

## Changes to the UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI) SELT testing arrangements Frequently Asked Questions (Institutions, agents and teachers)

### **Do the changes mean that only IELTS for UKVI can be used for Tier 4 student visas?**

UKVI has confirmed that Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) with Tier 4 sponsor status can choose how to assess that applicants meet the required English language level for undergraduate and postgraduate degrees (National Qualification Framework level 6 or above). Institutions will continue issuing the Certificate of Acceptance of Studies (CAS) for Tier 4 visa purposes and the majority of institutions will continue accepting most English language tests, including IELTS, for this purpose. However as some institutions may require IELTS for UKVI, it is important that students check the requirement of the programme they are applying to.

Official list of British Universities and Colleges with HEI status/Tier 4 register of sponsor:  
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/register-of-licensed-sponsors-students>

### **What about students who are applying to a Tier 4 Visa Sponsor which is not an HEI, or students who want to apply for a pre-sessional course?**

The Tier 4 rules have not changed, so students studying with non-HEIs, or at below degree level (National Qualification Framework level 6), will usually need to make a visa application direct to UKVI. They will need to submit an English language qualification which is included on the UKVI list of Secure English Language Tests (often referred to as SELT tests). IELTS is on this list, and students will need to register for their tests at the designated test locations authorised by UKVI. Information and booking is available at [www.ielts.org](http://www.ielts.org).

These test takers will receive an IELTS Test Report Form (TRF) which shows that they have taken their test to meet the UKVI requirements, and UKVI have access to the results through a verification service.

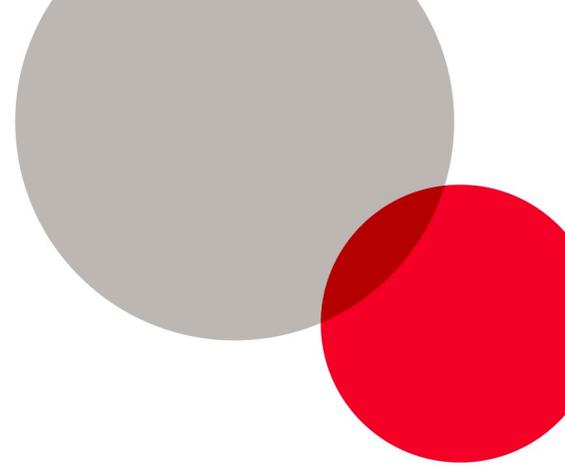
### **Will students need a SELT for a pre-sessional even if they have a CAS for an undergraduate degree?**

Yes. Students will have to take IELTS at a designated location authorised by UKVI in order to be assigned a visa for the pre-sessional (even if they have a CAS for the degree-level course).

### **How will the UK institutions know if the IELTS test was taken under SELT conditions?**

The Test Report Form (TRF) is slightly different. The TRFs that give results for IELTS for UKVI test takers are identifiable by the inclusion of a UKVI number.

### **Can our organisation still accept IELTS if it has not been taken at a designated location authorised by UKVI?**



Yes, if your organisation is an HEI with Tier 4 Sponsor status and the student is studying for a degree level course (National Qualification Framework level 6 or above). This means that, according to the Tier 4 rules, you can choose your own way to assess your students' English language competence at degree level and above.

### How does IELTS address security concerns?

IELTS works closely with immigration authorities around the world including the Home Office (UKVI) to investigate test fraud, and IELTS staff also receive training in facial recognition and document fraud identification. The Home Office and other immigration authorities also regularly consult with IELTS to support the detection of false documentation.

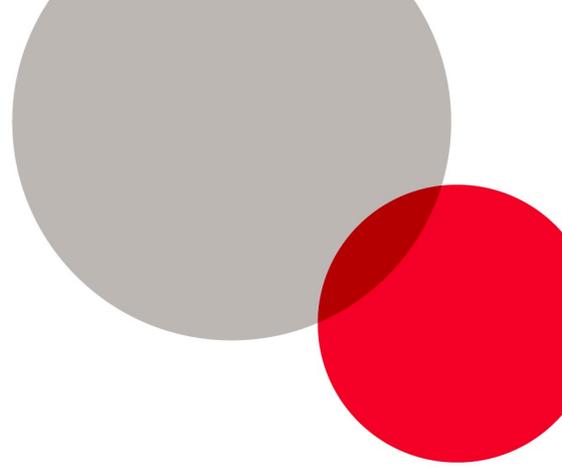
The IELTS partners also apply a range of multi-layered mechanisms to ensure the security of test day operations globally. These layers of security include biometric systems and finger scans (where permitted), along with the capture of a digital photograph of the test taker, which appears on the Test Report Form (TRF).

Registered organisations including the Home Office are able to verify every IELTS TRF using the online IELTS Results Verification system.

