

# What makes a good English language test and its ecosystem?

Philip Rylah

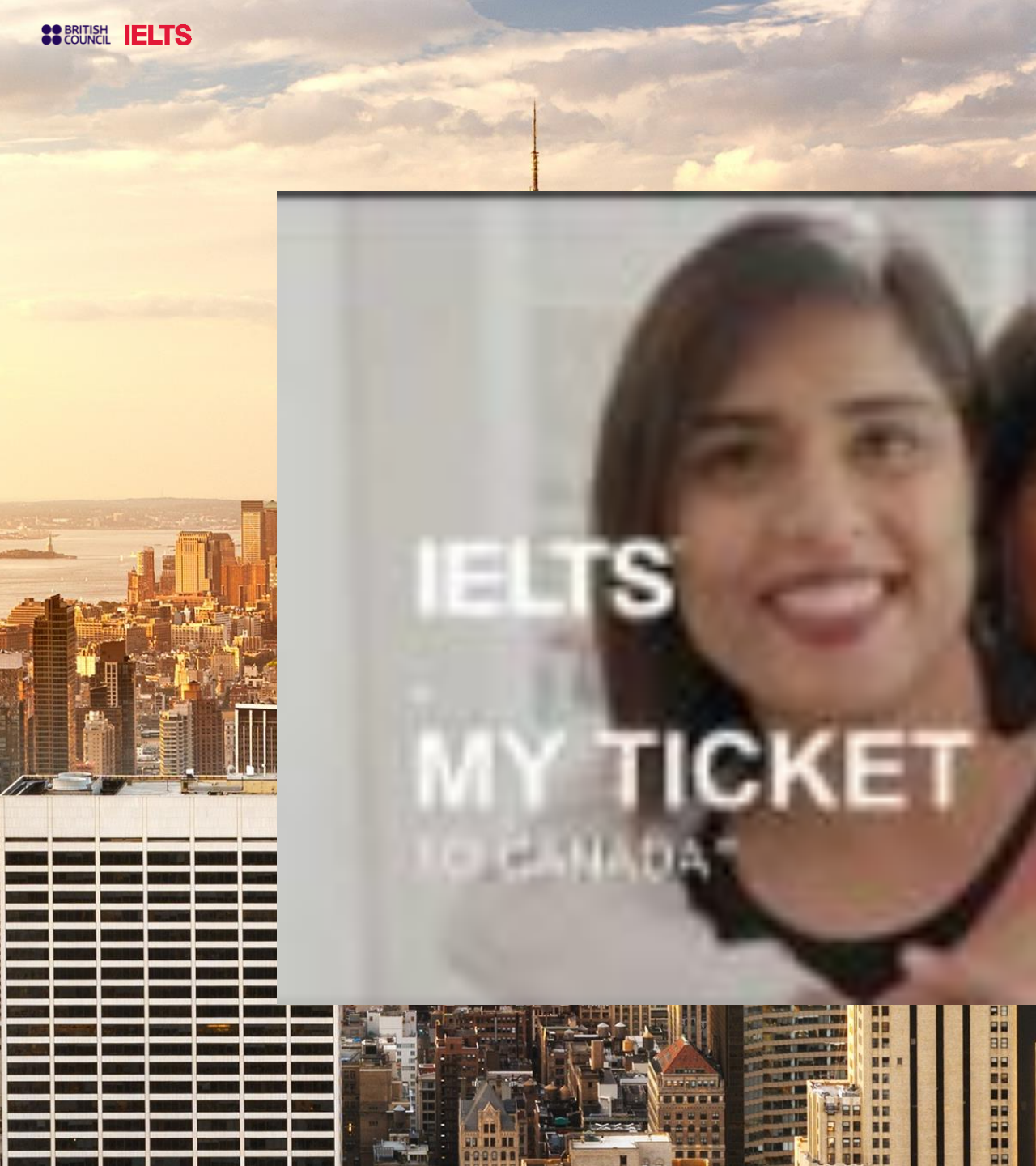
Dahlia Younan

February 24, 2023



# Outline

- The IELTS design – valid and reliable
- Question production
- Use of technology to support high-stakes assessment
- Use of technology in preparation support
- Questions



