

**House of Representatives: Inquiry into Registration Processes**  
**and Support for Overseas Trained Doctors**



**Submission No. 110**  
(Overseas Trained Doctors)  
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### **Terms of Reference**

Recognising the vital role of colleges in setting and maintaining high standards for the registration of overseas-trained doctors (OTDs), the Committee will:

- 1) Explore current administrative processes and accountability measures to determine if there are ways OTDs could better understand colleges' assessment processes, appeal mechanisms could be clarified, and the community better understand and accept registration decisions;
- 2) Report on the support programs available through the Commonwealth and State and Territory governments, professional organisations and colleges to assist OTDs to meet registration requirements, and provide suggestions for the enhancement and integration of these programs; and
- 3) Suggest ways to remove impediments and promote pathways for OTDs to achieve full Australian qualification, particularly in regional areas, without lowering the necessary standards required by colleges and regulatory bodies.

### **Request for indulgence by The Parliamentary Committee**

**Due to the shortage of time in preparing this Submission, examples have been utilised from other professions and their Boards. However, these examples apply equally for OTDs and highlight the effects of poor administration and unrealistic English language proficiency requirements.**

**Furthermore, a lot of the statistical data included in this submission, or similar, has never been seen publicly and much of it would be of great assistance to OTDs, medical organisations and Boards, and for anyone else who wishes to gain a deeper understanding of English language proficiency test.**

## ACRONYMS

AHPRA	Australian Health Professionals Registration Authority
AMC	Australian Medical Council
ANF	Australian Nurses Federation
ASDOT	Assessment Subsidy for Overseas Trained Professionals
COAG	Council of Australian Governments
CPA	Certified Practising Accountant
FECCA	Federation of Ethnic Communities Councils of Australia
HSC	Higher School Certificate
IDP	IDP Education
IELTS	International English Language Testing System
MARA	Migration Agents Registration Authority
MCQ	Multiple Choice Question
NRAIP	National Registration and Accreditation Implementation Project
National Scheme	National Registration and Accreditation Scheme
OBOS	Office of the Board of Studies
OTD	Overseas Trained Doctor
OET	Occupational English Test

## Summary

This submission is only concerned with the third point of the Terms of Reference where the Committee of Inquiry invited suggestions how one can remove impediments and promote alternative pathways for OTDs to achieve full Australian qualification, particularly in regional areas, without lowering the necessary standards required by colleges and regulatory bodies..

The Inquiry needs to understand that the main impediment for competent and experienced OTDs to achieve full Australian qualifications is that the English language proficiency requirements are almost impossible to achieve and that this problem needs to be urgently resolved. The National Boards appear to be incapable of solving this problem and it has to be taken out of their hands.

In Australia, we already have a large pool of highly qualified OTDs, estimated at about 3000 OTDs, 5,000 nurses and thousands of other qualified professional people who possessed the required professional knowledge and ability. These OTDs have been subjected to high costs of test fees costs and requirements necessary to prove their English language proficiency, using a the IELTS test, which not never designed for this purpose, and has been widely criticised for doing so.

Throughout this submission, the IELTS test has been discussed with some reference to the OET testing system. I am unable to provide much information of the OET test, as I have not completed enough research into it, which will enable me to give an informed opinion. However, both testing systems share similar issues and deficiencies.

The most serious objection one has to the use of the tests is the expected high level that is expected of OTDs. Only a very small minority of OTDs are able to obtain such a score. It is unlikely that this high level of English language proficiency, which they must have, is a reflection of what other Australian registered doctors possess.

To deepen the issue, the test does not apply to all OTDs but for those people who come from non-White nations. Not only do we have a discriminatory system, it is also a racially repressive one. AHPRA rationalise this by saying that they are protecting the Australian public, although there is no proof offered to justify such a statement.

What is urgently required, to reduce the skills shortage, is for an independent group of language and linguistics experts to examine the usage of the different tests of International English Language Testing (IELTS) and Occupational English Test (OET) to measure the English language proficiency levels for OTDs.

Of all the organisations studied and discussed in this Submission, which include the National Boards of Australian Health Professionals Registration Authority (AHPRA), Department of Immigration and Citizenship (DIAC) and Migration Agents Registration Authority (MARA), not one regulatory Board or Authority had carried out needs analysis of what level of English proficiency is required by their members.

The levels required chosen were simply based upon what others have done. Each one of these regulatory bodies lack an understanding on how IELTS works, or whether if it is an appropriate test that they should be using. In this submission, a detailed analysis of two candidates who completed IELTS tests sixteen and seventeen times, respectively, is shown and analysed. What one can say with certainty is that a candidate completing many test will usually receive a wide range of results rather than having consistent results. It is quite unusual to find such candidates producing consistent scores. This raises the question of the reliability and validity of such tests.

The promoters of these tests make many such claims and they should be treated as marketing hype, rather than factual statements. Oddly, many organisations, including AHPRA and their National Boards simply accept such statements as being truthful and they then fail to carry out any additional due diligence to check their veracity.

It was ludicrous that the various Boards can make decisions on language requirements, while failing to take the most basic requirements of good governance by trying to understand why they require OTDs to achieve impossibly high English language proficiency levels, well beyond what is required for their profession and higher than that for local Australian, or exempt, doctors.

