

IELTS ACADEMIC MASTERCLASS

BAND SCALE 0-9

IELTS Academic Overview

Structure, Format & Scoring System



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What is IELTS Academic?

🌐 International Standard for Higher Education

The **International English Language Testing System (IELTS)** is jointly managed by the **British Council**, **IDP: IELTS Australia**, and **Cambridge Assessment English**.

- **Four Core Skills:** Measures Listening, Reading, Writing, and Speaking in academic contexts.
- **Target Purpose:** Designed for undergraduate/postgraduate study or professional registration (medicine, nursing, engineering, law).
- **vs. General Training:** General Training focuses on workplace, migration, and secondary education contexts.



12,500+

Recognized Institutions Worldwide

Accepted across 140+ countries by universities & professional
bodies

Exam Structure Overview

TOTAL TIME

~2 Hours 45 Mins

WRITTEN SESSION

No breaks between test parts

SPEAKING TEST

Same day or ±7 days

Test Section	Duration	Main Focus	Order & Format
 Listening	~30 Minutes (+10 mins transfer on paper)	Understanding spoken English in social & academic contexts	Section 1 · Played ONCE
 Reading	60 Minutes (3 Long Passages)	Understanding complex academic texts & arguments	Section 2 · No extra transfer time
 Writing	60 Minutes (2 Tasks)	Describing visual data & writing a formal academic essay	Section 3 · Task 2 = 2/3 weight
 Speaking	11–14 Minutes (3 Parts)	Spoken communication in a 1-on-1 examiner interview	Face-to-face or video call format

Listening Section Breakdown

PART 1 · SOCIAL

Everyday Conversation

2 speakers. E.g., booking accommodation or travel arrangements.

PART 2 · SOCIAL

Everyday Monologue

1 speaker. E.g., local facility speech or guided tour information.

PART 3 · ACADEMIC

Academic Discussion

Up to 4 speakers. E.g., students discussing a research project.

PART 4 · ACADEMIC

Academic Lecture

1 speaker monologue. University-level lecture (most demanding).



Audio Rules & Accents:

- Played **ONCE ONLY** — no second listens
- Accents: British, Australian, North American, NZ

QUESTION FORMATS (40 QUESTIONS TOTAL):

Multiple Choice · Matching · Form/Note/Table Completion · Sentence Completion · Diagram/Map Labeling

Academic Reading Section

FORMAT SPECIFICATIONS

3 Long Passages · 40 Questions

Total word count ranges between **2,150 and 2,750 words** across 60 minutes.

- **Source Material:** Academic books, journals, magazines, and newspapers.
- **Audience Level:** Written for an educated non-specialist audience (no background domain knowledge required).
- **No Extra Transfer Time:** Answers must be recorded on the answer sheet within the 60 minutes.

CORE QUESTION TYPES

1. True / False / Not Given

Assesses factual agreement with writer statements.

2. Yes / No / Not Given

Assesses writer's claims, opinions, or perspective.

3. Matching Headings & Information

Linking paragraph themes to section summaries.

4. Sentence & Summary Completion

Filling gaps adhering strictly to word limit rules.

⚠ Golden Reading Rule:

Base all answers strictly on text evidence, never rely on prior outside knowledge!

Writing Section Overview

 Total Duration: 60 Minutes

 Two Compulsory Tasks

Formal Tone Required

TASK 1 · VISUAL DATA

Describing Visual Information

- **Time Allocation:** Recommended 20 Minutes
- **Word Count:** Minimum 150 words
- **Objective:** Summarize, describe, or explain visual data (chart, graph, table, process or map).
- **Key Focus:** Select main features and make relevant comparisons.

 **Note:** No personal opinions or outside interpretations permitted.

TASK 2 · ACADEMIC ESSAY

2/3 Writing Score (Double Weight!)

Discursive Academic Essay

- **Time Allocation:** Recommended 40 Minutes
- **Word Count:** Minimum 250 words
- **Objective:** Write a formal essay responding to an argument, point of view, or problem.
- **Key Focus:** Present a clear position supported by developed evidence & examples.

 **Priority Strategy:** Always spend more time on Task 2 due to higher score weighting.

Task 1: Describing Visual Data

Visual Types & Essay Structure

Line graph, bar chart, pie chart, table, process diagram, or map.

1. Introduction: Paraphrase the prompt statement.

2. Overview: State 2–3 overall trends/key changes (Mandatory!).

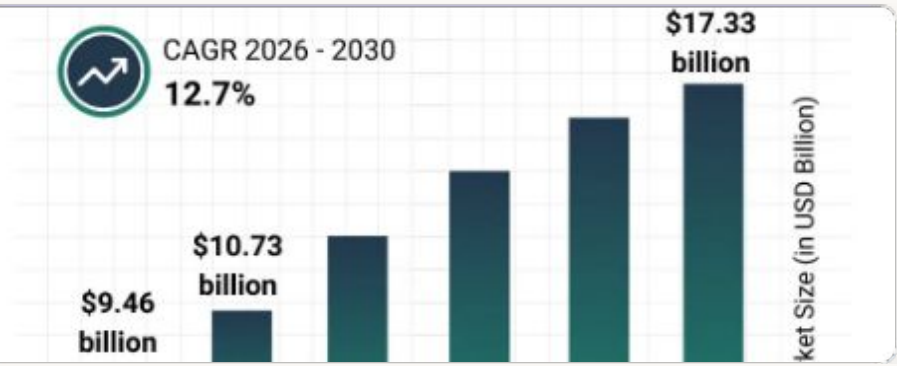
3. Body Paragraphs: Group data logically & make comparisons.

✓ DO:

Select key trends, compare data points, organize logically.

✗ DON'T:

Give opinions, list every single data value, copy prompt words.