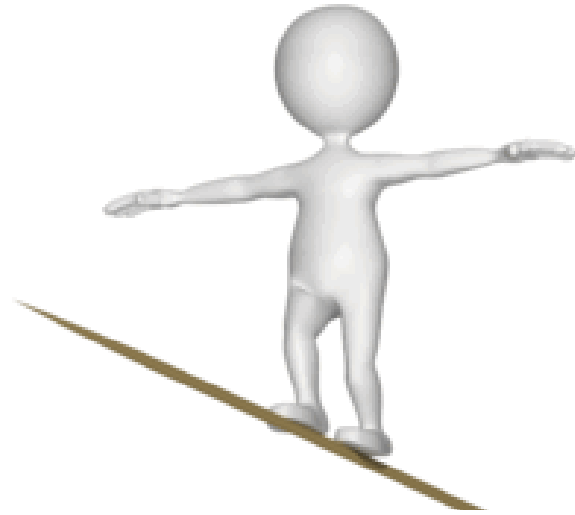
# What is a test?

- A test is a specific (and necessarily limited) sample of \_\_\_\_\_, from which users seek to make broader generalisations about the knowledge, \_\_\_\_\_, or abilities a person has
- All language tests \_\_\_\_\_, on the basis of how the test taker responds to the test, what they are able to do in terms of wider language use

performance

estimate

skills



# A Balancing Act

# The longer the test...

...the more

it is.

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...the less

it is.

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valid

reliable

practical

impactful

# No extra words!

Validity

Reliability

Impact

Practicality

Washback

# IELTS is the test you can count on.

## ▪ **Validity**

- Task design
- Question production process

## ▪ **Reliability**

- Consistency in overall band scores
- Trained, certified Examiners, not raters

## ▪ **Fairness**

- Multiple formats (paper, computer, and..)
- Special needs provisions

## ▪ **Access**

- Available in 140 countries\*

## ▪ **Transparency**

- Published assessment criteria





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# The IELTS Design

# IELTS Design

- ✓ Strong practical links between the test and the world beyond the test
- ✓ In order to design an assessment model that would facilitate this, a significant body of work was carried out to define what the IELTS constructs should be
- ✓ This work has been built on and developed over the years, as researchers aimed to continually investigate the validity of IELTS test constructs for the contemporary domains they are used for.

# Skills Assessment: IELTS Academic

## Listening

- detailed understanding of specific points
- overall understanding of main points
- ability to recognise relationships and connections between facts
- ability to follow a conversation
- ability to understand a detailed description, which includes language expressing spatial relationships and directions, related to a visual input

## Reading

- detailed understanding of specific points
- overall understanding of main ideas/themes
- ability to recognise opinions or ideas
- ability to skim and scan for specific information
- ability to recognise relationships and connections between facts, and make inferences
- ability to understand a detailed description and how it relates to information presented in the form of a diagram

## Writing

- Task 1: the ability to identify the most important and relevant information and trends in a graph, chart, table or diagram, and to give a well-organised overview of it using language accurately in an academic style.
- Task 2: the ability to present a clear, relevant, well-organised argument, giving evidence or examples to support ideas and use language accurately.

## Speaking

- Part 1: the ability to communicate opinions and information on everyday topics and common experiences or situations by answering a range of questions
- Part 2: the ability to speak at length on a given topic (without further prompts from the examiner), using appropriate language and organising ideas coherently.
- Part 3: ability to express and justify opinions and to analyse, discuss and speculate about issues.

# Fitness for purpose

## IELTS Academic



- Suitable for those wanting to study in an English-speaking environment or university (higher education), or for professional registration purposes
- Measures if test takers are ready to begin studying in English and features vocabulary and English varieties that are familiar within an academic setting