It is not just the lack of good governance but the failure to maintain consistently other standards such as

- Fiduciary duty
- Governance
- Due process
- Duty of care
- Avoid any abuse of power
- Racism

One thing that has been noticed through Freedom of Information (FOIs) requests is a pattern whereby organisations and Boards call for submissions regarding possible changes, to give a semblance of asking their members for their opinions. Once they receive the submissions, usually allowing minimum time for people to prepare their answers, they then go and do what they think should be done. In the case of MARA, they commissioned a researcher to make recommendations and then tell him what results they were looking for.

It is this lack of understanding by AHPRA of their own policy, which creates the absurd situation at that OTDs are required to have the same English language proficiency for chiropractors and aged care nurses and specialist doctors. Does this equivalence between different professions make sense? It might be convenient to have common standards between different professions but is it true?

Furthermore, not one organisation that has been examined has carried out a needs analysis to find out what their occupation requires.

We now find ourselves in the absurd situation that the Australia government provides funding to assist financially disadvantaged OTDs to complete the English language proficiency tests. The assistance is to cover the cost of assessments and/or examinations, which must be passed to enable the OTDs to qualify for employment in certain professions in Australia. The program is the Assessment Subsidy for Overseas Trained Professionals program (ASDOT).

Lastly, are the English language proficiency requirements for OTDs really fair and secure? What most people do not know, and IELTS does not publish this information in any usable form, but most candidates cannot pass the English language proficiency requirements, which have been set at 7 in all bands. One suspects that the situation is probably the same for the OET test even if they have four bands of four grade levels.

From a detailed statistical analysis, which has never been published before, and which IELTS would not want anyone to know, less than 3% of candidates being able to reach the required 7 in all bands, one is left wondering whether all the other 97% are "unqualified".

In Figure 1, very few people can pass the English proficiency test using the IELTS testing system.

Candidate results	Frequency	Percent
More than 8 in all bands	43	0.7
More than 7 in all bands	142	2.4
More than 6 or 6.5 in all bands (but not 7)	895	14.9
More than 5 or 5.5 in all bands (but not 6 or 7)	2452	40.8
Other	2514	41.9
Total Candidates	6003	100.0

Figure 1. Numbers of candidates who can achieve a minimum score in all bands.



## **Recommendations of this Submission**

That the Committee recommend that:

1. The English language proficiency scores required of OTDs must be lowered to represent the true proficiency levels of other doctors who are already registered. Until a full needs analysis is completed for English language proficiency requirements of each profession, a more realistic IELTS score of an average of 6.5 in all bands and for OET, two Cs and two Bs would be acceptable.
2. Acceptable test results can be based upon an average of many tests and not from just one sitting.
3. The validity of the test scores may be no more than five years.
4. Test results should not be the only form of evidence used to prove that OTDs possess the requisite English language proficiency levels.
5. Each level within a profession is to have a needs analysis of the level of English language proficiency as part of a job description.
6. An independent team of language and linguistics experts examine the use of different English test of International English Language Testing (IELTS) and Occupational English Test (OET), and other English language proficiency testing systems, and make recommendations on which tests are to be used and what would be the appropriately acceptable test score levels.
7. An independent team of language and linguistics experts are to investigate what are the English language proficiency test levels for local Australian-born and apply that level equally to all OTDs.
8. Within the context of Australia being a multicultural society, OTDs should be admitted on the basis of their representation of the communities cultural and religious background.
9. That the promoters of the IELTS and OET tests be called before a Parliamentary Committee to explain how their tests are scored and then calculated to produce a final result and why they do not provide feedback to their clients. Currently, this information is denied to all IELTS test candidates but must be provided under various laws such as Australian Equity Law, Fair Trading Act 1999, the Charter of Human Rights and various International Treaties and Agreements, etc.
10. Why English language proficiency is considered more important than professional skills and experience? Skills and experience should also be taken into consideration.
11. That the use of the IELTS and OET tests as a veil for a covert racist policy is unlawful under a range of Australian discrimination laws so it must be discontinued or modified immediately.
12. That a Commissioner be appointed to hear on any appeals and overturn decisions made by professional organisations where an applicant has been treated unfairly.



# Pigs float down the Dawson

## Flood has devastated piggery's livestock

By DANIEL BURDON  
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### FAST FACTS

- More than 30,000 pigs lost in floodwaters
- Nearly 40 years of work down the drain for Baralaba butcher
- Government assistance won't cover livestock losses
- No increased risk to public health

MORE than 30,000 pigs have been floating down the Dawson River since last weekend with a piggery at Baralaba paralysed by flooding which has killed most of its bred live-stock.

Baralaba butchers' Sid Everingham owns and runs the piggery near Baralaba.

Mr Everingham said: "We've lost probably about 30,000 pigs in the floods, we tried to get as many weaners and suckers out by boat, but we could only save about 70 weaners, and the suckers didn't survive long, because they needed that mother's milk, and all the sows have been washed away."

"I put a whole lot of them out of the pens in the shed, so they could hopefully get to higher

ground, but I haven't seen them since, and haven't heard any reports, so I believe they've gone down the river."

