

English Language Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

NHS

Professionals

International



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English Language Requirement

In order to relocate to the UK as a Healthcare Professional, you will need to be either from an English-speaking country or pass an English language test. The language requirements differ slightly depending on the role you are applying for.

Nursing and Midwifery Roles

For Nursing and Midwifery roles, the Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC) accepts two language tests as evidence that you can communicate effectively in English.

These are:

- **International English Language Test System (IELTS)**

If you have completed an IELTS examination you must provide an IELTS academic certificate that confirms you have achieved a minimum Level 7.0 in speaking, listening, and reading and Level 6.5 in writing and overall Level 7.0.

- **Occupational English Test (OET)**

If you have completed an OET examination, you must provide a certificate that confirms you have achieved a minimum Level B in speaking, listening, and reading and Level C+ in writing.

Allied Health Professional (AHP) Roles

For Allied Health Professional (AHP) roles, if your role requires a Health Care and Professionals Council (HCPC) registration, you will need to pass one of the following English language tests:

- **International English Language Test System (IELTS)**

If you have completed an IELTS examination you must provide an IELTS academic certificate that confirms you have achieved a minimum Level 7.0 in speaking, listening, and reading and Level 6.5 in writing and overall Level 7.0.

- **Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) Internet Based Test (IBT)**

If you have completed an TOEFL examination, you must provide proof that confirms you have achieved a minimum with a minimum score of 100 (out of 120). Note TOEFL tests must be undertaken outside of the UK.

For AHP roles that do not require HCPC registration, such as sonographers, you will have an English Language test as part of your visa application, and we will guide you through this process closer to the time.

International English Language Test System (IELTS)

What is the IELTS?

IELTS stands for International English Language Testing System. The IELTS is broken down into four areas: Listening, Reading, Writing and Speaking.

Which IELTS module do I need to take?

You must take the Academic Module. The IELTS need to be taken at either a British Council or International Development Program of Australian Universities and Colleges (IDP) test centre. You can find your nearest centre via the links below:

- takeielts.britishcouncil.org/take-ielts/book
- www.ieltsessentials.com/global/registerforyourtest/findatestcentre

Which Level do I need to achieve in IELTS?

You must achieve a Level 7 in speaking, listening and reading and a Level 6.5 in writing. Please see the score scale below:

The IELTS Band Score Scale	
9	Expert User
8	Very Good User
7	Good User
6	Competent User
5	Modest User
4	Limited User
3	Extremely Limited User
2	Intermittent User
1	Non-User
0	Did not attempt the test

What do I need to do to achieve the required level in IELTS?

You are strongly advised to enrol in a review centre so that they can support you in achieving the required level in IELTS. There are a number of review centres around the world that you can choose from. We will be able to provide you with recommended review centres.

Prepare by completing mock tests

Once you have enrolled with a review centre, it is important for you to complete mock tests. This is important for you to complete so that you have a good understanding of what level you are currently working at and how much studying you will need to complete to achieve the required level.

How long will it take me to achieve the required level in IELTS?

Obtaining these levels in all areas of IELTS requires intensive study. The more time you have to dedicate to studying, the quicker you will achieve it. This part of the process is based on your individual circumstances and depends on many things such as, what level you are currently achieving in your mock tests and how many hours a week you are studying.

What do the IELTS tests involve?

There are two types of IELTS: Academic and General Training. All test takers take the same Listening and Speaking tests but different Reading and Writing tests. Make sure that you prepare for the correct test type, which is Academic.

The Listening, Reading and Writing sections of all IELTS tests are completed on the same day, with no breaks in between them.

The Speaking section, however, can be completed up to a week before or after the other tests. The total test time for all 4 sections is 2 hours and 45 minutes.