## IELTS General Training

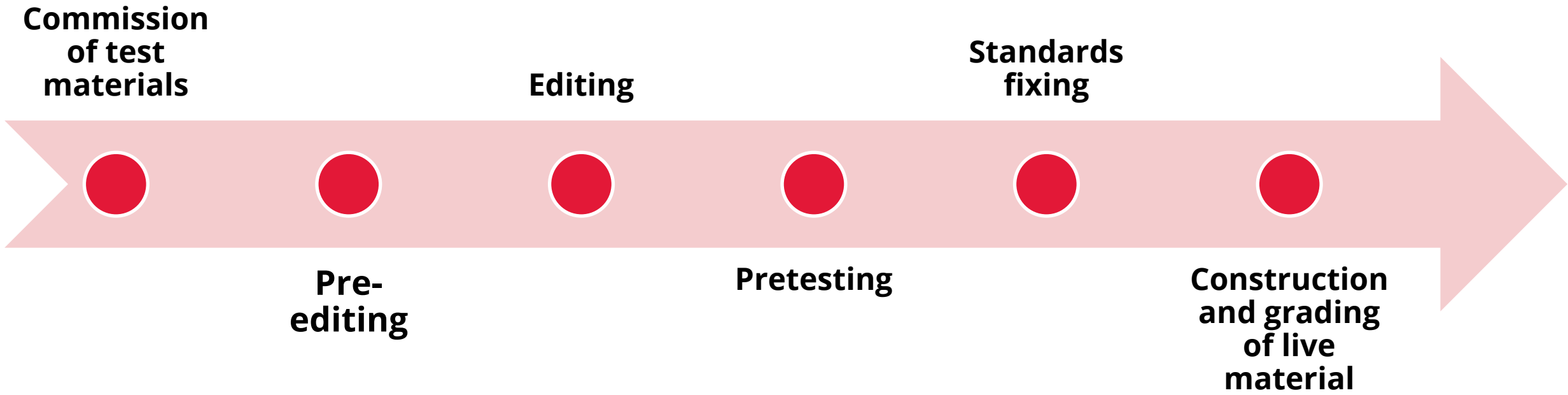


- Suitable for those applying to study below degree level, including at an English-speaking school or college
- Taken for work experience or other employment training
- Required for migration to Australia, Canada, New Zealand and the UK.

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# Question production life- cycle

# Three-year production process



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# Use of technology in the IELTS test

# IELTS on computer

- Same IELTS, more choice - with significant benefits for test takers and test users.
- Results available in 3-5 days
- New test centres to respond to demand
- Demand-driven testing: up to 3 times a day, 7 days a week

# Video Call Speaking test

- The same face-to-face IELTS Speaking test with an Examiner, delivered via high-definition video calls.
- Increased accessibility
- Test takers undertake the same high standard of identity verification
- Enables real-life, two-way interaction, as we experience in the real world.



# Online assessment – IELTS Online Academic



## Remote proctoring

- IELTS managed
- Hybrid of human and AI proctoring
- Ability to perform test taker ID checks



## Video-Call Speaking

- IELTS owned platform
- Live online face-to-face Speaking test with an IELTS Examiner
- ID checks



## Electronic results

- Test taker receives electronic Test Report Form, **not paper**
- Electronic distribution of results in 5 days
- Organizations verify online
- Same results verification system



## Test sessions

- A wide range of scheduled start times
- Initially session based
- Greater flexibility – more choice



## Customer support model

- 24/7 hubs
- Proctors/ Examiners
- Online tech support

# IELTS Online Requirements



## Test environment

- Quiet, comfortable and well-lit space to take the test alone
- Passport or photo ID document used to book the test, present for all sections of the test



## Web browsers / internet

- Latest version of web browsers
  - Google Chrome
  - Apple Safari
  - Mozilla Firefox
  - Microsoft Edge
- Stable internet connection
- Minimum
  - Download speed 512 Kbps
  - Upload speed 512 Kbps
- Recommended
  - Download speed >2Mbps
  - Upload speed >1Mbps



## Software requirements

- Uses the IELTS Exam Portal
- Windows PC or MacOS
- Minimum
  - 64-bit Windows 7
  - MacOS 10.13
- Recommended
  - 64-bit Windows 10
  - MacOS latest



## Hardware requirements

- Sufficient free hard disk space to enable the installation to proceed
  - Windows PC & Mac: 500 MB of free disk space required
- Speakers
- Microphone
- Camera on and uncovered for duration of the test



