

English is often the medium of instruction at many Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in the Sultanate and abroad. At these HEIs, all prospective undergraduate students are expected to take part in class discussions and submit assessments such as coursework and examinations in English, the medium of instruction. Hence, students will need to achieve a certain level of fluency in English to cope with, and benefit from, their future undergraduate course.

Different undergraduate courses need different levels of English, usually measured via English Language Tests and institutions will usually mention the type/s of English language qualification/s (tests) they require for direct admission.

DO NOT WORRY IF YOU ARE NOT YET PROFICIENT IN ENGLISH

If you are currently in grade 12 and worried that you may not **YET** fulfil these conditions, there is **NO** need to worry as there are preparation courses to help you improve your academic English language skills.

If you are a prospective undergraduate scholarship applicant, you are expected to take an English language test, even if you are **NOT** expected to achieve a high score. The test result will be primarily used as an **INDICATOR** of your English language proficiency.

Based on the English language test scores, your future academic advisers and admissions teams will be able to gauge whether you meet the necessary English language requirements to directly enter your future undergraduate course **OR** need to first improve your English language skills with a pre-session course that must be not take more than a year for you to complete.

You can take the English language test online or at a test center in Oman. Hopefully, you have already taken the test while you were still in grade 11 or year 12 and it is usually valid for two years. If not, we strongly advise you to take an approved English proficiency test, ideally in April or May, in the Sultanate **while** you are **still** competitively applying for scholarships, seats and/or grants through the Higher Education Admissions Center (HEAC) portal.

Do **NOT** wait until after your final exams or after the scholarships have been competitively awarded to take the tests! A lower overall score does **NOT** negatively affect your ability to competitively apply for scholarships, unless a minimum IELTS score is required to apply for a particular scholarship. Also keep in mind that a higher score does **NOT** give you a competitive advantage when applying for scholarships.

The following page* aims to answer the frequently asked questions about English Language Tests, including about the International English Language

Testing System (IELTS) for UK Visas & Immigration (UKVI) Academic test, which is accepted by most countries and course providers around the world. The IELTS for UKVI academic test is mandatory for those who need to study a foundation course in the UK because of the visa requirements set by the UK Government.

FAQS AND ANSWERS

1. WHAT IS AN ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEST AND WHICH ONE SHOULD I TAKE?

An English language test measures your English language skills. Most Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in the Sultanate and abroad accept more than one type of English language test, including the IELTS Academic version and IELTS for UKVI Academic version. Admissions teams at HEIs will usually state which test(s) they prefer for direct admission, the minimum overall grade they expect, and the grades they require in writing, speaking, listening, and reading. Admissions teams at HEIs act as a central enquiry point for students, who are thinking of applying for an undergraduate degree.

2. WHAT IS AN IELTS TEST?

If you are a prospective undergraduate student, the International English Language Testing System (IELTS) test is an English language proficiency test designed to assess your ability to listen, read, write, and speak in English and is suitable for students who want to study in an English-speaking environment (i.e. any Higher Education Institution where teaching is carried out in English). IELTS is graded on a scale of 1-9. IELTS is jointly owned by the British Council, IDP: IELTS Australia and Cambridge Assessment English.

3. WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE IELTS ACADEMIC VERSION AND IELTS GENERAL TRAINING VERSION AND WHICH ONE DO I NEED FOR MY HIGHER UNDERGRADUATE STUDIES?

The IELTS Writing and Reading test components are different in the Academic and General Training tests. For instance, the Academic test focuses on topics suitable for anyone entering university or professional institutions, while the General Training test is based on topics of general interest.

As a prospective student, and if you are considering taking an IELTS test, you will need to take the IELTS Academic version or the IELTS for UKVI Academic version.

4. WHAT IS IELTS FOR UKVI ACADEMIC TEST?

UKVI stands for United Kingdom Visas and Immigration. It is a Secure English Language test (SELT) for visa purposes approved by the home office for visa applications to the United Kingdom (UK). This means this test has been designed to meet certain requirements set by the UK Government and that are specific to UK Visas and Immigration procedures. In other words, it has been accepted as proof of English proficiency for people wanting to live and work or study in the UK.

The IELTS Academic for UKVI test is the same as the 'regular' IELTS Academic test in terms of content, format, scoring and the level of difficulty, but with increased security settings. The IELTS UKVI Academic test can be accepted as an indicator of your English language skills by most, if not all, Higher Education Institutions in Oman and abroad (including in countries other than the UK), while it is mandatory in view of student visa applications for those who first have to take a course below undergraduate degree level in the UK (e.g. a foundation course).

5. WHICH TEST SUITS ME BEST?

- The UKVI version of the IELTS test is mandatory for prospective students, who will take courses below degree level in the UK.
- For courses at undergraduate degree level or any courses in countries other than the UK, you should check which other tests are accepted by the institutions that offer these courses.

If you are NOT planning to competitively apply for any scholarship allocated to the United Kingdom or if you are expected to meet the direct entry requirements set by HEIs in the UK (e.g. you are an international qualification holder), you can consider to take the 'regular' IELTS Academic option.

However, if you are planning to competitively apply for a scholarship allocated to the United Kingdom and think you will be below the degree level (for example, you first have to pursue a foundation course), you may want to opt for the IELTS for UKVI Academic test instead. Please do bear in mind that no entity can guarantee that you will be awarded your preferred scholarship as awards are highly competitive.

6. WHY DOES THE EXTERNAL UNDERGRADUATE SCHOLARSHIP DEPARTMENT ADVISE STUDENTS TO TAKE THE IELTS FOR UKVI?

Although most HEIs do accept more than one type of English language test and MoHERI is not in favour of any particular test, it is also true that students who will be competitively awarded a scholarship to study in the UK and who will have to pursue a foundation programme (e.g. GED qualification holders) may require the IELTS for UKVI test for visa application procedures. Bear in mind that the IELTS for UKVI has also been accepted by HEIs in all other study destinations.

7. IS THE IELTS ACADEMIC OPTION ACCEPTED IN ALL COUNTRIES?

Yes, but it is important to note that if you are competitively awarded a scholarship to study in the United Kingdom (UK), and, based on your type of school qualification (e.g. GED) and/or not *quite* meeting the direct entry requirements set by a university, you have to first study a foundation course in the UK. And for this and for visa and immigration purposes, you will have to submit an academic IELTS for UKVI test.



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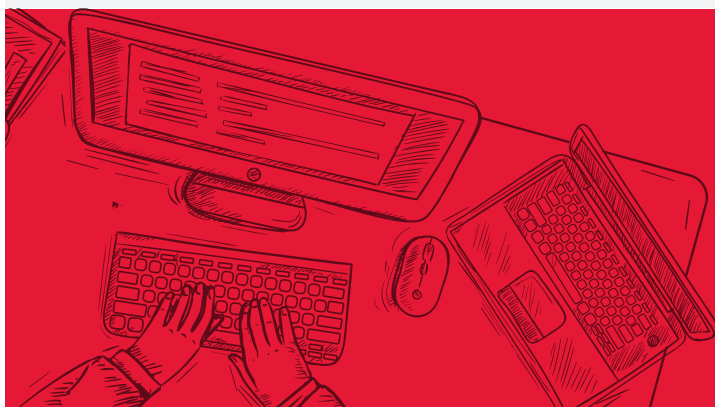


Book IELTS for UKVI with IDP test centre

IELTS for UKVI test dates

March	4	20	July	1	17	November	6	
April	10	29	August	7	28	December	2	18
May	8	22	September	16				
June	5	17	October	9	14			

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