Mr Everingham had been building his butchery and piggery up for more than 40 years in the town, and while he was upset by the loss, he hoped he could re-build it.

He said he was angry that the grants made available of up to \$25,000 for primary producers did not in-

clude reimbursements for livestock.

"I'm a pig farmer, and I spent years breeding these pigs, and building the pens, but those pigs I've lost I'll never get back again."

"The government offers this assistance, but a piggery is nothing without its sows, and what am I supposed to do about getting more sows now?"

He said at least \$80,000 worth of damage had been caused to the property, including livestock losses, but that it was difficult to put a price on a good breeder.

"In beef, the best breeders go for thousands of dollars, and most people might have a couple, but I couldn't put a price on the pigs I had, so I wish there was at least something there for that loss of income that I am experiencing."

"How am I meant to provide a receipt for pigs I've bred and killed - it's not like I bought them at the supermarket."

Mr Everingham said the power was turned off to Baralaba for 48 hours as well, meaning over Christmas - one of the busiest times of year for him - he lost all his substantial meat holdings in the shop.

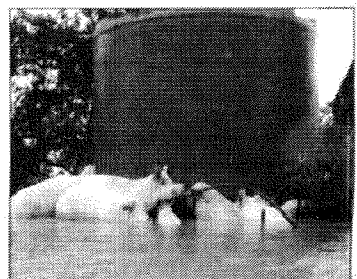
He said: "Hopefully I can get some reimbursement for the meat I've lost, but as long as I have a bit of support, then I will just start all over and try to put the shop and pig farm back where it was, but it will take years."

Queensland Health public health physician Margaret Young said the livestock, including pigs, that was floating down rivers around CQ posed no more threat to public health than anything else in the



**LOSING BATTLE:** Sid Everingham battles floodwaters with his lorry to try and save some of his pigs.

PHOTO: DANIEL BURDON



**STOCK LOST:** Pigs wrangle for the high ground as flood water inundates the Baralaba piggery.

PHOTO: DANIEL BURDON

waterways, and advised people not to drive, walk or ride through floodwaters. She said it was vital that if people had to enter floodwaters, to wear appropriate clothing, boots, and to remember to wash hands regularly.

Was it really 30,000 pigs which floated down the river?

The Queensland, Australia newspaper The Morning Bulletin covered stories from the recent floods. One livestock farmer was particularly devastated.

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Baralaba Butchers' Sid Everingham owns and runs the piggery near Baralaba.

Mr. Everingham said: "We've lost probably about 30,000 pigs in the floods, we tried to get as many weaners and suckers out by boat, but we could only save about 70 weaners, and the suckers didn't survive long, because they needed that mother's milk, and all the sows have been washed away."

But later the story was clarified.

What Baralaba piggery-owner Sid Everingham actually said was "30 sows and pigs", not "30,000 pigs"

<http://www.neatorama.com/2011/02/09/30000-pigs-lost/>

## Explanation of the National Registration and Accreditation Scheme

In March 2008, the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) resolved to establish a single National Registration and Accreditation Scheme for ten health professions, for introduction on 1 July 2010 with Western Australia joined on 18 October 2010.

There is a National Board for each profession.

AHPRA is the single Agency that supports the Boards and the National Scheme, and has offices in each state and territory, with the head office in Melbourne.

Despite the move for uniform standards, AHPRA took it upon them to try to implement uniform standards of English language proficiency regulations across all professions. AHPRA is in error for insisting that there be the same English language standards without any needs analysis on what profession requires what level of English language proficiency.

AHPRA was formed by an Act of Parliament and is bound by the Health Practitioner Regulation National Law as in force in participating jurisdictions, and its Regulations include the Health Practitioner Regulation National Law Act 2009. An examination of this Act shows that within the 309 pages, the words, “English language” is mentioned only once yet is the single major reason why OTDs are excluded from working in Australia.

A reading of that section proves that AHPRA made a serious error by insisting that all National Board have the same English language proficiency requirements. Under the *Health Practitioner Regulation National Law Act 2009*, Reprinted as in force on 1 July 2010, Reprint No. 1, Div.3, sec.38(1) (d) says that

### **38 National board must develop registration standards**

(1) A National Board must develop and recommend to the Ministerial Council one or more registration standards about the following matters for the health profession for which the Board is established—

(d) requirements about the English language skills necessary for an applicant for registration in the profession to be suitable for registration in the profession;

There is nothing in the Act saying that the National Boards must have identical English language proficiency requirements. Commonsense dictates that different professions have different needs, as Pharmacy decided that they required a higher score which effectively locks out practically all locally or overseas trained pharmacists who cannot receive exemptions. The National boards failed in their obligations in properly carrying out their sec.38(1) (d) requirements by not independently assessing what English language skills necessary for an applicant for registration in the profession

Some of the objectives of the National Registration and Accreditation Scheme (the National Scheme) were for the Boards:

- (d) to facilitate the rigorous and responsive assessment of overseas-trained health practitioners;
- (e) to facilitate access to services provided by health practitioners in accordance with the public interest

It appears that the National Boards failed in their responsibility to OTDs in properly carrying out their obligations regarding the English language proficiency of the OTDs.