**Well-lit environment**



**Stable connection**



**IELTS Exam Portal**



**Free hard disk space**

# Remote Proctoring

## Identity Checks

- Carried out by a human 'greeter'
- Supported by AI

## Room Scan

- Ensures integrity of test environment
- Critical to security

## Identity Verification

- Multiple points of verification throughout the test

**Continual monitoring with human proctors and AI**

# The new IELTS Results Service

**NEW**

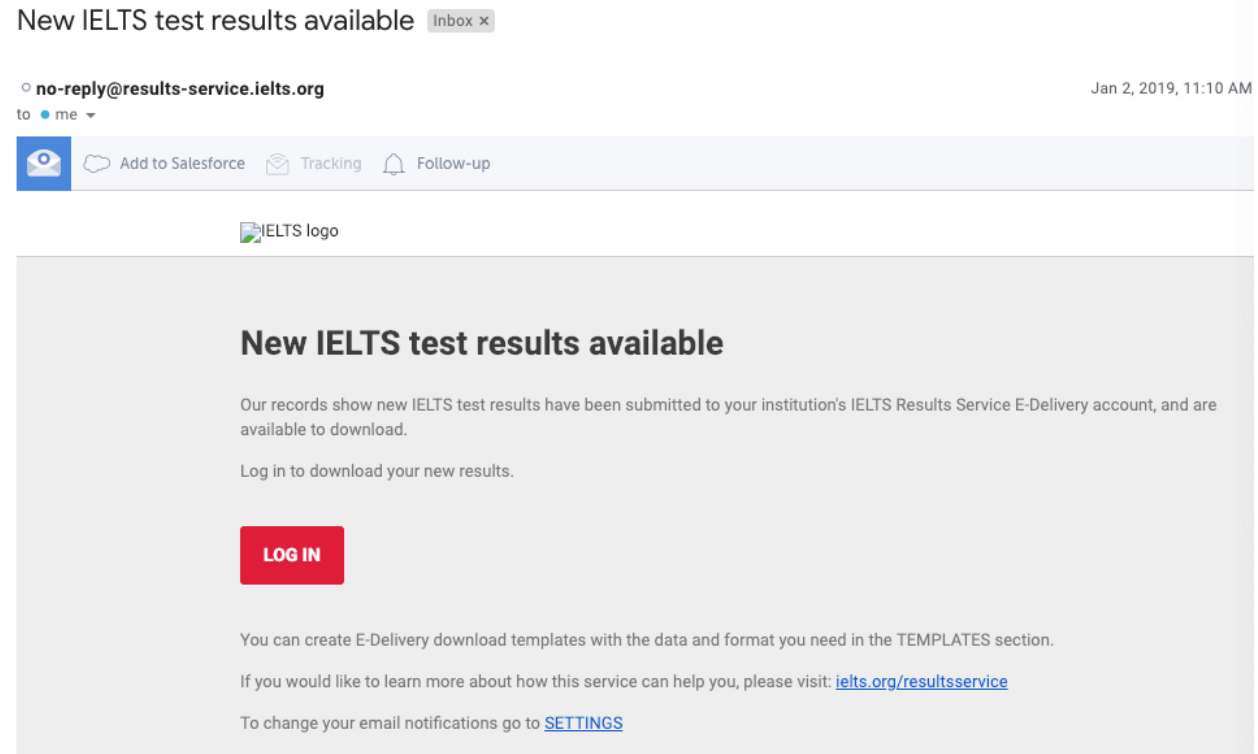
Benefits over the regular Verification Service:

- Electronic results to your inbox
- Updated results flagged in system
- Upload data direct to your system(s)
- No need for paper TRFs – but can still verify paper TRFs using the verification tool

Benefits over the old e-download service:

- Email notifications
- No more 2-year data downloads
- Additional data fields
- Customisable templates

## ▪ Email sample



The screenshot shows an email notification titled "New IELTS test results available" with an "Inbox x" tag. The sender is "no-reply@results-service.ielts.org" and it is dated "Jan 2, 2019, 11:10 AM". The email body contains the following text:

**New IELTS test results available**

Our records show new IELTS test results have been submitted to your institution's IELTS Results Service E-Delivery account, and are available to download.

Log in to download your new results.

**LOG IN**

You can create E-Delivery download templates with the data and format you need in the [TEMPLATES](#) section.

