



Northern Ireland Practice
and Education Council

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) on International English Language Testing System (IELTS)

IELTS is the International English Language Testing System- an English language proficiency test developed and run by the British Council in partnership with Cambridge Assessment English. It is a widely recognised test for higher education and global migration.

Question 1 What does it include?

There are two types of IELTS tests: academic and general. The academic test is for people applying for higher education and/or professional registration. The general test is for those requiring to travel for work experience.

Question 2 What is the Test Format?

The IELTS test has four sections: listening, reading, writing and speaking. The total test time is 2 hours and 45 minutes.

Question 3 What is TOEFL?

Education testing service administers TOEFL. It stands for Test of English as Foreign Language. It is a US based test similar to IELTS in the UK. It is still accepted by registering bodies like the Healthcare Professions Council (HCPC) if you wish to register and work in the UK.

Question 4 Is it Better to take IELTS or OET?

Either test is acceptable by the NMC. HCPC requires you to complete either IELTS or TOEFL.

Question 5 What are the language requirements for nurses and midwives

Nurses and Midwives registered outside the UK, follow the link below on guidance on registration language requirements.

[Information for internationally trained applicants - The Nursing and Midwifery Council \(nmc.org.uk\)](https://www.nmc.org.uk/information-for-internationally-trained-applicants-the-nursing-and-midwifery-council-nmc-org-uk)

<https://www.nmc.org.uk/registration/joining-the-register/english-language-requirements/>

Question 6 Language requirements for Allied Health Professionals

Allied health professionals registered outside the UK, follow the link below on guidance on registration language requirements.

<https://www.hcpc-uk.org/registration/getting-on-the-register/international-applications/documents/certificate-of-english-language-proficiency/>

Question 7 What Is the difference between IELTS and OET?

Both tests assess your reading, listening, speaking and writing skills. OET assesses you on the topics you have already studied when receiving your healthcare credentials. Whereas, IELTS assesses you on topics you have never studied before.

Question 8 Is OET accepted by universities for undergraduate and postgraduate education?

IELTS is the preferred choice if you are looking to pursue further education. Each university would be able to specify what it prefers along with the scores required for that particular course.

Question 9 Do I need IELTS to apply for pre-registration nursing or other allied healthcare courses?

Yes, if you would like to do a pre-registration course IELTS is required, if English is not your first language. You may be considered if you have completed your GCSE English exam, however, this needs to be confirmed with the university you are applying to.

Question 10 What is the required score for IELTS?

For the NMC:

IELTS academic score: A score of at least 7 in reading, listening, and speaking and at least 6.5 in writing.

The test can be completed across 2 IELTS sittings if you sit them within 12 months of each other. However, no score in either of the two sittings should be below 6.5 for listening, reading and speaking or below 6 for writing.

Question 11 Can I Combine the score for IELTS And OET?

No, you cannot combine the scores for IELTS and OET.

Question 12 How long is the IELTS Test valid for?

The IELTS test results are valid for 2 years from the date the test is awarded.