AHPRA misinterpreted the Act by trying to standardise the level of English language proficiency across all National Boards rather than censure that each the National Boards maintain standards for the members. After the exchange of much documentation, it was decided that it would be impossible to impose identical English language proficiency standards across all the National Boards as some

Boards wanted *higher* standards. A reading of the documents under FOI provides an insight into the thinking of some National Boards. They thought of themselves as being elitist and wanted to have the highest levels of English language proficiency, without having a clue why or whether they needed such a high level.

At a meeting of all the National Boards in December 2009, (Meeting: 4, Agenda Item: 3.2) there was a recommendation that members:

1. note that the proposed common English language standard now contains provision for Board-specific content, and
2. agree to the revised version of the common English language standard, and
  - a. Substituting any Board-specific components of the standard, and
  - b. Any further modification that the Board considers necessary.

The meeting also requested the following

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

That members:

1. note that the proposed common English language standard now contains provision for Board-specific content, and
2. agree to the revised version of the common English language standard, subject to:
  - a. substituting any Board-specific components of the standard, and
  - b. any further modification that the Board considers necessary.

### **Background to having common English language standards (AHPRA Minutes)**

At their first meetings, all national boards agreed to work with other boards on possible registration standards for common use on criminal history and English language requirements. The concept was that the common standards would reflect the minimum requirements to which boards could add any Board-specific additional requirements.

The National Registration and Accreditation Implementation Project (NRAIP) team then developed an initial draft of possible standards for common use. The NRAIP team circulated the draft to all national boards and all State and Territory registration boards and invited initial comments.

Comments received on the initial drafts and revised drafts were considered at the October 2009 meeting. All national boards then included the revised versions of the proposed common standards in their consultation papers, with seven national boards including comments on the proposed common standards.

Boards considered initial feedback on the standard, particularly feedback from national boards, and a revised version of the standard, at their November meetings. Feedback from the November meetings has been taken into account in developing the final version of the standard at Attachment A.

### **ISSUES**

#### **Approach to finalising the standard**

The final version of the common standard at Attachment A is the best synthesis of the views of the national boards and stakeholders that can be achieved at this time. There are clear benefits administratively in a common standard, as Agency staff will only need to know and apply one standard. However, it is clear that there are some issues which may make it difficult to achieve consensus on a common standard. Accordingly, the proposal aims to achieve as much commonality as possible whilst recognising that some aspects of the standard may vary among boards.

The core common issue that should be retained is the minimum standard of English language testing. As indicated below, boards are free to specify a higher level.

### **Components of the common standard that are intended to be board-specific**

The following components of the common standard are intended to be Board-specific:

1. each board must specify the English language skills test or tests that it will accept (test results must be at least IELTS level 7 across all four test bands, or the equivalent, but can be higher if boards wish)
2. there is a section for boards to add any further board-specific requirements, and
3. when the standard is finalised, it will refer to the name of the individual board, rather than "health practitioner".

### **Components of the common standard that boards may modify if necessary**

Wherever possible, boards are encouraged to adopt the common content unmodified for administrative simplicity. However, if boards wish, each board can decide the following:

1. whether to include the provision that the Board will accept IELTS (or approved equivalent) results more than two years old if accompanied by proof that a candidate has actively maintained employment as a registered health practitioner using English as the primary language of practice in a country where English is the native or first language
2. whether to keep the list of countries specified in exemption 1(a) so that the exemption is limited to the countries specified, or remove the list of countries, with the result that the exemption will apply to any country where English is the first or native language (note that the second option may be interpreted as wider than the current list of countries by applicants)
3. whether to remove exemption 1(a) completely, and
4. whether to include exemption 1(b).

A number of *stakeholders* raised issues with the definition of international student. This terminology has now been replaced in the final draft.

### **How did AHPRA get it so wrong?**

It is clear from the forgoing that AHPRA wrongly assumed that, for administrative purposes and convenience, that the English language proficiency requirements for all members are the same, which may be true or not, but provided no evidence that it was so.

To compound their naivety, AHPRA left it to each National Board to make modifications to the English language proficiency requirements, but decreed that the requirements can be only at a higher level.

An examination of all the files obtained under the FOI has not been completed but not one National Board appeared to have even considered lower IELTS scores.

Furthermore, the acceptance of the IELTS test was just accepted and there was no attempt to investigate the reliability and validity of that testing system. OET never scored even a mention but

assumed to be an equivalent test. This is quite an assumption, as it is a test for different purposes than IELTS.

Can the individual Boards or submissions be relied on to make sensible decisions? The FOI reveals many comments made by them and a considerable number of them are simply unreliable and without foundation. For example, a member of the Dental Practice Board of Victoria wanted the English language proficiency test results to be no longer than 12 months, the current validity being two years, on the basis that

The experience of the University of Melbourne is that if practitioners do not continue to work in an English-speaking environment, they lose their facility in the language. Hence, certification should be no more than 12 months old and gained in an English speaking country, if not in Australia.

Of the objectives of the National Scheme was for the Boards:

- (e) to facilitate access to services provided by health practitioners in accordance with the public interest

Although, there has been a lot of effort expended in the rigorous assessment of OTDs little effort has been expended in assisting them to achieve the required level of English language skills. By expecting OTDs to achieve English language proficiencies higher than local Australian-born doctors and then exempt many who come from “White” countries was not in the spirit of the National Scheme. Now the Committee wants to know why there is a shortage of OTDs. Now the Committee knows as the national Boards of AHPRA failed to carry out a needs analysis to understand what level of English language proficiency is required for each Board.

