA. ‘The new on-line verification service is really outstanding – another reason why IELTS is the test of choice!’



Enhanced test day security

Test day security systems have undergone significant transformation in the last 18 months. Test centre staff are rigorously trained in all aspects of test administration, including impostor identification, document fraud and the detection of inappropriate use of electronic devices.

Electronic download of results

An additional security measure will be announced early next year. Band scores will be transmitted electronically directly to organisations that recognise IELTS. It is such investment in research into new technology that keeps IELTS at the forefront of test construction and delivery.



Surge in global recognition

Just as IELTS candidature grew significantly in 2003, so too did the number of organisations that recognise IELTS results. This increased global recognition makes it easier for candidates to use their IELTS result to help them achieve their life goals.

Valued by universities

IELTS is specified as fulfilling English language requirements for entry to academic courses by institutions of further and higher education in countries which include Australia, Canada, Ireland, New Zealand, South Africa, the United Kingdom and the United States of America. The number of universities and colleges that recognise IELTS grew by 17% to 867 during 2003 and this growth is set to continue in the coming year.

Highly prized by professional bodies

IELTS scores are also used by a number of professional bodies worldwide, including the General Medical Council in the UK, the Australian Medical Council, the Medical Council of Ireland and the Commission on Graduates of Foreign Nursing Schools (CGFNS) in the USA.

The CGFNS began accepting IELTS test scores in March 2003 for non-USA trained nurses and healthcare workers applying for the CGFNS Certification Program and/or the VisaScreen™: Visa Credentials Assessment program. Applicants applying to work as a nurse or healthcare professional in the USA are required to pass an English language proficiency examination as part of their requirements to receive certification.

CGFNS explained that 'expanding the English testing options would increase access and availability to English proficiency tests for foreign healthcare professionals, and in turn, expedite the certification and screening processes for applicants.'

Since March 2003, thousands of nurses around the world have successfully taken IELTS and submitted their scores for VisaScreen and certification for work in the USA.

Endorsed by governments

Ministries of Education and government departments throughout the world recognise IELTS as evidence of English language ability, including the UK Ministry of Defence, the New Zealand Immigration Service, Citizenship and Immigration Canada and the Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs in Australia.

A recognition highlight from 2003 was the decision by the Hong Kong Government to accept IELTS (Academic) scores for civil service recruitment purposes. Candidates must achieve an overall score of 6.5, with no module scores below 6.0.

A complete listing of educational institutions, employers, professional bodies and governments that recognise IELTS can be found on the IELTS website at www.ielts.org

A commitment to quality

To ensure that IELTS remains at the forefront of quality in language testing, the IELTS partners are committed to an ongoing programme of research and validation activities. Highlights of just some of these important activities are included here. Further information is available on the IELTS website at www.ielts.org

IELTS Master's Award

Each year the IELTS partners sponsor an award of £1000 for the Master's level dissertation which makes the most significant contribution to the field of language testing. The winner of the 2003 Award was Eunice Eunhee Jang, with her dissertation *In search of folk fairness in language testing*. Ms Jang received her award at a formal ceremony during the Language Testing Research Colloquium in California, USA, in 2004.



Conferences and presentations

During the course of the year IELTS presentations were given at various national/international conferences, including:

- AIEC (Melbourne, Australia)
- ARELS Teachers Conference (London, UK)
- EAIE (Vienna, Austria)
- ECIS (Hamburg, Germany)
- IATEFL (Brighton, UK)
- NAFSA (Salt Lake City, USA)
- NAGAP (New Orleans, USA)
- TESOL (Baltimore, USA)



IELTS research programme 2003/4

The IDP Education Australia and British Council joint funded research programme agreed on funding for the following research projects in 2003/4:

What makes a good IELTS speaking test? Perceptions of candidates and examiners, Christopher Hampton and Huang Chun, British Council Shanghai, China.

Student Identity, Learning and Progression: with specific reference to the affective and academic impact of IELTS on 'successful' IELTS students, Pauline Rea-Dickins, Richard Kelly and Guoxing Yu, University of Bristol, UK.

Exploring difficulty in speaking tasks: an intra-task perspective, Barry O'Sullivan, Cyril Weir and Tomoko Horai, University of Roehampton, Surrey, UK.

An investigation of the effectiveness and validity of planning time in part 2 of the oral module, Catherine Elder, University of Auckland, New Zealand, and Gillian Wigglesworth, University of Melbourne, Australia.

An examination of the rating process in the IELTS speaking test, Annie Brown, University of Melbourne, Australia.