Test	Content	Time
Speaking	<p>3 parts, comprised of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduction and Interview (4-5 Minutes) The examiner will introduce him/herself and you will then be asked to introduce yourself and confirm your identity. You will be asked general questions about home, family, work or general interests. • Individual long turn (3-4 minutes) You will be given a card which asks you to talk about a particular topic and this card will include points you can cover in your talk. You will be given 1 minute to prepare your talk and a pen and pencil to make notes. You then talk for 1-2 minutes on the topic. • Two-way discussion (4-5 minutes) This part will be on the same topic as part 2 and the examiner may ask further questions in relation to that topic. 	11-14 minutes
Reading	<p>40 questions, in a variety of forms including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Multiple Choice • Identifying information (True/False/Not Given) • Identifying writer's views/claims (Yes/No/Not given) • Matching information/headings/ features/sentence endings • Sentence completion • Summary/note/table/flow chart completion • Diagram label completion • Short-answer questions 	60 minutes
Listening	<p>4 parts, with 10 questions in each section, so a total of 40 questions.</p> <p>The first two parts deal with everyday social language, and the final two parts are situations set in educational and training settings:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A conversation between two people 2. A monologue 3. A conversation between two main speakers, but may include up to 4 speakers 4. A monologue on an academic subject (i.e. university lecture) 	30-40 minutes
	<p>Questions will be in a variety of forms including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Multiple Choice • Plan/map/diagram labelling • Matching information • Form/note/table/flow chart/ summary completion • Short-answer questions • Sentence completion 	60 minutes
Writing	<p>2 tasks, comprised of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Describe visual information in your own words (at least 150 words) • Write an essay discussing on the point of view, argument or problem provided (at least 250 words) 	60 minutes

For more information on the IELTS tests and marking, visit the IELTS Website:
www.ielts.org/for-test-takers/test-format

When do I get my IELTS results?

Results are available 13 calendar days after the test. You can preview your results online and these results will remain online for 28 days. You will receive only one copy of the test report form so please keep this safe as replacement test forms cannot be issued.

Please ensure you update inform your recruitment contact immediately when you receive your results.

Can I combine my IELTS test certificates?

You can provide 2 IELTS test certificates taken within 6 months of each other to meet the above requirement but must not have scored below 6.5 in any categories in either of the test sittings.

An acceptable example of this would be:

	Listening	Reading	Writing	Speaking
Test 1	7.0	6.5	6.5	7.5
Test 2	6.5	7.0	6.5	6.5

How long are my IELTS results valid for?

Your IELTS results are only valid for two years.

What if I do not achieve the required level in IELTS?

You will need to retake the test. We highly recommend taking your time to prepare before taking your test, so it is a good idea to re-book ahead so you will feel ready to re-take. Your score is unlikely to increase unless you make significant effort to improve your English before re-taking the test.

Can I send my paper for re-marking?

If you did not achieve the results you were expecting, you can request to have your results re-checked by an examiner, however, this can be expensive and can take up to 3 months to be re-marked. There are no guarantees of any alterations or improvements to your scores.

If there has been an error and your results are confirmed to be higher than originally stated your money for re-marking will be refunded to you. It is normally recommended only to be considered if you have reached a score of 8 or above in three areas and only one area of a 6.5.

Occupational English Test (OET)

What is the OET?

The OET is the Occupational English Test. The OET is broken down into four areas: Listening, Reading, Writing and Speaking. It is designed specifically to assess the English Language skills of international healthcare professionals wanting to work in an English-speaking environment.

Which level do I need to achieve in the OET?

The NMC require you to gain a minimum of Level B in speaking, listening, and reading and Level C+ in writing of the test. Please see the score scale below:

The OET Grade Scale	
A	Very high level of performance
B	High level of performance
C+	Very Good Level
C	Good Level
D	Moderate Level
E	Low Level

How do I book my OET?

OET is available monthly in over 40 countries. You can book your test online at: www.occupationalenglishtest.org/book-oet/

What do I need to do to achieve a Level B?

You can visit the OET website where you will find lots of preparation materials and sample tests that you can use to help you study. Please see links below:

- Preparation Portal: www.occupationalenglishtest.org/preparation-portal/
- Study Guide: www.occupationalenglishtest.org/l/oet-study-guide/

You can also like the Facebook page @OfficalOET for regular preparation tips and advice. Your recruitment/agency contact will also be able to advise you on review centres.

What do the OET tests involve?

Test	Content	Time
Speaking	Specific to your profession, based on typical workplace situations. You will take part in two role-plays , where you'll take your professional role while the other person plays a patient or client, or sometimes a relative or carer.	Approx. 20 minutes
Reading	Specific to your profession, based on typical workplace situations. The task is to write a letter, usually a referral letter. Sometimes, especially for some professions, a different type of letter is required, i.e. a letter of transfer or discharge, or a letter to advise or inform a patient, carer, or group.	45 minutes
Listening	3 parts , where you will follow and understand a range of health-related spoken materials such as patient consultations and lectures.	Approx. 45 minutes
Writing	3 parts and a total of 42 question items. The topics are of generic healthcare interest and are therefore accessible to candidates across all professions. The 3 parts are: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Part A – Quick reading task This assesses your ability to locate specific information from four short texts in a quick and efficient manner.• Part B – Careful reading task This assesses your ability to identify the detail, gist or main point of six short texts sourced from the healthcare workplace (100-150 words each).• Part C – Careful reading task This assesses your ability to identify detailed meaning and opinion in two texts on topics of interest to healthcare professionals (800 words each).	60 minutes

For more information on the OET tests, visit:
www.occupationalenglishtest.org/test-information

Occupational English Test (OET)

When will I receive my OET results?

