

IELTS [International English Language Testing System

Annual Review 2002

International English Language Testing System

IELTS is the first choice international English language test for global opportunity.

IELTS is an internationally owned and globally recognised direct English language assessment of the highest quality and integrity readily available throughout the world.

IELTS is a highly dependable, practical and valid English language assessment primarily used by those seeking:

- international education
- professional recognition
- bench-marking to international standards
- global mobility

IELTS is owned, developed and delivered through the partnership of the British Council, IDP Education Australia: IELTS Australia and the University of Cambridge ESOL Examinations.

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Introduction

This Annual Review contains statistical details on the candidature and the test material released in 2002, information on test development and recognition and an up-date on IELTS-related research. Further information on the test content can be found in the IELTS Handbook and the IELTS Specimen Materials available from Cambridge ESOL, IDP Education Australia: IELTS Australia, (IDP: IA) and IELTS test centres.

IELTS covers all four language skills – Listening, Reading, Writing and Speaking – at nine levels from Non User to Expert User (see Band Score descriptions below).

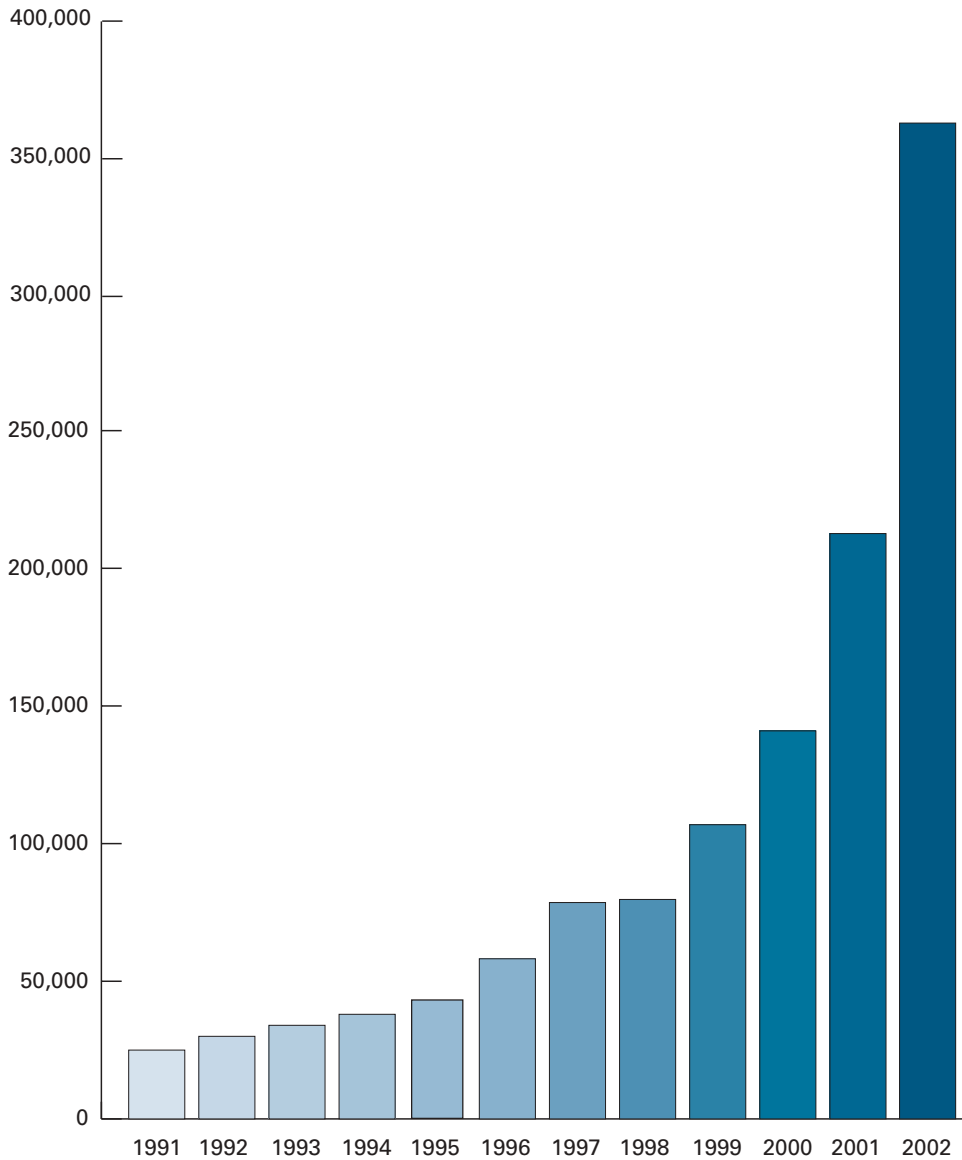
Band Scores

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 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.

Section 1 Tests in 2002

IELTS candidature

In 2002 more than 350,000 candidates took IELTS. This represented a 67% increase on the previous year and reflected the increased use and recognition of IELTS world-wide.



Academic or General Training?

The following table indicates the percentage split between the Academic and General Training candidature in 2002.

	2002
Academic	76%
General Training	24%

Gender

The following table indicates the percentage of male and female candidates taking IELTS in 2002.

	2002	
Academic	female	46%
	male	54%
General Training	female	40%
	male	60%

Candidate origins and first languages

The 25 most common places of origin and first languages for both Academic and General Training candidates are shown below.

Academic candidates

Top 25 places of origin (in descending order)	Top 25 first languages (in descending order)
1 China (People's Republic of)	1 Chinese
2 India	2 Arabic
3 Pakistan	3 Urdu
4 Hong Kong	4 Hindi
5 Thailand	5 Bengali
6 South Korea	6 Korean
7 Taiwan	7 Thai
8 Bangladesh	8 Telugu
9 Malaysia	9 Japanese
10 Japan	10 Indonesian
11 Indonesia	11 Spanish
12 Vietnam	12 Tamil
13 Sri Lanka	13 Vietnamese
14 Philippines	14 Punjabi
15 Iran	15 Tagalog
16 Greece	16 Malayalam
17 Russia	17 Fars
18 Mexico	18 Malay
19 Nepal	19 Gujurati
20 Brazil	20 Greek
21 Turkey	21 Russian
22 United Arab Emirates	22 Singhalese
23 South Africa	23 Portuguese
24 Germany	24 Kannada
25 Nigeria	25 French