Their interpretation of the Act has locked out thousands of OTDs from working in profession for which they trained for.

Since 1 July 2010, the following 10 professions have been regulated under the National Scheme:

- chiropractors
- dental practitioners (including dentists, dental hygienists, dental prosthetists and dental therapists)
- medical practitioners
- nurses and midwives
- optometrists
- osteopaths
- pharmacists
- physiotherapists
- podiatrists
- psychologists

From 1 July 2012, the following four health professions will be included in the National Scheme:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health practitioners
- Chinese medicine practitioners
- medical radiation practitioners
- occupational therapists

A FOI request was made to AHPRA and a large number of documents were made available, which are all listed in Appendix 2, and it was hoped that some of the relevant information could be included

in this submission. All documents requested were related to the reasons for the decision by the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency requiring overseas practitioner applicants to have minimum levels of English proficiency based upon a minimum score of 7 in each component of the IELTS academic module, OET or specified alternatives, with the exception of Pharmacy which requires a minimum score of 7.5.

A comprehensive list of all documents, which are hyperlinked, may be located at <http://www.ahpra.gov.au/About-AHPRA/Freedom-of-Information-and-Privacy/Disclosure-Log-2010/Disclosure-Number-1.aspx> or in APPENDIX 2 in this Submission.

David Ingram, one of the most senior developers of the IELTS test, warned about using the IELTS test for purposes for other than what it was designed for and specifically mentioned the use of the test for medical practitioners (D. Ingram, 2005).

Where the test is used for other purposes (e.g., as a measure of general language ability for immigration purposes, as a measure of proficiency in vocational contexts or, still worse, as a test of the English language ability of native speaking medical practitioners wishing to work in Britain), obviously the test becomes even further removed from real-life and so the gap between the test and real-life is wide, i.e., authenticity is low. In addition, even though IELTS presents its results in terms of simple performance-related scales, the actual outcomes of the Listening and Reading tests are translated onto the scale with its performance descriptions, not by matching observed behaviour with the descriptors but by a statistical or distributional process, i.e., the sub-tests are statistically matched for difficulty with previous versions of the test and cut-off scores are assigned for each proficiency level in order to obtain the same distribution of results as has been established over the life of IELTS.

What becomes more disturbing is that the whole process of requiring OTDs to prove their English language proficiencies using tests which are of questionable value, and the test is directed at OTDs who come from non-White nations, is not to facilitate their entry into their chosen profession, but to exclude them.

The reason why AHPRA places such importance upon English language proficiency of OTDs is that AHPRA believes that there is a connection between being successful as a doctor and high abilities in the use of the English language. They do not say that directly but hide it behind the statement that high English language proficiency protects the public. Most people would agree that experience and skills may rate even higher but that is for the rational person to think about.

Once again, Ingram has something to say about the use of the IELTS test for predictive purposes (D. Ingram, 2005)

Consequently, it is difficult, if not impossible, to reliably relate language test results to real-life abilities through predictive studies no matter how adequate the test design might be. What studies there are tend to illustrate the relatively low correlation between results on tests such as IELTS and TOEFL and subsequent success rates in academic study, for instance.

This whole process of OTDs proving their English language proficiency, which is costly and distressing to many of OTDs residing in Australia, is simply a sham, a farcical process.

### **Short case studies of individuals to appreciate the skills Australia is losing**

The Committee is asked to allow some indulgence about including personal stories of OTDs and trained nurses as these will give the Committee an appreciation how the pervasive use of English language proficiency tests are and how they exclude thousands of professionally trained people from working in their chosen field. Sadly, they become invisible to society as they do not complain because they have a reasonable fear, based on their homeland experiences, that they will be severely punished for speaking out. Furthermore, many think that they are the only ones with the English language proficiency problem. More so, when one has attempted the English test ten, twelve or fifteen times and more.

The Committee needs to hear the narratives of these individuals so that they can appreciate that Australia has an unfair policy, which does not improve the living conditions of Australians, but helps the professions maintain monopoly power in their profession. Their stories are pleas for help as they have no one else to turn to. Once rejected there is no independent appeal possible except to turn to the same people who rejected them in the first place. It is doubtful that any of these organisations will admit to a mistake.

Not only OTDs find that they are being excluded from the medical professions for which they were trained for by the use of impossibly high English language demands, but who possess an unblemished work history. There are dentists, veterinary doctors, chiropractors, etc. who are being unfairly excluded.

The Committee should not think that it applies to newly arrived migrants as it also applies to people who have lived here 40 years or more. Proof of English language proficiency with the use of the IELTS test is now being demanded of naturalised Australians and permanent residents. This makes a mockery of naturalised Australians having equality with Australian-born citizens. In some countries such as the USA, this would be unacceptable and unlawful.