KEY TREND VOCABULARY:

- Increase / decrease / fluctuate / remain stable
- Whereas / in contrast to / compared with

Task 2: The Academic Essay

COMMON ESSAY PROMPTS:

Opinion (Agree/Disagree) · Discussion (Both Views) · Advantages/Disadvantages · Problem/Solution · Two-Part Direct Questions

1. INTRODUCTION

Hook + Paraphrase + Position

Rewrite prompt in your own words and present a clear thesis stance.

2. BODY PARA 1

Point + Explain + Example

First main argument developed logically with a realistic example.

3. BODY PARA 2

Point + Explain + Example

Second main argument fully elaborated with supporting evidence.

4. CONCLUSION

Summary of Stance + Recommendation

Re-state overall position succinctly without introducing new points.

Key Principle: Answer the exact question prompt, not just the general topic!

Ensure every body paragraph directly relates to and expands upon your core position statement.

Speaking Section Overview

 1-on-1 Interview with Certified Examiner

 Duration: 11–14 Minutes

Identical for Academic & GT

PART 1 · 4–5 MINS

Introduction & Interview

General questions on familiar everyday topics:

- Home & hometown
- Work or studies
- Hobbies, leisure & interests

PART 2 · 3–4 MINS

Individual Long Turn

Speak on a given topic cue card:

- 1 minute preparation time
- Speak for 1 to 2 minutes
- Examiner asks 1–2 follow-up questions

PART 3 · 4–5 MINS

Two-Way Discussion

Deep discussion linked to Part 2 theme:

- Abstract & analytical concepts
- Justifying & explaining opinions
- Speculating & comparing trends

Speaking Parts 2 & 3 Deep Dive

PART 2 CUE CARD STRATEGY

1 Min Prep → 2 Mins Speaking

- **Preparation Minute:** Jot down key vocabulary & ideas — do NOT write full sentences.
- **Pacing:** Address every bullet point on the cue card logically.
- **Continuous Flow:** Keep speaking naturally until the examiner tells you to stop.

PART 3 ANALYTICAL DISCUSSION

Broad & Abstract Themes

- **Shift from Personal to General:** Discuss society, global trends, and broader causes rather than "I" or "my family".
- **AREL Response Framework:**
Answer directly → Reason why → Example or expansion → Loop Back.

💡 Examiner Insight:

Focus shifts from *personal experiences* (Part 1/2) to *abstract commentary* (Part 3). Never recite memorized scripts!

IELTS Scoring System

The 9-Band Scale (0 to 9)

Reported in whole and half bands (e.g., 6.0, 6.5, 7.0, 7.5)

Overall Score Formula:
Average of 4 Skills (Rounded per IELTS rules)

Band 9

Expert User

Complete operational command; fully fluent and accurate.

Band 7

Good User

Operational command; handles complex language well.

Band 6

Competent User

Effective command despite occasional inaccuracies.

Band 5

Modest User

Partial command; copes with overall meaning in most situations.

University Admission Targets: Most academic institutions require an overall score between **6.5 and 7.5** .

Section Scoring Criteria

OBJECTIVE MARKING

Listening & Reading

Scored on raw marks out of 40:

- **1 Mark** per correct answer
- Raw total out of 40 is converted to Band Score (0–9) using scaled tables.
- Conversion tables differ slightly between Listening and Reading.

SUBJECTIVE ASSESSMENT (4 CRITERIA @ 25% EACH)

Writing & Speaking Criteria

Writing:

- Task Response
- Coherence & Cohesion
- Lexical Resource
- Grammatical Accuracy

Speaking:

- Fluency & Coherence
- Lexical Resource
- Grammatical Accuracy
- Pronunciation

Test Formats & Logistics

Delivery Options

- **IELTS on Computer:** Fast results delivered in 1–5 days.
- **IELTS on Paper:** Results delivered in ~13 days.
- **IELTS Online:** At-home testing (where accepted by institutions).

Registration & TRF Validity

- **Registration:** Official British Council or IDP portal (Valid Passport/ID required).
- **Validity:** Test Report Form (TRF) is valid for **2 years** from test date.



Multiple Test Dates Monthly

Available in test centers worldwide

Common Mistakes & Prep Tips

COMMON PITFALLS

Mistakes That Cost Marks

- **Word Limits:** Exceeding specified word limits in Listening & Reading.
- **Reading Trap:** Confusing "False" with "Not Given".
- **Writing Task 1:** Weak overview statement or giving personal opinions.
- **Writing Task 2:** Unclear position or listing points without development.
- **Speaking:** Reciting memorized answers rather than speaking naturally.

PREPARATION ACTION PLAN

Proven Prep Strategies

- **Timed Practice:** Take full practice tests under realistic timed conditions.
- **Paraphrasing Skills:** Build academic vocabulary and recognize synonyms.
- **Visual Summaries:** Practice analyzing graphs and describing key data trends.
- **Spontaneous Speech:** Use the AREL framework for natural speaking responses.
- **Band Descriptors:** Study official criteria to target exact weaknesses.

Summary & Key Takeaways

1. BLUEPRINT

4 Skills • 1 Exam

~2 Hours 45 Mins total testing time.

2. GOAL

Target Band Score

Know your required band score before starting prep.

3. PRACTICE

Timed Practice

Practice every question type under realistic conditions.

4. NEXT STEP

Diagnostic Test

Take a full diagnostic test to isolate weak skills.

Master the Exam Strategy

High scores in IELTS come from combining English proficiency with smart exam technique and clear idea development.

For more masterclass resources visit: kristof.abrath.com

Image Sources



<https://images.ctfassets.net/btf5tt6k5y9e/6QkbAYdCHsWeQrUcmAZBWP/d074b464a2d05ea6c0cab8843733bfa9/college-diversity.jpeg>

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