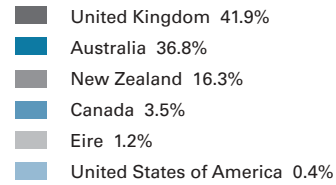
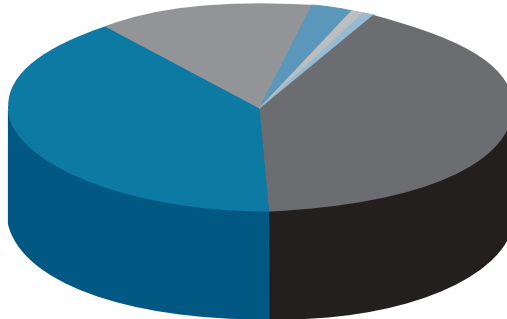
General Training candidates

Top 25 places of origin (in descending order)	Top 25 first languages (in descending order)
1 China (People's Republic of)	1 Chinese
2 India	2 Hindi
3 South Korea	3 Korean
4 Philippines	4 Tagalog
5 Sri Lanka	5 Gujurati
6 Pakistan	6 Arabic
7 Japan	7 Punjabi
8 Russia	8 Malayalam
9 Indonesia	9 Japanese
10 Romania	10 Telugu
11 Iran	11 Russian
12 Bangladesh	12 Singhalese
13 Taiwan	13 Urdu
14 Malaysia	14 Spanish
15 Hong Kong	15 Tamil
16 Egypt	16 Bengali
17 United Arab Emirates	17 Marathi
18 Thailand	18 Indonesian
19 Singapore	19 Romanian
20 Vietnam	20 Farsi
21 Ukraine	21 Thai
22 Fiji	22 German
23 Argentina	23 Vietnamese
24 Germany	24 Kannada
25 Colombia	25 French

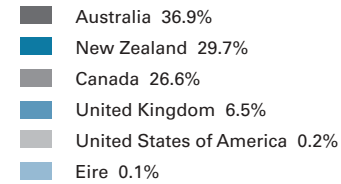
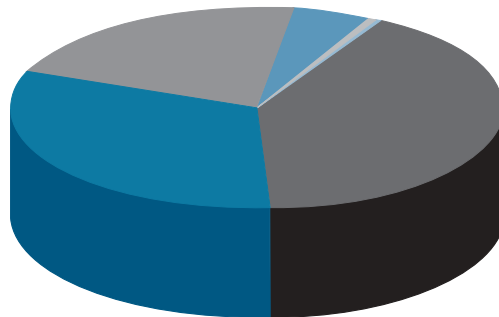
Candidate destinations

IELTS candidates are asked to indicate on their Application Form the country in which they intend to use their test results. In 2002, the stated destinations were:

Academic candidates



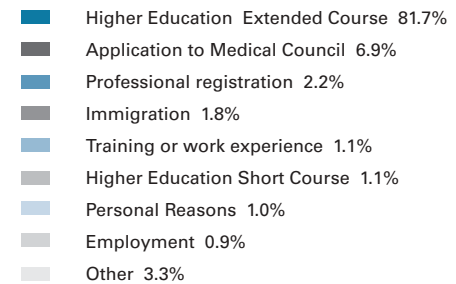
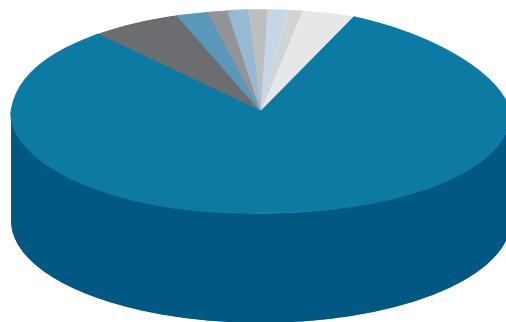
General Training candidates



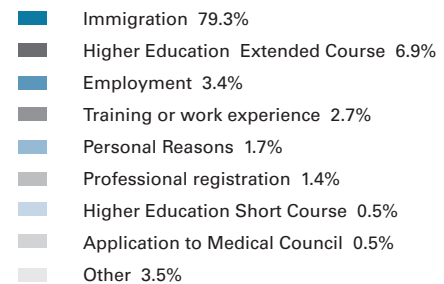
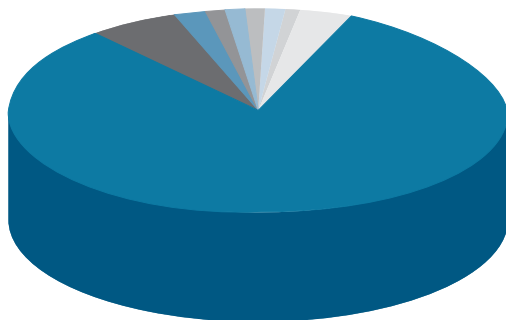
Test purpose of candidates

IELTS candidates are asked to indicate their purpose in taking the test. In 2002, the stated purposes were:

Academic candidates



General Training candidates



Locations in which test was taken

In 2002 IELTS was taken in over 110 locations. The top 25 in terms of candidate entries are indicated below:

Academic candidates	General Training candidates
1 China (People's Republic of)	1 China (People's Republic of)
2 India	2 India
3 United Kingdom	3 Australia
4 New Zealand	4 Philippines
5 Australia	5 New Zealand
6 Pakistan	6 Korea
7 Malaysia	7 United Kingdom
8 Bangladesh	8 Sri Lanka
9 Hong Kong	9 Pakistan
10 Thailand	10 United Arab Emirates
11 Indonesia	11 Singapore
12 Taiwan	12 Russia
13 Sri Lanka	13 Malaysia
14 Vietnam	14 Japan
15 Japan	15 Iran
16 Philippines	16 Indonesia
17 United Arab Emirates	17 Romania
18 Greece	18 Taiwan
19 Korea	19 Hong Kong
20 Iran	20 Egypt
21 Singapore	21 Israel
22 South Africa	22 Bangladesh
23 Mexico	23 Netherlands
24 Nepal	24 Fiji
25 Oman	25 South Africa

Band Score information

IELTS is assessed on a nine-band scale (see page 3). 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 which is reported as a whole or half band.

The Overall Band Scores for Academic and General Training candidates taking versions released in 2002 are reported below together with mean Band Scores for the individual modules.

These scores are in line with expected parameters of performance and are consistent with performance in 2001.

The nature of the General Training candidature generally results in lower mean Band Scores than their Academic counterparts.