There are plans afoot to introduce stringent English language tests for all professionals, except those from White nations, when existing doctors have to re-register. For example, MARA makes no secret of this. This has enraged many registered migration agents who know that they are being discriminated against and that they could not pass the hopelessly high IELTS scores. One registered Australian citizen, who was born in Greece and lived in Australia for 40 years, is angry that he may have to sit for the IELTS test and need to obtain seven in all bands when he has to re-register, if he wants to continue being a migration agent. He had worked in the Immigration Department for 25 years and now is a registered migration agent but will lose his registration as he does not believe that he can achieve the high demands of the IELTS test. In fact, most migration agents were born overseas and many of them will not be able to pass the planned English language requirements.



MARA now recognises that they have a problem on their hands, but as we shall see later that has not deterred them from denying registration for qualified migration agents on constructive grounds.

#### **Measures to raise English language standards**

An important recommendation was made to improve the English language standards of the profession by requiring that those who apply for initial and repeat registration prove they have a prescribed level of English language proficiency. This follows concerns regarding the capacity of all registered migration agents to communicate with a standard of English that would result in a consistent high level of service for consumers. Registered migration agents deal with complex legislation and often present complex submissions when representing their clients.

On 1 January 2010 a higher standard of English proficiency was introduced for initial registration applicants. Significant notice had been provided by the former MARA that this provision would be introduced. The Office of the MARA re-affirmed that this provision would be implemented and provided additional information on equivalencies. The Office of the MARA wrote to stakeholders in September 2009 and updated the relevant information on the website in October 2009.

From 1 January 2010 all initial registration applicants needed to demonstrate a score of seven in the academic version of the IELTS, up from the previous standard of six. Equivalent requirements were also determined that enable initial registration applicants to evidence their ability to meet the requirement.

The new policy has been administered fairly and flexibly, and where necessary applicants have been given additional opportunities to provide evidence of their English language proficiency. In 2009–10, 171 applicants were subject to the requirements, and none was refused due to the higher standard.

The Office of the MARA is aware that there is concern from some sectors in the profession about the recommendation to extend the higher English language standards to existing registered migration agents. An impact study on the increased English language requirement was commenced in June 2010. The information obtained through the study will be used to inform transition arrangements for the implementation of the recommendation.

(Office of the MARA Annual Report 2009-2010, p.15)

The claim that ‘In 2009–10, 171 applicants were subject to the requirements, and none was refused due to the higher standard.’ does not match with the rejection of an applicant who is discussed below and whose case is still not resolved, so technically it may be correct to say that he had been “not refused” since April 2009. One wonders how many other unresolved cases MARA is still handling.

In all of the discussions about English language proficiency, no one supplies any proof that it does improve the profession generally. The uses of English language tests were supposedly to increase English language skills of the profession, but in the absence of any proof that it does, it has a salient effect. It is a rejection of Australia’s multiculturalism by bureaucrats, who have no authority to do so and who are abusing their powers by implementing such policies. Furthermore, it was designed to weed out non-White OTDs.

Finally, FECCA (Federation of Ethnic Communities Councils of Australia), after a long time of doing nothing, has finally realised what the current trends are leading to, and is now trying to reclaim lost ground.

## **Reclaim Multiculturalism!**

### **In Support of a National Multicultural Agenda for all Australians**

We, the people of Australia, live in one of the most diverse countries in the world.

Almost one in four Australians were born overseas and up to half of all Australians (45 per cent) were either born overseas or have one or both parents born overseas. As a nation we speak over 300 languages, come from over 200 ancestries and practise more than 100 religions.

Australia's last multicultural policy expired in 2006. Currently there is a policy void in terms of a national multicultural agenda for all Australians.

A multicultural policy is not just about vulnerability, population growth, migration numbers and economic need. It is about managing relationships between communities and people in Australia to achieve harmony and maximise the quality of life of all Australians. It recognises that human beings are more than economic resources and that culture is integral to their well being.

**A National Multicultural Agenda defines the terms of relationships between different cultural communities. It proposes equal dialogue between them to arrive at principles of access, equity and social justice. Through this, it delivers equality in the public arena and social cohesion for all Australians.**

We seek the reinstatement of a National Multicultural Agenda that will address the current Australian reality which is one of increasing diversity.

The National Multicultural Agenda will promote the creation of an inclusive Australian identity which can be owned by all Australians, regardless of their culture or race.

The National Multicultural Agenda identifies a role for all Australians and a specific role for government as the leader in establishing a national vision to enable this action.

We ask the government for renewed political and social commitment to multicultural Australia as an overarching national policy of Australia.

Now, perhaps more than ever, this commitment is needed.

(<http://www.fecca.org.au/PDF/reclaimmulticulturalism.pdf>)

One word of warning for governments who continue to promote discriminatory racial practices, is that each time the public get wind of cases where people are being unfairly treated on racial or cultural grounds, the general public feel the outrage and act accordingly with the ruling government feeling the backlash at the next election, if not before. The public know more than the government and their policymakers.

There are many example of this and one example, not generally known was the case of Mrs Freer (Robertson, Hohmann, & Stewart, 2005)

Martin writes, as a prelude to comment on the government's severe defeats in the March 1937 constitutional referenda and in the May 1937 Gwydir by-election: 'the extent of the damage which the Freer case caused the government can scarcely be exaggerated'.... However, contemporary commentators saw the government's conduct towards her as an important ingredient in these failures.