If you would like to learn more about how this service can help you, please visit: [ielts.org/resultsservice](https://ielts.org/resultsservice)

To change your email notifications go to [SETTINGS](#)

# Updated details (after Enquiry on Result, cancellation etc.)

## Before download

The screenshot shows the IELTS Results Service dashboard. At the top, there is a navigation bar with the IELTS logo, the text 'Results Beta', and user information 'Welcome, Web Projects' and 'LOGOUT'. Below the navigation bar are menu items: HOME, DOWNLOADS, VERIFICATION, TEMPLATES, USERS, SETTINGS, and HELP. The main content area features a large heading 'Welcome to the IELTS Results Service'. Underneath, there is a section titled 'Available results' containing two white boxes. The first box says '7 new results' with a red 'DOWNLOAD NOW' button. The second box says '2 updated results' with a red 'DOWNLOAD NOW' button. Below this is a section titled 'Latest downloads' with a table. The table has four columns: 'Records', 'Download date', 'User', and 'Download again'. It contains one row with '3 results', '22 March 2019, 12:34', 'Joe Bloggs', and a 'download' link. At the bottom right of this section is a 'view all downloads' link. The footer contains links for 'About us', 'Disclaimer', 'Legal', 'Privacy', and 'Statement on Modern Slavery', along with logos for the British Council, IDP, and Cambridge Assessment English, and the text '© 2019 IELTS Copyright notice'.

IELTS Results <sup>Beta</sup> Welcome, Web Projects LOGOUT

HOME DOWNLOADS VERIFICATION TEMPLATES USERS SETTINGS HELP

### Welcome to the IELTS Results Service

Available results

7 new results [DOWNLOAD NOW](#)

2 updated results [DOWNLOAD NOW](#)

### Latest downloads

Records	Download date	User	Download again
3 results	22 March 2019, 12:34	Joe Bloggs	<a href="#">download</a>

[view all downloads](#)

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## After download

This screenshot is identical to the one above, but with an additional section titled 'Latest downloads' below the 'Available results' section. This section contains a table with three rows. The first row shows '2 updated results' downloaded on '16 April 2019, 14:30' by 'Paul Kingston' with a 'download' link. The second row shows '3 results' downloaded on '22 March 2019, 12:34' by 'Joe Bloggs' with a 'download' link. At the bottom right of this section is a 'view all downloads' link. The rest of the page, including the navigation bar, main heading, and footer, remains the same as in the previous screenshot.

IELTS Results <sup>Beta</sup> Welcome, Web Projects LOGOUT

HOME DOWNLOADS VERIFICATION TEMPLATES USERS SETTINGS HELP

### Welcome to the IELTS Results Service

Available results

7 new results [DOWNLOAD NOW](#)

### Latest downloads

Records	Download date	User	Download again
2 updated results	16 April 2019, 14:30	Paul Kingston	<a href="#">download</a>
3 results	22 March 2019, 12:34	Joe Bloggs	<a href="#">download</a>

[view all downloads](#)

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# Request an API Connection

## How It Works

### Register for API

- Click the “Help” tab
- Scroll down to the section “Getting started with IELTS Results API”
- Register your details