	Overall	Listening	Reading	Writing	Speaking
Academic	5.86	5.79	5.79	5.64	5.94
General Training	5.65	5.48	5.43	5.64	5.79

Top 25 places of origin

Academic candidates

The figures below show the mean Overall and individual module Band Scores achieved by 2002 Academic and General Training candidates from the top 25 places of origin and the top 25 first language backgrounds.

Place of origin	Overall	Listening	Reading	Writing	Speaking
1 China (People's Republic of)	5.37	5.25	5.46	5.17	5.34
2 India	6.63	6.50	6.30	6.65	6.83
3 Pakistan	6.19	6.23	5.86	6.09	6.32
4 Hong Kong	5.87	5.96	5.92	5.51	5.80
5 Thailand	5.54	5.54	5.64	5.14	5.57
6 South Korea	5.57	5.68	5.58	5.21	5.54
7 Taiwan	5.48	5.35	5.44	5.20	5.65
8 Bangladesh	5.63	5.43	5.39	5.58	5.87
9 Malaysia	6.37	6.60	6.36	6.01	6.26
10 Japan	5.64	5.74	5.61	5.30	5.64
11 Indonesia	5.83	6.14	5.95	5.23	5.74
12 Vietnam	5.61	5.30	5.76	5.53	5.57
13 Sri Lanka	6.30	6.28	5.98	6.14	6.52
14 Philippines	6.28	6.31	5.90	6.16	6.50
15 Iran	5.84	5.48	5.72	5.68	6.20
16 Greece	6.32	6.53	6.27	5.84	6.36
17 Russia	6.39	6.38	6.23	6.06	6.64
18 Mexico	6.46	6.29	6.65	5.94	6.70
19 Nepal	5.84	5.90	5.54	5.67	5.97
20 Brazil	6.56	6.45	6.60	6.18	6.71
21 Turkey	5.96	5.94	5.76	5.62	6.16
22 United Arab Emirates	5.63	5.65	5.37	5.19	6.06
23 South Africa	7.83	7.82	7.45	7.65	8.11
24 Germany	7.13	7.27	6.91	6.81	7.28
25 Nigeria	7.12	6.61	6.59	7.29	7.71

General Training candidates

Place of origin	Overall	Listening	Reading	Writing	Speaking
1 China (People's Republic of)	5.37	5.15	5.47	5.35	5.26
2 India	6.02	5.80	5.50	6.17	6.35
3 South Korea	5.11	5.02	5.07	4.97	5.07
4 Philippines	6.01	5.99	5.52	6.07	6.23
5 Sri Lanka	5.70	5.61	5.22	5.68	6.03
6 Pakistan	5.64	5.51	5.15	5.68	5.93
7 Japan	5.31	5.32	5.14	5.11	5.39
8 Russia	5.62	5.39	5.45	5.63	5.76
9 Indonesia	5.75	5.89	5.76	5.37	5.71
10 Romania	5.79	5.63	5.65	5.66	5.94
11 Iran	5.69	5.28	5.21	5.76	6.25
12 Bangladesh	5.46	5.14	4.94	5.51	5.94
13 Taiwan	5.42	5.19	5.28	5.30	5.59
14 Malaysia	6.48	6.47	6.09	6.37	6.71
15 Hong Kong	5.75	5.74	5.66	5.51	5.77
16 Egypt	5.43	5.27	5.01	5.35	5.80
17 United Arab Emirates	4.38	4.38	3.68	4.20	5.01
18 Thailand	5.42	5.32	5.34	5.23	5.47
19 Singapore	6.02	6.14	5.74	5.68	6.27
20 Vietnam	4.98	4.65	4.78	5.12	5.11
21 Ukraine	5.70	5.39	5.44	5.75	5.87
22 Fiji	5.55	5.42	4.83	5.57	6.11
23 Argentina	6.44	6.32	6.52	6.14	6.47
24 Germany	6.64	6.59	6.29	6.47	6.90
25 Colombia	5.61	5.34	5.50	5.54	5.77

Top 25 first languages

Academic candidates

Place of origin	Overall	Listening	Reading	Writing	Speaking
1 Chinese	5.43	5.32	5.50	5.21	5.40
2 Arabic	5.95	5.89	5.64	5.63	6.36
3 Urdu	6.24	6.27	5.90	6.15	6.39
4 Hindi	6.74	6.70	6.45	6.63	6.92
5 Bengali	5.78	5.58	5.54	5.71	6.00
6 Korean	5.57	5.68	5.58	5.21	5.54
7 Thai	5.53	5.53	5.63	5.14	5.57
8 Telugu	6.44	6.20	6.07	6.59	6.66
9 Japanese	5.64	5.74	5.61	5.30	5.64
10 Indonesian	5.83	6.14	5.95	5.23	5.74
11 Spanish	6.43	6.32	6.51	5.99	6.64
12 Tamil	6.64	6.47	6.33	6.62	6.88
13 Vietnamese	5.61	5.31	5.76	5.53	5.57
14 Punjabi	6.16	6.14	5.90	6.11	6.25
15 Tagalog	6.25	6.28	5.87	6.13	6.47
16 Malayalam	6.64	6.34	6.33	6.78	6.86
17 Farsi	5.84	5.48	5.71	5.67	6.21
18 Malay	6.36	6.63	6.34	5.97	6.25
19 Gujurati	6.27	6.33	5.89	6.28	6.35
20 Greek	6.28	6.48	6.21	5.79	6.37
21 Russian	6.40	6.40	6.23	6.06	6.66
22 Singhalese	6.36	6.36	6.03	6.23	6.58
23 Portuguese	6.55	6.48	6.56	6.16	6.72
24 Kannada	6.92	6.68	6.63	6.99	7.14
25 French	6.48	6.46	6.47	6.20	6.54

General Training candidates

Place of origin	Overall	Listening	Reading	Writing	Speaking
1 Chinese	5.40	5.18	5.48	5.37	5.30
2 Hindi	6.12	5.99	5.62	6.17	6.47
3 Korean	5.11	5.02	5.07	4.97	5.08
4 Tagalog	6.00	5.98	5.51	6.06	6.21
5 Gujurati	5.50	5.41	4.97	5.71	5.65
6 Arabic	5.14	5.05	4.57	4.99	5.66
7 Punjabi	5.72	5.61	5.31	5.81	5.88
8 Malayalam	5.93	5.54	5.47	6.21	6.24
9 Japanese	5.30	5.32	5.14	5.10	5.39
10 Telugu	5.85	5.50	5.25	6.09	6.30
11 Russian	5.60	5.36	5.41	5.60	5.75
12 Singhalese	5.67	5.58	5.19	5.65	6.00
13 Urdu	5.73	5.57	5.22	5.78	6.06
14 Spanish	5.97	5.71	5.94	5.83	6.15
15 Tamil	5.99	5.69	5.49	6.10	6.44
16 Bengali	5.78	5.48	5.34	5.82	6.20
17 Marathi	6.29	6.11	5.74	6.48	6.59
18 Indonesian	5.76	5.89	5.77	5.37	5.71
19 Romanian	5.78	5.62	5.65	5.66	5.96
20 Farsi	5.68	5.27	5.20	5.76	6.26
21 Thai	5.41	5.31	5.33	5.22	5.45
22 German	6.59	6.57	6.23	6.40	6.86
23 Vietnamese	4.97	4.64	4.77	5.12	5.10
24 Kannada	5.96	5.59	5.41	6.18	6.40
25 French	6.39	6.25	6.14	6.21	6.60