Many governments have discovered, often too late, that the Australian public do understand the meaning of a 'fair go'. When the Australian public discover that capable OTDs are currently working as swimming pool cleaners, farm labourers and as baggage handlers, one will feel their outrage and hear the lame explanations of why this has happened. The refrain will be that 'we are protecting the public' There has been no recorded death caused by OTDs who supposedly have low English language proficiencies, but there have been many deaths and serious health problems due to the shortage of doctors throughout Australia.

**Narrative One – A Letter from an OTD from Buenos Aires (Ophthalmologist) living in Australia**

I am a Permanent Resident of Australia proudly applying to my citizenship this October of 2011.

I had been Medical Doctor since 1987, when I successfully finished my Medical School as a top 7 student with a special certificate awards as one of the brightest student of 1987. The University of Buenos Aires, where I underwent my medical carrier, enjoys high level of prestigious and excellence. Established in 1824 in the earliest time of the independence from Spain, is the oldest Medical School in Latin America. It was the home of three Nobel Prizes: Bernardo Alberto Houssay in 1947, Luis Federico Leloir in 1970 and Cesar Milstein in 1984. According to this reach background of my medical school is that my qualification is accepted in several countries such as Spain where I am registered as well as a Doctor.

Once finished my degree, I started from 1988 to 1994 my training and education in a Residency system in the main public hospital rehabilitation in Argentina, obtaining at the end of this period my first postgraduate degree in as Specialist in Ophthalmology. At the same time I underwent my second postgraduate degree in Occupational and Environmental Medicine finishing it in 1996. Being one of the few professional in joint both specialties Occupational Ophthalmology.

In the public system, I completed different stages of development. From Resident 1988 to 1994, to medical staff from 1994 to 2005, finishing as a Chairman of the Department of Teaching, Education and Research and Chairman of the Committee of Occupational and Environmental Medicine from 2005 to 2007 when I decided to migrate to Australia.

As a teacher from 1997 to 2007, I taught in several courses of Occupational Medicine in my specific field of Occupational Ophthalmology, being speaker in Seminars, Congress around the world. Moreover, I represented Argentina in the International Committee of Work and Vision of the International Commission on Occupational Health (ICOH) from 2003 to 2007 when I decided to migrate to Australia.

Once in Australia in 2007, I tried to give the country my 22 years of experience in my medical field from the first day. I underwent courses of English to improve my communication skills at Victoria University from October 2007 to June 2008 (Certificate III ESL) and from July 2008 to December 2008 (Certificate IV ESL Further Studies). The only barrier which I should overcome would be the proficiency English test. Thus, in the 28th of February 2009 I sat in the IELTS test.

Unfortunately I obtained below Band 7 of the AMC requirement for instance Listening Band 5.5, Reading Band 6, Writing Band 6, Speaking Band 8, Overall Band 6.5.

Frustrated for my first failed exam in my life, I decided to intent with the other proficiency test accepted for AMC, The Occupational English Test (OET). I sat for this test 2nd of May 2009 obtained below Band B of the AMC requirement. Listening Band D, Reading Band B, Writing Band D, Speaking Band C. As the OET is made and managed by Centre for Adult Education (CAE) I decided to take its bridging course with the security of being taught by the same group that made this test. Unfortunately , we were 18 foreign doctors in this course which ran from July 2009 to November 2009 full time 9 am to 15 pm Monday to Friday. Only two of 18 OTDs could pass this exam. It was incredible, we were studying full time in the centre where the exam was made and only 12% passed it. I obtained Band B in Listening, Band A in Reading, Band C in Writing, and Band B in Speaking. I tried to appeal my writing result but I was not allowed to do that according the rules of the test.

I sat again for OET 13<sup>th</sup> February 2010, with a worse result of Listening Band C, Reading Band B, Writing Band C, and Speaking Band B.

I was totally frustrated and understood that it was important to have a good English language proficiency, but I have to pay another \$548 for a new test. It was not important to study for this test. The most important was being able to pay again for the test, only a commercial issue that delay experienced OTDs to put in action in the medicine workforce in a country with a shortage of doctors.

Today, because of my difficult economical situation, I am working as a pool lifeguard. I had applied for about 45 different close fields, such as Injury Management Advisor, Employment Case Manager, I was rejected for being overqualified for the position. The answer in each case was the same: "we are looking for tertiary qualification you are overqualified for this".

I am really disappointed with this situation. Firstly, because I cannot develop my usefulness skills of 22 years as a Doctor. Secondly, because my new country's lack of doctors lose professionals who could help in areas of need. Finally, I am working in an area which could be occupied for another person with lesser qualifications.

I have reached the stage where I have exhausted my savings and I am virtually now broke.

**(Name withheld)**

### **Comment**

It appears to be a conflict of interests that an organisation holding responsibly for a high-stakes test can also be delivering training courses for people to pass such tests. Candidates, not unreasonably, would expect the CAE to advise them the best way to pass, and that would be the motivation why people would sign up and do the training course with them.

The same conflict of interests apply to the different organisations who test candidates in the IELTS test. They teach, test and then use the scores to assess the candidates' English language proficiency to enter their university.