### We’ll set-up your API developer portal account

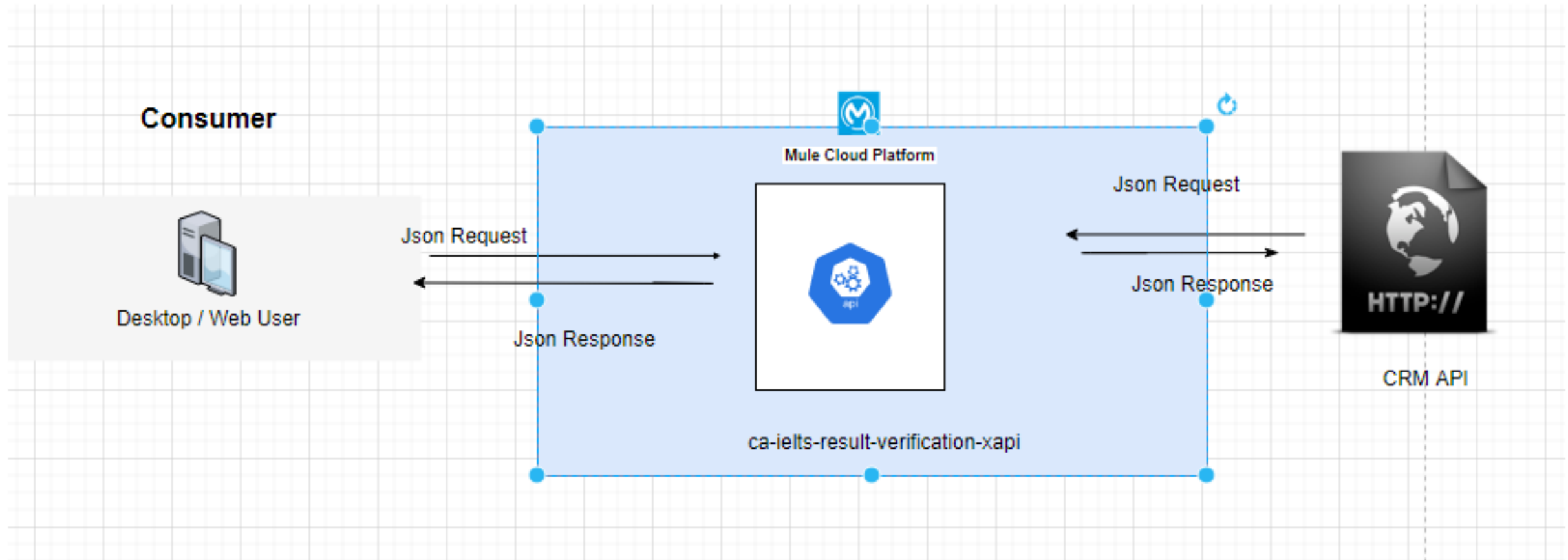
- Once our security checks are complete, we’ll create your API developer portal account and send you an email to activate it.
- Usually about two weeks

### Get Your API Credentials

- Upon activation of your account your IELTS Results API, Client ID & Secret will be generated
- You'll receive an email when these are ready to collect from ‘My Applications’ in the API Developer Portal.

**Tip:** Consult your application management or CRM system provider about integrating with IELTS Results Service API.

# API also available to connect to customer CRMs



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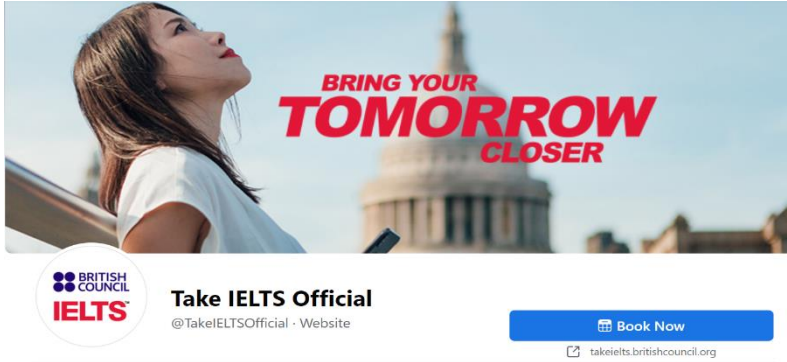
# What makes a good eco-system?



# What are the qualities for a good preparation eco-system when it comes to ELT?

- Audience discussion

# Social Media



Facebook:

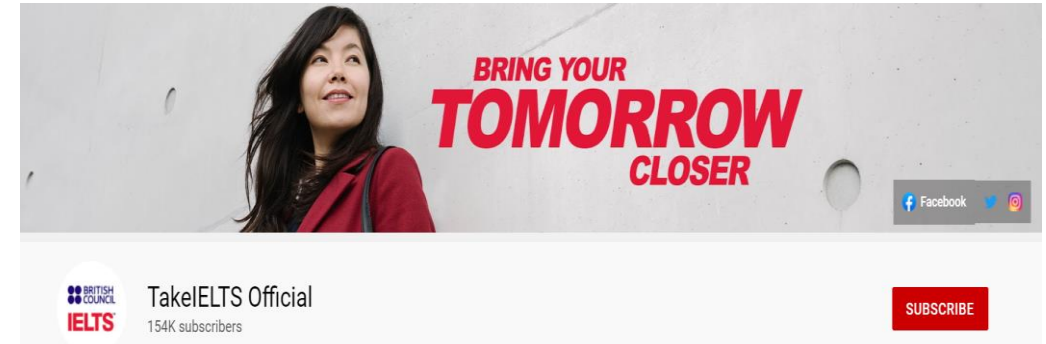
- Online community
- Weekly 'Ask the Expert' sessions
- Hints, tips and IELTS news