Reliability of test material

New versions of each of the six IELTS modules are released each year. The reliability of Listening and Reading tests is reported using Cronbach's Alpha, a reliability estimate which measures the internal consistency of the test. The following table shows Cronbach's Alpha for each of the Listening and Reading versions released in 2002.

Listening	Version	Alpha
(*9000)	00041	0.91
	00040	0.85
	00039	0.88
	00038	0.89
	00037	0.89
	00036	0.89
	00035	0.88
	00034	0.87

Academic Reading	Version	Alpha
(*7500)	00043	0.83
	00042	0.88
	00041	0.85
	00040	0.84
	00039	0.87
	00038	0.88
	00037	0.88
	00036	0.84
	00035	0.86
	00034	0.79

General Training Reading	Version	Alpha
(*2500)	00028	0.88
	00027	0.87
	00026	0.84
	00025	0.87
	00024	0.89
	00023	0.89
	00022	0.84
	00021	0.90

* Refers to minimum sample size.

The figures reported for the Listening and Reading modules indicate the expected levels of reliability for tests containing 40 items. Values for the Listening are consistently slightly higher than those for the Reading components; both Academic and General Training candidates take the same Listening module and so the test population represents a broader range of ability.

The reliability of the Writing and Speaking modules cannot be reported in the same manner because they are not item-based; Writing and Speaking modules are assessed at the test centre by qualified and experienced examiners according to detailed descriptive criteria. Reliability of marking is assured through the face-to-face training and certification of examiners and all examiners must undergo a re-training and re-certification process every two years.

Continuous monitoring of the reliability of IELTS Writing and Speaking assessment is achieved through a sample monitoring process. Selected centres world-wide are required to provide a representative sample of examiners' marked tapes and scripts such that all examiners working at a centre over a given period are represented. The tapes and scripts are then second-marked by a team of IELTS Senior Examiners. Senior Examiners monitor for quality of both test conduct and rating, and feedback is returned to each centre. Analysis of the paired examiner-Senior Examiner ratings from the sample monitoring data produces correlations of .89 for the Writing module and 0.86 for the Speaking module.

The performance of materials in the Writing and Speaking modules is routinely analysed to check on the comparability of different test versions. Mean Band Scores for the Academic Writing versions released in 2002 ranged from 5.28 to 5.87, with an overall mean of 5.64. Likewise mean Band Scores for the General Training Writing versions released in 2002 ranged from 5.42 to 5.87, with an overall mean of 5.64. The mean Band Scores for the Speaking tasks released in 2002 ranged from 5.76 to 6.02 with an overall mean of 5.90 (5.93 for Academic candidates and 5.79 for General Training candidates). The analysis for both Writing and Speaking shows a very consistent pattern across different test versions over time.

New IELTS Website

A new version of the IELTS Website will be released in the second half of 2003. The Research section of this Website will contain more detailed and extensive data and statistics relating to IELTS.

IELTS centres

IELTS centres are run by either British Council, IDP Education Australia: IELTS Australia or Cambridge Examinations and IELTS Inc (a US-based company established to run IELTS centres in North America). Most centres are British Council offices, IDP Education Australia offices or universities/language schools. There are currently more than 290 centres in over 110 countries world-wide.

In 2002 the following IELTS centres were opened:

Argentina
Cultura Inglesa, Buenos Aires
Brunei
Bandar Seri, Begawan
Cuba
British Council, Havana
Hong Kong
Common English Proficiency Assessment Scheme (CEPAS) Management Unit, Kowloon*
Indonesia
IDP Education Australia, South Jakarta
India
IDP Education Australia, Chandigarh
IDP Education Australia, New Delhi
New Zealand
Massey University Albany Campus, Auckland
Poland
British Council, Krakow
United Kingdom
International House, London
Sheffield Hallam University
United States
Inlingua English Center, Washington
Talk International, Florida
Zambia
British Council, Lusaka

* The CEPAS Management Unit in Hong Kong was set up specifically to test university candidates sponsored by the University Grants Committee (see page 14).

There are plans to open further centres in Australia, Indonesia, India, Macedonia, New Zealand, Great Britain and the United States in 2003.

The list below indicates the largest 30 centres world-wide in 2002.

1	Beijing	China IELTS Network*
2	Shanghai	China IELTS Network*
3	Chennai	British Council
4	Guangzhou	China IELTS Network*
5	New Delhi	British Council
6	Mumbai	British Council
7	University of Technology Sydney	IDP: IA
8	University of Auckland	IDP: IA
9	UNITEC Auckland	IDP: IA
10	Dhaka	British Council
11	Manila	IDP: IA
12	Christchurch Polytechnic	IDP: IA
13	Kuala Lumpur	IDP: IA
14	Chongqing	China IELTS Network*
15	Eurocentres Lee Green London	British Council
16	Singapore	British Council
17	Hong Kong	British Council
18	Lahore	British Council
19	Bangkok	British Council
20	University of Queensland	IDP: IA
21	Seoul	British Council
22	Hong Kong	IDP: IA
23	Massey University, Albany Campus, Auckland	IDP: IA
24	IALF Jakarta	IDP: IA
25	RMIT Melbourne	IDP: IA
26	New Delhi	IDP: IA
27	Bangkok	IDP: IA
28	Taipei	British Council
29	University of Westminster, London	British Council
30	Middlesex University, London	British Council

* British Council manages delivery of IELTS in China on behalf of the China IELTS Network, which is a partnership between British Council and IDP Education Australia.