A study of the linguistic and discursal features in the output from IELTS Academic writing tasks, M A Yadugiri, consultant, formerly at Bangalore University, India.

Attitudes of tertiary key decision-makers towards English language tests: a New Zealand case study, Hilary Smith, Stephen Haslett, Systemetrics Research New Zealand and Massey University, New Zealand.

Such research makes an important contribution to the monitoring and test development process for IELTS and helps IELTS stakeholders to develop a greater understanding of the test.

Cambridge ESOL funded research

Over the past year, Cambridge ESOL's Research & Validation Group has undertaken a number of research projects, including:

- IELTS Impact Studies (stakeholder attitudes, teaching/learning approaches and materials)
- IELTS Writing Revision Project (assessment criteria and scales)
- the relationship of IELTS to frameworks of reference (e.g. Common European Framework and Hong Kong Civil Service).

Worldwide availability

IELTS test centres are run by either British Council, IDP Education Australia or IELTS Inc. (a USA-based company established to run IELTS centres in North America). Most centres are either British Council offices, IDP Education Australia offices or universities/language schools. Test centres run regular test administrations according to local demand and results are available within two weeks.

There are currently around 310 IELTS test centres in 113 countries world-wide. A number of IELTS test centres also offer off-site testing, increasing availability to over 150 countries. All test centres are monitored and follow the IELTS Code of Practice.

New IELTS centres

The following IELTS centres were opened in 2003, further expanding the global availability of IELTS testing:



Armenia

British Council Yerevan



Australia

University of Sydney



Bolivia

The Language Works, La Paz



England

School of Oriental and African Studies,
London
Warwickshire College, Leamington Spa



India

IDP Education Australia Ahmedabad
IDP Education Australia Hyderabad



New Zealand

Whangerei Northland Polytechnic



South Africa

IDP Education Australia Sandton,
Johannesburg



Uganda

British Council Kampala



USA

International House San Diego
ELS Language Centres Chicago
ELS Language Centres Manhattan



Uzbekistan

British Council Tashkent

A full list of IELTS test centres can be found at www.ielts.org

Where candidates take the test

In 2003, the top 25 locations in which candidates took the test are indicated below:

Academic candidates

- 1 China (People's Republic of)
- 2 India
- 3 United Kingdom
- 4 New Zealand
- 5 Australia
- 6 Hong Kong
- 7 Pakistan
- 8 Bangladesh
- 9 Philippines
- 10 Malaysia
- 11 Thailand
- 12 Indonesia
- 13 Taiwan
- 14 South Africa
- 15 United Arab Emirates
- 16 Iran
- 17 Sri Lanka
- 18 Vietnam
- 19 Singapore
- 20 Japan
- 21 South Korea
- 22 Irish Republic
- 23 Greece
- 24 Nepal
- 25 Saudi Arabia

General Training candidates

- 1 India
 - 2 China (People's Republic of)
 - 3 Australia
 - 4 Philippines
 - 5 Pakistan
 - 6 United Kingdom
 - 7 Iran
 - 8 New Zealand
 - 9 United Arab Emirates
 - 10 South Korea
 - 11 Russia
 - 12 Sri Lanka
 - 13 USA
 - 14 Singapore
 - 15 Bangladesh
 - 16 Canada
 - 17 Saudi Arabia
 - 18 Israel
 - 19 Hong Kong
 - 20 Egypt
 - 21 Japan
 - 22 Malaysia
 - 23 Colombia
 - 24 Germany
 - 25 Romania
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A unique partnership approach



IELTS is jointly managed as a partnership between British Council, IDP Education Australia and Cambridge ESOL. This unique collaboration ensures that IELTS remains a truly international English language test, meeting the needs of both candidates and organisations that rely on the results, wherever they are in the world.

Each of the three organisations brings its own strengths to the partnership.



British Council

The British Council's purpose is to build mutually beneficial relationships between people in the UK and other countries and to increase appreciation of the UK's creative ideas and achievements. The British Council works in over 110 countries and in 2003 delivered more than 1 million examinations. www.britishcouncil.org



IDP Education Australia

IDP Education Australia is Australia's foremost international education organisation, with more than 100 locations and activities in over 55 countries. It undertakes a broad range of activities from student advisory services and educational publications to project consultancy and English language teaching and testing. www.idp.com



University of Cambridge ESOL Examinations (Cambridge ESOL)

Cambridge ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) provides the world's leading range of certificates for learners of English. Each year, they are taken by around 1.5 million people, in 135 countries and are recognised by thousands of educational organisations and employers throughout the world. www.CambridgeESOL.org