YouTube: Videos include:



- IELTS tips
- Introduction to IELTS and the exam
- Personal testimonials
- Country specific videos



Opportunities abroad blog: Over 100+ blogs from an IELTS expert giving advice on a wide variety of IELTS related content including:

- IELTS language
- Exam prep
- Exam day
- IELTS skills.



# Study Pack and Webinars

A comprehensive series of free online IELTS Webinars that offer in-depth guidance across all four skills.

- ❑ Live Webinars with an IELTS expert every week
- ❑ Covers a range of topics e.g. Grammar for Writing Task 1
- ❑ Explores a variety of issues, e.g. vocabulary use for Speaking
- ❑ Each Webinar has time for questions at the end!
- ❑ The IELTS Study Pack includes a series of webinars, detailed Study Plans and practice tests.

## Expert tips videos



## Listening week

The aims of the Listening Self-study Programme are that you . . .

- Understand the format of the Listening Test
- Develop your own listening skills
- Practise different parts of the Listening Test

Day 1



## Webinars schedule - January-March 2023

Date	Title	Description
Thursday 5 January 2023	Academic Writing Task 1 Graphs & Charts	This webinar introduces the format of Academic Writing Task 1 and shows the different ways the data is displayed. We will look at and practise analysing the question, writing the introduction with the all-important overview, selecting data and writing the body paragraph. The focus will be on online graphs and bar charts.
Thursday 12 January 2023	IELTS Reading Overview	This webinar starts with an overview of the Reading Test format. This is followed by a brief look at some common problems you might experience in the Reading Test and introduces some key skills and key strategies that will help you develop the reading skills you need to develop for success. Practice will be provided across different question types.
Thursday 19 January 2023	Writing Task 2 Overview	This webinar introduces the format of Writing Task 2 and what the examiners are looking for in 2 key aspects of the marking criteria, Task Response and Coherence & Cohesion. You will have the opportunity to work through an essay structure by analysing model paragraphs and follow 7 key steps to help you write your own essay.
Thursday 26 January 2023	The IELTS Speaking Test	In this webinar we will start with an overview of the format of the Speaking Test. Then you will have the chance to practise some of the skills and strategies you need for each of the three parts of the test.

# Familiarisation Test

The IELTS on Computer Familiarisation Test is a free way to try out the computer-delivered and online IELTS before your test.

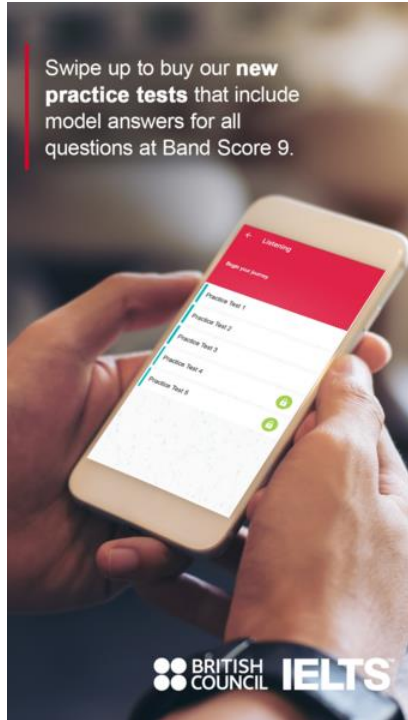
- ❑ Offers a sample listening, reading and writing test
- ❑ Includes different versions for the academic and general tests
- ❑ Sends results of the listening and reading tests directly to your email
- ❑ Is accessible at any time on your computer mobile or tablet

Take the free IELTS on computer familiarisation test

Register now 



# IELTS Prep App



IELTS Prep App is easy to download, use and offers lots of free practice material:

- Prepare for the test thoroughly with practice tests, grammar tips, quizzes and a variety of grammar/vocabulary exercises
- Track your learning progress and build your confidence for the real test
- Understand IELTS assessment criteria
- Free but with purchasable extra practice tests
- With over 5 million downloads it is the worlds leading IELTS app



IELTS Prep App - [takeielts.org](https://takeielts.org)

British Council Education

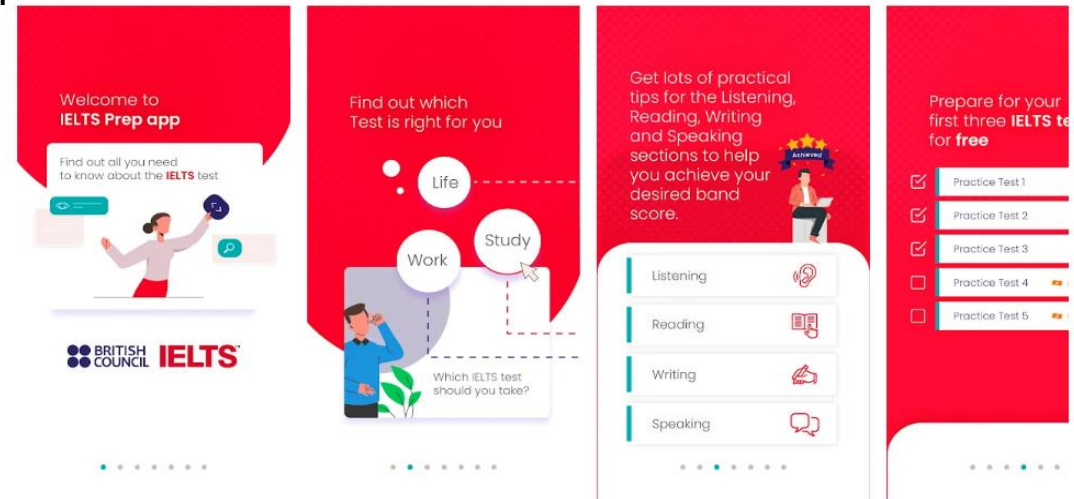
★★★★★ 24,090

Everyone

Offers in-app purchases

This app is available for your device

Installed



# Technology assisted learning – Get closer to your target band score with IELTS Coach

IELTS Coach

## Prepare for IELTS with the experts

Get the score you need with the co-creator of the IELTS test.

- Flexible pricing
- Live online group and private classes
- Available 24/7

- Improve test-related skills for all sections of the test
- Gain test awareness
- Develop effective test strategies
- Choose the best IELTS course for you
- Get IELTS ready and be calm and confident on your test day

# Premium Offers



Over 5 million people have successfully used Road to IELTS to help them get the test score they need.

- Get expert advice and helpful hints videos and blogs on test format
- Practice tests with answer keys, study guides and videos of candidates taking the test
- Focus on critical language points using lots of interactive practice materials
- Easily fits your online, study schedule

# New in 2023



## □ IELTS App 2.0

- A refreshed, new look IELTS app with links to even more British Council resources, support and communications and reminders.



## □ IELTS Ecosystem

- A free service that offers greater focus around understanding the IELTS test and supporting test takers to ensure the level of English is appropriate for them to achieve their required score.
- This ecosystem will provide self-access materials, information about the IELTS test, videos, blogs, English Language Learning support and practice tests; bringing all the great British Council support offers together.



## □ IELTS Trial Test

- A Premium pre-test practice materials offer.
- In this section registered IELTS test takers can fine tune their test day skills, focus on specific areas of weakness and receive tips and advice about how to achieve their best score.



## New in 2023

### The British Council **Language for Resilience** programme

- increases access to the teaching and learning of English and other core skills
- builds resilience with the aim of broadening horizons
- provides agency and a voice for young women and men who may have been displaced, affected by conflict or come from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds or isolated communities.

### IELTS Testing for Refugees

- British Council IELTS has committed to provide access to testing for refugees, free of charge



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# Let's talk

**IELTS™**

**Thank you**

Stay connected!

[Philip.Rylah@britishcouncil.org](mailto:Philip.Rylah@britishcouncil.org)

[Dahlia.Younan@britishcouncil.org](mailto:Dahlia.Younan@britishcouncil.org)

**takeielts.org**