Section 2 Test Development

The IELTS Writing Revision Project

The IELTS Writing Test Revision Project began in June 2001 with three main objectives:

1. the development of revised rating scales, including a definition of assessment criteria and revised band descriptors (Task 1 and Task 2 for both the General Training and the Academic Module);
2. the development of materials for training trainers and examiners;
3. the development of new certification/re-certification sets for examiners.

It was agreed that the IELTS Writing Revision Project should closely model the approach successfully used for the earlier IELTS Speaking Test Revision Project, and would be divided into the following five phases:

Phase 1	Consultation, Initial Planning and Design	June – December 2001
Phase 2	Development	January 2002 – May 2003
Phase 3	Validation	June 2003 – May 2004
Phase 4	Implementation (incl. examiner retraining)	June – December 2004
Phase 5	Operation	January 2005 onwards

Phase 1 of the project – *Consultation, Initial Planning and Design* – involved consultation with a range of stakeholders; it was completed in December 2001 and reported in last year’s Annual Review. The first phase highlighted several key issues from the perspective of the assessor which provided a valuable focus for the subsequent re-development of the existing assessment criteria and rating scale descriptors for IELTS Writing.

The *Development Phase* of the project (Phase 2) continued throughout 2002 and into the early part of 2003. The combined use of quantitative methodologies (application of draft criteria and scales to sample language performance) and qualitative methodologies (insightful and intuitive judgements derived from ‘expert’ participants) informed the re-construction of assessment criteria and scales for the IELTS Writing Test.

Four key revision areas were identified during the Development Phase :

1. Assessment approach

The current approach to assessment permits the examiner to adopt either a holistic (global) or analytical (profile) approach to rating IELTS Writing scripts. The benefits of analytical assessment – enhanced reliability through increased observations, greater discrimination across a wide range of assessment bands (9 Bands), greater control over what raters pay attention to, removal of the tendency to assess impressionistically, active discouragement of norm-referencing, and the provision of

research data/information – suggest that moving towards a single, standardised approach using analytical scales will be desirable. This approach will also mirror what happens in the current IELTS Speaking Test.

2. Assessment criteria

The current assessment criteria were carefully deconstructed and analysed for the purposes of review and revision. It was established that enough similarity in the Writing tasks exists across the Academic and General Training Modules to warrant the use of a common set of assessment criteria for each rather than developing separate criteria for Academic and General Training; consequently, a revised set of criteria was developed for Task 1 in both Academic and General Training Modules and a slightly modified set developed for Task 2 in both modules.

The five revised criteria produced will be: Task Achievement (Task 1), Task Response (Task 2), Coherence and Cohesion (Task 1 and 2), Lexical Resource (Task 1 and Task 2) and Grammatical Range and Accuracy (Task 1 and Task 2).

3. Rating scale descriptors

The current wording of the rating scale band descriptors was carefully reviewed in the light of revisions to the assessment criteria. Revised band descriptors evolved through a succession of iterative drafts and revisions, the final form being an amalgamation of expert contributions and regarded widely as a rater-friendly instrument.

4. Examiner training

Prior to January 2005 new examiner training systems will be implemented. In addition, it will be a requirement for all examiners to re-certificate. All existing training/standardisation documentation affected by the revision (examiner training packs, certification sets, revised Writing Assessment Guide, revised IELTS Specimen Materials and new item writer specifications) will be prepared in time for examiner retraining and recertification to take place prior January 2005. Issues relating to underlength scripts, illegibility, memorised scripts and transparency of task rubric were also resolved during this phase of the project and practical guidance on dealing with these features will be included in new examiner training documentation.

The third phase of the project – the *Validation Phase* – is underway. This consists of a detailed and thorough validation programme employing both qualitative and quantitative methods; this is expected to confirm the validity, reliability, impact and practicality of the revised assessment criteria and band level descriptors.

CBIELTS

CBIELTS has been developed to give candidates more choice in how they take IELTS. Candidates who decide to take the computer-based Listening and Reading components will have the choice of taking the Writing module on screen or on paper. All CBIELTS candidates will take the face-to-face Speaking component. There are no plans to withdraw the pen and paper version of IELTS. The intention is to give candidates a choice of the medium through which they can take the test.

CBIELTS is currently in the final stage of trialling. According to candidate questionnaires, completed during the trial, the computer presentation of the tests is clear, and the majority of trial candidates report that they prefer taking the computer-based test to the paper-based one.

Early indications from the trial are that candidates are performing in a similar manner on both the pen and paper and computer-based tests.

Section 3 Recognition and Acceptance of IELTS

IELTS is specified as fulfilling English language requirements for entry to academic courses by the majority of institutions of further and higher education in Australia, Canada, Ireland, New Zealand, South Africa and the United Kingdom and currently by over 400 universities and colleges in the USA. It is also used by a number of professional bodies world-wide, including the Ministry of Defence, and the General Medical Council in the UK, the Australian Medical Council and Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs, the Medical Council of Ireland, the New Zealand Immigration Service and the Commission on Graduates of Foreign Nursing Schools in the USA.

In addition it is used for screening and recruitment purposes in-country by universities, business schools and professional bodies in the private sector in a number of overseas countries, including Brazil, Brunei, Bulgaria, Colombia, Cyprus, Denmark, Italy, Lithuania, Malaysia, Myanmar, Poland, Turkey and Vietnam.

IELTS has been accredited by the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority in the UK as part of the UK National Qualifications Framework.

In July 2002 the University Grants Committee in Hong Kong announced the adoption of IELTS as the common English proficiency assessment scheme for graduating university students, thus standardising the university exit English language test across the board.

A comprehensive list of institutions which specify IELTS scores as fulfilling their English language requirements is available on the IELTS website (www.ielts.org).