Results are issued online approximately 16 business days after the test. Your certificate will be posted to you directly from OET approximately 7 days after the results are published online.

How long are my OET results valid for?

Your OET results are valid for 2 years.

Can I request a re-mark?

You may request a re-mark of your test results. Requests for re-marking must be made within 5 days of results being published.

Can I combine my test certificates?

You can achieve the required mark across two test sittings if:

- You sit the tests within six months of each other, and
- You are tested in all four skills at the same time, and
- All grades in both sittings are above Grade C+ and you achieve Grade B or higher in all four fields when the results of both sittings are viewed together.

An acceptable example of this would be:

	Listening	Reading	Writing	Speaking
Test 1	B	C+	B	C+
Test 2	C+	B	C+	B

Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) Internet Based Test (IBT)

What is the TOEFL IBT?

The TOEFL IBT is the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) Internet Based Test (IBT). The TOEFL IBT is broken down into four areas: Listening, Reading, Writing and Speaking.

Which level do I need to achieve in the TOEFL IBT?

You will need a minimum overall score of 100 out of 120.

How do I book my TOEFL IBT?

Visit the ETS website to discover the different type of TOEFL IBT test options, whether that's at a test centre or from home. You can book your test using the link below: www.ets.org/toefl/test-takers/ibt/take/

What do the TOEFL IBT tests involve?

The TOEFL IBT test has 4 sections: Reading, Listening, Speaking, and Writing. During the test, you'll perform tasks that combine these 4 English communication skills, such as:

- Read, listen and then speak in response to a question
- Listen and then speak in response to a question
- Read, listen and then write in response to a question

The total test takes about 3 hours to complete, but you should plan for 3½ hours, allowing 30 minutes for check in.

Test	Content	Time
Speaking	<p>30 – 40 questions. This test is designed to assess how well you can read and understand the kind of materials used in an academic environment. It includes 3 or 4 reading passages, each approximately 700 words long, with 10 questions per passage.</p> <p>Reading passages are excerpts from a variety of university-level textbooks that would be used in introductions to a discipline or topic.</p>	54 – 72 minutes
Reading	<p>28 – 39 questions. This test is designed to measure your ability to understand conversations and lectures in English.</p> <p>There are 2 types of listening items — lectures and conversations. Both use campus-based language.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3–4 lectures, each 3–5 minutes long, with 6 questions per lecture. • 2–3 conversations with 2 speakers, each 3 minutes long, with 5 questions per conversation. 	41 – 57 minutes
Break – 10 minutes		
Listening	<p>4 tasks. This test is designed to measure your ability to speak English effectively in academic settings. It is composed of tasks that resemble real-life situations you might encounter both in and outside of a classroom.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Question 1 – Independent speaking task This requires you to draw entirely on your own ideas, opinions and experiences when you respond. • Questions 2–4 – Integrated speaking tasks This requires you to combine your English-language skills – listening and speaking, or listening, reading and speaking – just as you would in or out of a classroom. <p>You'll get 15–30 seconds of preparation time before each response, and your response will be 45 or 60 seconds long.</p>	17 minutes
Writing	<p>2 tasks. This test is designed to measure your ability to write in English in an academic setting, and you're expected to be able to present your ideas in a clear, well-organised manner.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Integrated writing task (20 minutes) – Read a short passage and listen to a short lecture, then write in response to what you read and listened to. • Independent writing task (30 minutes) – Write an essay based on personal experience or opinion in response to a writing topic. 	50 minutes

For more information on the TOEFL IBT tests content, visit:
www.ets.org/toefl/test-takers/ibt/about/content/

When will I receive my TOEFL IBT results?

Your scores will arrive anywhere between 4-13 business days after your test date, with the time ranging due to the type of test you take. Discover more here: www.ets.org/toefl/test-takers/ibt/scores/getting

How long are my TOEFL IBT results valid for?

Your TOEFL IBT results are valid for 2 years.