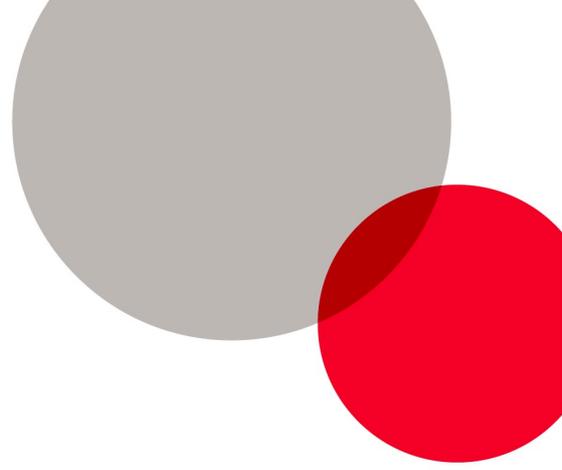
### What categories of visa are affected by the changes?

As a guide, you can use the following table:

Visa description	CEFR level required	Skills	IELTS test and score required
Tier 1 (General) visa	C1	Reading, Writing Speaking, and Listening	IELTS for UKVI - 7.0 overall, and for each of the four skills
Tier 1 (Exceptional Talent) visa	B1	Reading, Writing Speaking, and Listening	IELTS for UKVI- 4.0 overall, and for each of the four skills
Tier 1 (Entrepreneur) visa	B1	Reading, Writing Speaking, and Listening	IELTS for UKVI - 4.0 overall, and for each of the four skills
Tier 1 (Graduate Entrepreneur) visa	B1	Reading, Writing Speaking, and Listening	IELTS for UKVI - 4.0 overall, and for each of the four skills



Tier 2 (General) visa – in most cases	B1	Reading, Writing Speaking, and Listening	IELTS for UKVI - 4.0 overall, and for each of the four skills
Tier 2 (Sportsperson) visa	A1	Reading, Writing Speaking, and Listening	IELTS for UKVI - 4.0 <sup>1</sup> overall, and for each of the four skills
Tier 2 (Minister of Religion) visa	B2	Reading, Writing Speaking, and Listening	IELTS for UKVI - 5.5 overall, and for each of the four skills
Tier 4 (General) student visa - below degree level and pre-session courses	B1	Reading, Writing Speaking, and Listening	IELTS for UKVI - 4.0 overall, and for each of the four skills
Tier 4 (General) student visa - degree level and above	B2	Reading, Writing Speaking, and Listening	IELTS for UKVI* - 5.5 overall, and for each of the four skills  *Only when required – check with your institution if you need to take an IELTS for UKVI test <sup>2</sup>
Family of a settled person visa	A1	Speaking and Listening	IELTS Life Skills at A1 – Pass  IELTS for UKVI – 4.0 in Speaking and Listening <sup>3</sup>
Indefinite leave to remain (to settle) or citizenship	B1	Speaking and Listening	IELTS Life Skills at B1 – Pass  IELTS for UKVI – 4.0 in Speaking and Listening <sup>3</sup>



<sup>1</sup> IELTS is accepted by UKVI at band scores 4.0 and above, equivalent to CEFR level B1.

<sup>2</sup> Higher Education Institutions on UKVI's list of [Tier 4 Sponsors](#) decide which exams to accept when a SELT is not required, and these may include IELTS taken at any of the 1000+ IELTS test locations.

<sup>3</sup> IELTS can be used where IELTS Life Skills is used; candidates would need to get 4.0 or above in Speaking and Listening (scores for Reading and Writing will be ignored).

Please note that these changes do not affect the use of IELTS by people from the European Union, European Economic Area, Switzerland and 'majority English speaking countries' as defined by the UK Home Office (<https://www.gov.uk/english-language>).

### **How often will the IELTS for UKVI test be available?**

Test takers will normally be able to book an IELTS for UKVI or an IELTS Life Skills test within 28 days at permanent locations, and quarterly at pop-up locations.

### **Will there be enough capacity globally?**

The IELTS SELT Consortium is working closely with UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI) in order to ensure that their requirements for sufficient provision of tests for UKVI purposes are met.

### **How is an IELTS test different when it is taken for UK Visa and Immigration purposes / at a designated location authorised by UKVI?**

IELTS for UKVI is designed to meet certain administrative requirements that are only specified by UKVI. This includes reporting to UKVI on all IELTS for UKVI test sessions. The Test Report Form is slightly different, to show that test takers have taken the test at an IELTS for UKVI session. The actual test taken is the same – same format, examiners, level of difficulty, scoring and so on.

### **Can students use their TRF from an IELTS taken for UKVI purposes when applying to other countries / for other purposes?**

Yes. IELTS test results are accepted by more than 9,000 organisations worldwide, including universities, colleges, governments and employers.

### **We have applicants who have already taken their IELTS test. Can they still use their result to apply to UK Visas and Immigration for a visa for a pre-sessional this summer?**

If students take IELTS on or before 5 April 2015 they will be able to use it for their application up to 5 November 2015, but you must confirm this with UKVI.

From 6 April 2015 they must take the test at a designated IELTS test location authorised by UKVI and they must confirm at the time of registration that they wish to use their test for these purposes.