IELTS is not a certificated pass/fail examination; rather it provides a profile of a candidate's performance on a Test Report Form. Many institutions require minimum scores in particular skill areas to suit the demands of particular courses. In addition, the requirements for admission to undergraduate and postgraduate

Small sample of IELTS score requirements for academic entry

Country Institution	IELTS Overall Band Scores	IELTS individual Band Scores
Australia		
University of Canberra	6.5 (undergraduate)	
Deakin University	6.0 (undergraduate) 6.5 (postgraduate)	
University of Western Australia	6.5	
Canada		
University of Toronto	6.5	minimum of 6.0 in each module
Simon Fraser University, Vancouver	6.5	
Queen's University	7.0	
Ireland		
Trinity College, Dublin	6.0	
University College, Cork	6.0	
New Zealand		
University of Auckland	6.0 (undergraduate) 6.5 (postgraduate)	
University of Waikato	6.0 (undergraduate) 6.5 (postgraduate)	minimum of 6.0 in Writing
United Kingdom		
University of Cambridge	7.0	minimum of 6.0 in each module
Durham University	6.5	
King's College London (University of London)	6.5	
USA		
	<i>Undergraduate schools</i>	
Carnegie Mellon University	7.0	
New York University	7.0	
George Mason University	6.5	
Hawaii Pacific University	6.0	
Pepperdine University	6.5	
	<i>Graduate schools</i>	
University of Michigan (Rackham Graduate School)	6.5	
University of Texas	6.5	
University of California, Berkeley	7.0	
Rice University	7.0	
Boston University	7.0	
University of Minnesota	6.5	
University of Pennsylvania (Graduate School of Education)	7.0	

courses may differ. In general an Overall Band Score between 6.0 and 7.0 in the Academic modules is accepted as evidence of English proficiency by institutions of further education worldwide. However, institutions themselves are responsible for determining the IELTS Band Scores appropriate to their particular courses or requirements. Institutions should note that IELTS Band Scores reflect English language proficiency alone and are not predictors of academic success or failure. It is standard practice for the scores reported on an IELTS Test Report Form to be accepted by institutions as evidence of a candidate's English language ability for a two-year period from the date of the test.

IELTS is also accepted by a range of professional bodies worldwide as fulfilling their English language requirements and examples of this are shown below.

Institution	IELTS Overall Band Scores	IELTS individual Band Scores
Commission on Graduates of Foreign Nursing Schools (CGFNS), Philadelphia	6.5 (Academic)	minimum of 7.0 in Speaking
American Veterinary Medical Association	6.5 (Academic)	
Citizenship and Immigration Canada	7.0 minimum for 'High' proficiency (General Training) 5.0 minimum for 'Moderate' proficiency (General Training) 4.0 minimum for 'Basic' proficiency (General Training)	
Registered Nurses Association of British Columbia	6.5 (Academic)	minimum of 7.0 in Speaking
Australian Medical Council	7.0 (Academic)	
Australian Pharmacy Examining Council	7.0 (Academic)	
Australian Nursing Council	7.0 (Academic)	
Australian Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs	4.0–6.0 (General Training)	points are awarded towards an applicant's General Points Score on a sliding scale from 4.0 to 6.0
General Medical Council, UK	7.0 (Academic)	minimum of 6.0 in each module
Nursing and Midwifery Council UK	6.5 (General Training)	minimum of 5.5 in Listening and Reading and minimum of 5.0 in Writing and Speaking
New Zealand Immigration Service	6.5 (General Training)	
Veterinary Council of New Zealand	7.0 (Academic)	

Security of IELTS results

It is recognised that, as a high-stakes test, the security of IELTS results is of paramount importance. Considerable work has been carried out in 2002 to enhance security. This includes in-built security features in the composition of the Test Report Form (TRF) base paper and the inclusion of candidate photos on all Test Report Forms issued after 1 April 2003. Please see sample below.

The image shows a sample of an IELTS Test Report Form (TRF) with a large 'SAMPLE' watermark. The form is titled 'INTERNATIONAL ENGLISH LANGUAGE TESTING SYSTEM Test Report Form'. It includes sections for 'Candidate Details' (Family Name, First Name, Candidate ID, Date of Birth, Sex, Place of Birth, Country of Origin, Language, Mother Tongue, Test Date, Test Centre), 'Test Results' (Listening, Reading, Writing, Speaking, Overall Band Score), and 'Administrative Comments' (Candidate Stamp, Examiner Stamp, Written Examiner, Examiner's Signature, Address of Examiner, Date, Test Report Form Number). The form also features logos for the British Council, IELTS, and the University of Cambridge.

On-line Results Verification Service

A new on-line service has been developed which enables key stake holders to be totally confident about the authenticity of any TRF with which they are presented. The new service has been successfully tested and trialled and is now available to IELTS Recognising Organisations.

The verification service is a database driven on-line system which contains all IELTS results for candidates who sat IELTS after 1 January, 2003. For data protection reasons we are unable to include records for candidates who sat IELTS before this year. The system has extensive security features to protect candidates' data from unauthorised access.

Each day the system is updated from other IELTS systems to ensure that the data available on the system is up-to-date. Authorised users are able to login to the system and navigate to a query screen. The TRF number is then entered and if the TRF number is matched with one held on the system an electronic version of the TRF is displayed, the two versions of the TRF should be checked for any discrepancies. If the TRF number is not matched the Recognising Organisation is given detailed instructions on what to do next.

It is not possible for verifiers to make general searches on the system: verifiers are only able to search on the specific TRFs which have been presented to them by individuals who have sat IELTS.

From 1 April 2003 all TRFs include a scanned photo of the candidate and from September 2003 these photos have also been displayed on the verification service. This development makes verification more secure and is a further important measure to enhance the integrity of results.

Access to the service is free and available to IELTS Recognising Organisations. Users are required to have read and agreed to the Terms of Use. This is important to prevent misuse of the system and to protect the site from unauthorised use. To apply for access to the service please visit the login page at <https://ielts.ucles.org.uk>.

Section 4 IELTS Research

All IELTS-related research activities are co-ordinated as part of a coherent framework for research and validation of the test. Activities are divided into areas which are the direct responsibility of Cambridge ESOL, and work which is funded and supported by IDP: IA and British Council.

Update on Cambridge ESOL funded research

Over the past year Cambridge ESOL Research and Validation has continued to carry out validation work according to three broad strands of activity:

- routine operational analyses concerning the administration cycle of the test, i.e. test production, test conduct, marking/grading, post-test evaluation (including ongoing pre-testing and standards fixing activity).
- instrumental research activities concerning small-scale projects which are designed to inform the operational activities but which cannot be addressed as part of the routine work, e.g. studies to inform the Writing Test Revision (see Section 2), and ongoing validation activity relating to the revised IELTS Speaking Test (see below).
- longer-term research projects with long-term research objectives in the field of assessment which have a broader relevance, e.g. work on a common scale for Writing, work to locate IELTS within the Common European Framework of proficiency levels.

1. The revised IELTS Speaking Test

Since the introduction of the revised Speaking Test format for IELTS in July 2001, attention has focused on monitoring the implementation of the revised test and evaluating its effectiveness.

Approximately 3,500 recordings of live IELTS Speaking Tests conducted during 2002 have been collected and organised to form a spoken language corpus. This dataset permits the investigation of key features of the test such as quality of candidate language, aspects of examiner language/behaviour, and nature of task output. A variety of methodologies is used to analyse the spoken language data including transcription analysis, the use of observation checklists, and the use of text analysis software (e.g. WordSmith tools).

In 2002 work was completed on developing a tailored observation checklist for use with the IELTS Speaking Test; the instrument identifies the language functions (*informational*, *interactional* and *managing interaction*) associated with particular tasks and is capable of producing a profile of language elicited across several different tasks within a Speaking Test. The checklist was applied to more than 70 IELTS Speaking Tests in the context of two specific research studies. The first study explored the range and distribution of speech functions occurring across the three parts of the revised IELTS test format and across different test versions; the second study compared the range and distribution of speech functions occurring in the revised format and the old format of the test used prior to July 2001. Findings from these studies confirmed that the revised

IELTS test format is capable of eliciting a broad range of speech functions overall and that all three categories of functions are represented in varying degrees. Research outcomes from internal studies such as these are routinely presented at conferences and reported in the Cambridge ESOL quarterly newsletter, *Research Notes*.

Further studies are being undertaken to explore various aspects of the language produced by the test-takers and examiners. For example, the IELTS Speaking Test corpus is being used to provide data for researchers undertaking studies under the British Council/IELTS Australia funded research program, e.g. the studies by Read/Nation and O'Sullivan/Lu (see below).

2. IELTS and the Common Scale for Writing

Work completed in 2002 on revising the assessment criteria and rating scales for IELTS Writing is reported in Section 2 of this Annual Review. In addition to the IELTS Writing Revision Project, Cambridge ESOL has been undertaking a major research study to explore the relationship between levels of Writing performance in IELTS and in the other Cambridge English examinations (e.g. FCE, CPE). This work forms part of a larger endeavour to establish a common scale for second language writing ability and to determine comparability across different measures of language proficiency; a further goal is to be able to map levels of writing performance in IELTS onto the Common European Framework of proficiency levels and to analyse how the study-oriented 'can-do' performance descriptors produced by ALTE (Association of Language Testers in Europe) can be used in relation to performance on the IELTS test.

This type of study requires the creation of a large electronic corpus of IELTS Writing scripts and a feasibility study was undertaken during 2002 to explore how IELTS scripts could be incorporated into the existing Cambridge Learner Corpus (CLC). The CLC is a computerised database of contemporary written learner English, which currently stands at over 16 million words; it was developed jointly with Cambridge University Press. During 2002 the IELTS partners worked towards a formal agreement which will allow IELTS scripts to be entered into the CLC from the middle of 2003; in time this will enable quantitative analysis of large amounts of data from IELTS Academic and General Training Writing. In the interim, efforts have focused on the qualitative analysis of candidate writing performance at different levels across the two modules to determine their relationship with performance levels in the other Cambridge Writing tests. Early findings suggest that a strong Band 6 Writing performance on IELTS may be comparable to a successful performance in the CAE Writing component and can be placed at C1 level in the context of the Common European Framework of Reference. Further studies are in progress to confirm this relationship and to explore it for the other IELTS modules.

3. The IELTS Impact Studies

The IELTS Impact Study (IIS) is collecting data world-wide on the effects of the test on a broad range of stakeholders, including students, candidates, teachers and receiving institutions. The

study is part of the continuous validation and revision processes to which all Cambridge examinations are subjected. The more consultation data available to Cambridge ESOL and its IELTS partners on the impact of the test, the stronger the assurance of its validity, reliability, positive impact and practicality.

The IIS is now in its third phase. In Phase 1 of the study, development work was commissioned to the Department of Linguistics and Modern English Language at Lancaster University, under the supervision of Professor Charles Alderson. Phase 2 saw extensive analyses and pre-testing of the draft data collection instruments by the Cambridge ESOL EFL Validation Unit, with consultancy support from, among others, Professor Lyle Bachman, Dr Jim Purpura, Professor Antony Kunnan, and Dr Roger Hawkey.

Phase 3 of the impact study began with a survey of over 300 university, British Council, IDP Education Australia and independent language centres world-wide. Responses were obtained on the language tests for which each centre runs courses; numbers, durations and dates of such courses; numbers and nationalities of students; textbooks and other materials used.

From the survey data, a case-study sample of around 30 centres was selected, representative of the IELTS nationality population. To collect both qualitative and quantitative impact study data from students, teachers and administrators at these centres, the finalised IIS study data collection instruments developed and validated in Phases 1 and 2 of the project, were used, namely:

- a modular student questionnaire on pre- and post-IELTS candidate language learning background, aims, perceptions and strategies; test-preparation programmes, and IELTS attitudes and experience
- a language teacher questionnaire, covering background, views on IELTS, experience of and ideas on IELTS-preparation programmes
- a materials evaluation instrument for language teachers on books and other materials used to prepare students for IELTS
- a classroom observation instrument for the analysis of live or video-recorded IELTS-preparation lessons at the case-study centres
- a receiving institute questionnaire on IELTS experiences and attitudes.

Useful checks on the questionnaire data have been carried out on visits by IIS team members to some of the selected centres. These visits have included stakeholder interviews, focus group sessions and video-recorded classroom observations.

The final IIS report, due later in 2003, will have much to say about IELTS impacts. The findings are not, of course, to be pre-empted, but provisional analyses (of data from 544 IELTS candidates, and 83 teachers) suggest perceptions that IELTS:

- has communicative aims, according to learner/candidate needs
- indicates to candidate learners how they may have to think, study, work at their eventual receiving institutions
- leads to relevant teaching/learning methods, authentic texts,

- and preparation courses planned round topics and micro-skills, many of which are new to students
- has led to the publication of generally good test-preparation textbooks
- is supported by useful test sample packs
- needs still more preparation teacher support and training.

Both the quantitative and qualitative data so far suggest interesting candidate perceptions on the relative difficulties of the IELTS skills modules. Around 52% of the candidate respondents consider the Reading module the most difficult, 20% the Writing, 14% the Listening and 8% the Speaking. Language courses used in preparation for IELTS vary significantly in the amount of direct attention given to the IELTS test, but tend to divide their content fairly evenly across the four skills. The analyses of video-recordings of IELTS preparation classes are producing interesting findings on the influences of the test on language teaching and learning approaches and materials. IELTS appears to encourage more communicative activities across the four skills, but the opportunities for learners to communicate on their own behalf still appear to vary considerably.