### **In-UK-specific questions**

#### **Will there be enough capacity in the UK?**

The IELTS SELT Consortium is working closely with UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI) in order to ensure that their requirements for sufficient provision of tests for UKVI purposes are met.

#### **What do these changes mean for existing IELTS test centres in the UK?**

There will be ten test locations in the UK offering the IELTS test for UK visa applications. There are no plans to change the operations of the rest of the UK IELTS test centres, as demand for IELTS (for non-UKVI purposes) in the UK, is growing strongly and we expect this to continue. The ten test locations offering IELTS for UKVI will continue to offer IELTS under the current arrangements.

#### **How have the test locations offering IELTS for UKVI been selected?**

Test locations providing IELTS for UKVI have been selected on the basis of stipulations by UKVI, including proximity to population centres and ease of access by public transport.

## IELTS Life Skills

### **Will people need to take a SELT for family visas?**

Yes. People applying for a family visa to the UK as a spouse/partner is required to take a SELT test. The test authorised by UKVI for this purpose is the IELTS Life Skills.

### **Will people need to take a SELT for settlement or naturalisation?**

Yes. From November 2015, people applying for settlement or naturalization will be required to take a SELT test. The test authorised by UKVI for this purpose will be IELTS Life Skills.

### **Will people with an IELTS result – at a higher level than IELTS Life Skills – be able to use this to prove their English language level to UKVI for the purposes of family visas or settlement?**

Yes. From 6 April 2015 people will be able to provide an IELTS for UKVI test result as proof of English level for a family visa and for settlement purposes as long as their IELTS Speaking and Listening scores are 4.0 or above

### **What is IELTS Life Skills? What is it for?**

IELTS Life Skills is a test of Speaking and Listening, available at CEFR Level A1 and CEFR Level B1. It is designed to meet the requirements of UK Visas and Immigration for family visas and Settlement purposes.

### **When and where can I take an IELTS Life Skills test?**

IELTS Life Skills tests are available throughout the world, in locations specified by UK Visas and Immigration. Test takers can register for the IELTS Life Skills test at [www.ielts.org](http://www.ielts.org)

### **What is the format of the IELTS Life Skills test?**

Test takers will take the test with another test taker and one Examiner. Performance on both speaking and listening will be assessed during this one session.

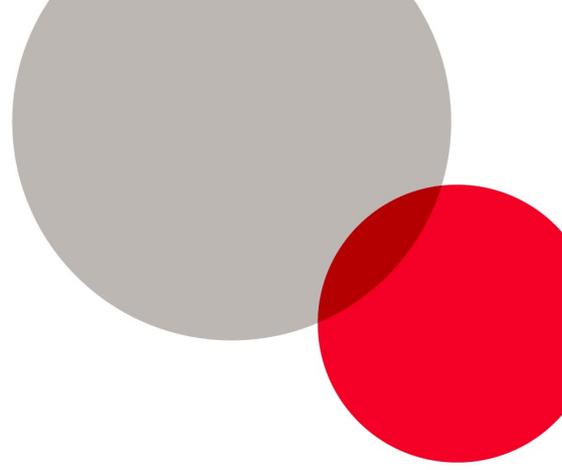
### **Why does IELTS Life Skills only cover speaking and listening?**

The new test has been designed to meet specific immigration requirements for which applicants only need to demonstrate speaking and listening skills.

### **How long does the IELTS Life Skills test take?**

IELTS Life Skills at CEFR Level A1 takes 16-18 minutes and Level B1 is 22 minutes.

### **Is there any break between Speaking and Listening?**



No. Speaking and Listening skills will be assessed at the same time.

### **How is IELTS Life Skills assessed?**

A certificated IELTS Life Skills Examiner will assess performance throughout the Listening and Speaking test based on the following criteria:

- obtaining information
- conveying information
- speaking to communicate
- engaging in discussion.

### **How can people prepare for the IELTS Life Skills test?**

Free test samples are available at [www.ielts.org/uk/lifeskills](http://www.ielts.org/uk/lifeskills)

### **How many copies of the IELTS Life Skills Test Report Form will be provided?**

Test takers receive one copy of the IELTS Life Skills Test Report Form.

### **How soon will they get their IELTS Life Skills results?**

IELTS Life Skills results are usually available within 7 days of the test.

### **How often is an IELTS Life Skills test available?**

The IELTS SELT Consortium aims to make IELTS Life Skills test dates available within 28 days of booking, and to address unexpected demand as quickly as possible.

### **How often can I re-take IELTS or IELTS Life Skills?**

There are no restrictions on re-taking IELTS Life Skills until you pass. However, people who have previously taken the IELTS Life Skills test and have passed are not allowed to re-take the test at the same level within two years. E.g: a candidate who has taken an IELTS Life Skills A1 test and has passed cannot take another Life Skills A1 test within two years. Similarly a candidate who has taken an IELTS Life Skills B1 test and has passed cannot take another Life Skills B1 test within two years.