Although IELTS candidates clearly feel the pressure of taking such a high-stakes exam – around two-fifths claiming to feel "very worried" before the test – qualitative data on this issue suggest a complexity of causes of anxiety. These include topic unpredictability, time pressure, test task complications, vocabulary level, unfamiliar accents, and candidates' own concerns about their English proficiency level.

IIS data will also provide insights into the validity:reliability interface. Already, we have interesting comment and information on: test-retest consistency, the appropriacy of the test and its modules for students at various levels of proficiency and from different backgrounds, and the perceived parity between IELTS tests administrations at different centres.

From the analyses of the qualitative and quantitative data collected, hypotheses will be developed on many aspects of IELTS impact. Findings and recommendations that are felt to need further research may receive it in a possible Phase 4 of the impact study.

The full final report of the Study will be published as a volume in the Cambridge ESOL/Cambridge University Press *Studies in Language Testing* series.

4. Conference Presentations and Publications

During 2002 Cambridge ESOL staff presented research papers relating to IELTS at various national/international conferences, including:

- BALEAP (London, UK)
- AAAL (Salt Lake City, USA)
- TESOL (Salt Lake City, USA)
- IATEFL (York, UK)
- METU (Ankara, Turkey)
- NAGAP (San Diego, USA)
- NAFSA (San Antonio, USA)

- SUNYCAP (Rochester, USA)
- ECIS (Berlin, Germany)
- BAAL (Cardiff, UK)
- British Council (Beijing, China)
- LTRC (Hong Kong, China)

Issues 7, 8, 9 and 10 of Cambridge ESOLs *Research Notes* include articles on IELTS research projects, together with announcements about the British Council/IELTS Australia funded research programme and the IELTS MA Award.

The *Studies in Language Testing* series is jointly produced by Cambridge ESOL and Cambridge University Press. Three IELTS-related volumes in this series are currently in preparation:

- a final report of the IELTS Impact Studies (see above)
- a selection of reports on Writing/Speaking studies from the joint-funded research programme
- a history of EAP assessment, with particular reference to the development of IELTS

British Council/IELTS Australia joint funded research programme 2002/3 (Round 8)

As part of their ongoing commitment to IELTS-related validation and research, IELTS Australia and British Council once again made funding available for research projects in 2002/2003. Such research makes an important contribution to the monitoring and test development process for IELTS (e.g. the IELTS Writing Revision Project); it also helps IELTS stakeholders (e.g. English language professionals and teachers) to develop a greater understanding of the test.

All funded research is managed by the IELTS Research Committee comprising representatives of the three IELTS partners as well as other academic experts in the field of applied linguistics and language testing. The Committee agrees research priorities and oversees the tendering process. The maximum amount of funding made available for any one proposal is £13,000/AUS\$30,000.

In November 2002, the IELTS Research Committee met to review and evaluate the submitted proposals according to the following criteria:

- Relevance and benefit of outcomes to IELTS
- Clarity and coherence of proposal's rationale, objectives and methodology
- Feasibility of outcomes, timelines and budget (including ability to keep to deadlines)
- Qualifications and experience of proposed project staff
- Potential of the project to be reported in a form which would be both useful to IELTS and of interest to an international audience.

It was agreed to fund the following proposals:

An investigation of the lexical dimension of the IELTS Speaking Test, John Read and Paul Nation, School of Linguistics and Applied Linguistics, Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand.

An examination of candidate discourse in the revised IELTS Speaking Test, Annie Brown, Language Testing Research Centre, The University of Melbourne, Australia.

An empirical study on examiner deviation from the set interlocutor frames in the IELTS Speaking Test, Barry O'Sullivan and Lu Yang, University of Reading, UK.

Does the computer make a difference? Reactions of candidates to a CBT versus traditional hand-written form of IELTS Writing component: effects and impact, Cyril Weir and Barry O'Sullivan, Centre for Research in Testing, Evaluation and Curriculum, University of Roehampton, UK.

Cambridge ESOL has provided data, materials and other types of support for several of these projects. Full reports on the projects are due by December 2003 and it is hoped to publish the reports after evaluation by the Research Committee and independent academic experts.

During 2002 the findings from earlier projects carried out under the joint funded research studies were presented at various national/international conferences, including:

- CLESOL (Wellington, NZ)
- LTRC (Hong Kong, PRC)
- AIEC (Hobart, Australia)
- English Australia Conference (Canberra, Australia)

IELTS MA Dissertation Award 2001

As part of the tenth anniversary of IELTS in 1999, the IELTS partners – Cambridge ESOL, British Council, and IDP Education Australia : IELTS Australia agreed to sponsor an annual award of £1,000 for the MA dissertation in English which makes the most significant contribution to the field of language testing. In its inaugural year the award went to joint winners in Australia and Canada. In 2001 the award went to a Korean student studying at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA).

For the award in 2001, submissions were accepted for dissertations successfully completed in 2000. The IELTS Research Committee, comprising representatives from the three partner organisations, met in 2001 to review the shortlisted submissions. The Committee was extremely impressed at the high standard of all the shortlisted dissertations. The research topics were varied and included the four macro-skills of Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing, as well as the interpretation of test results.

After careful consideration, the Committee decided to announce one winner: Sang Keun Shin, *An Exploratory Study of the Construct Validity of Timed Essay Tests*.

The Committee considered the winning dissertation by Sang Keun Shin to be an excellent example of applied linguistics research within the language testing domain. This dissertation reported on an exploratory study examining the construct validity of timed essay tests by comparing the composing processes of L2 writers in test and non-test situations. It constitutes a significant contribution to our understanding of the differences

and similarities between the processes L2 learners use when composing academic course papers and writing for 'sit-down' timed writing essays; it also has relevance for an understanding of the key issues relating to construct validation.



Nick Saville (Cambridge ESOL); Angel Lam (IELTS Manager/IDP, IELTS CEPAS Program), Sang Keun Shin, Georgina Pearce (Deputy Director, English Language Centre, The British Council)

Sang-Keun Shin was presented with his award at the Language Testing Research Colloquium in December 2002 in Hong Kong.

In addition, it was felt that two other dissertation authors should be mentioned for the quality of their contributions: Eleftheria Nteliou, *UCLES 'Main Suite' Speaking Tests: Describing the Test-takers' Language Output in terms of CALS Checklist of Operations at KET and FCE Levels* (Reading University, England) and Nick Boddy, *The Effect of Individual Interpretation of the Elicitation Phase of the IELTS Speaking Test on its Reliability* (Macquarie University, Australia).

Details of the application process for the annual IELTS MA Dissertation Award can be found on the IELTS website – www.ielts.org.

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