### **Another doctor misses out**

In order to work as a doctor in the UK, a Thai candidate who sat for IELTS (the International English Language Testing System) needed a minimum score of 7.0 in each skill area.

Though the doctor got an overall band score of 7.5, he only got 6 for speaking. This meant he had to take the exam again. His outstanding band scores in the other skill areas (two 8s and a 7.5) suggested he should have done better than 6 in speaking.

The doctor was puzzled as to why his speaking test result was so low. I was, too, as his spoken English seemed better than average. His grammar was excellent, he could express his ideas and feelings well, he appeared to have a wide vocabulary, and he spoke fluently.

While he was talking about the preparation he'd done for the test, the doctor's problem became clear. He mentioned that a friend in the USA had told him the following: "In the speaking test, speak slowly to be understood by the examiner. Pay careful attention to your pronunciation. To help your ideas be understood, you should also keep your language simple by using simple words. Finally, keep your sentences short, and don't give long answers."

Unfortunately, his friend gave him poor advice. It was also similar to incorrect advice I've often seen on the Internet. [http://www.idp.co.th/IELTS/A\\_SeekGoodSpeakingTestAdvice.aspx](http://www.idp.co.th/IELTS/A_SeekGoodSpeakingTestAdvice.aspx)

### **Narrative Two – Egyptian doctor unable to obtain registration**

A person living in Australia was the classmate of the person described in Narrative One and who had completed the OET test eight times.

He was understandably distressed that he was expected to prove English language proficiency which is higher than that of other Australian doctors and resented those doctors who were exempted from proving their English proficiency.

He made it quite clear that he believes, and his friends also concur with him, that the English language proficiency policy is a racist-driven policy.

Despite my pleadings to provide me with details anonymously, I have heard nothing more from him. In my conversation with him he felt that if he spoke up that he will suffer some form of retribution.

In my experience, most injustices are just kept quiet as many of the people would prefer to suffer in silence, and live in hope that they could pass a test which is weighed against them succeeding.

### **Narrative Three**

#### **Australia's own Cultural revolution –a qualified doctor now earns a living being a farmer**

Hi ....

I am a registered nurse in India I have three years experience from hospital as a registered nurse. I am here about 2 years and I tried to get registration but I have not get yet because of the IELTS requirement of 7 x 4 bands.

But now just a 2 weeks ago I became aware about that if any international nurse completed their secondary education in English they do not need IELTS requirement. I also met some people who are in medical field but they unable to get registered here and they can't work in their field because of IELTS.

There so many stories of other peoples as well that they are experienced and qualified but because of IELTS they also can't register here. I met one person who is qualified doctor in their country here he is working on a farms as he cannot register here and unable to work in his field because of the IELTS requirements.

i also met some people who sat for the IELTS test more than ten times but they unable to reach their score. They keep getting a minimum of 7 in three bands but get knocked back by getting one band 6.5, but it is always a different band they get 6.5 in.

Thanks Cheers

### **Narrative Four – OTD who asked that not even his/her origins be mentioned**

I want to tell my experience and I would prefer not to identify my national background. I have been trying to pass IELTS and OET for 6 years and, while I have now passed I do not want to do anything that might jeopardise my future.

I passed the OET on my first attempt six years ago gaining As and Bs in all 4 subtests, but by the time I had prepared for, and passed, the AMC's MCQ and the Clinical Exam my OET results had lapsed. At that time I was also offered a hospital position.

For the last three years I presented 8 times at OET tests to try and gain A or B in all 4 subtests at the one sitting, spending over \$10,000 in application fees and preparation course fees.

My husband made just enough for our family to live on. In the last few years I supplemented this by acting as a clinical tutor for other IMGs who were preparing for the AMC Clinical Exam.

I also sat the IELTS test five times before I was successful.

I would not wish anyone to go through the experience I had.

**Narrative Five - A nurse living in Australia for 33 years**

Dear .....

I have a query regarding the IELTS test; I sat the test on the 8th of September with the following results;

reading	7
listening	7.5
writing	6.5
speaking	9
Overall band score	7.5

With these results I will not be able to register as a Div 11 nurse.

I am about to finish my course in December (with excellent results so far) and I feel disgusted that a VET-Assess test, an interview to get into the course, and the completion of a Cert. 111 course at Vic. Uni. does NOT prove that my English is adequate!

Where does it end? I am 53 years old, born and educated in the Netherlands, have lived in Australia for 32 years, been married to an Englishman for 33 years and only speak English. I was a Government-funded migrant in 1978 and therefore was screened for my English language skills to check if my English was adequate. (Yes, the Australian Government paid for our migration!)

I can fully understand the motives for the implementation of the IELTS test; I myself have been very annoyed at times whilst working as a PCA in the aged care industry and trying to understand a hand-over conducted by a nurse whose English is hard to understand.

I found the IELTS test quite easy, but as you don't get any feed-back about results I have no idea where I went wrong. An essay and report are written in long hand; my handwriting is slow but very neat. Perhaps I failed on word count or I should have spent big money to do a course regarding this test so at least you know if there is a certain format you have to follow whilst writing an essay or report.

I am flattered that with this score I can apply for study at Oxford University.

I am now eager to see how long it will take for the AHPRA to realise that the minimum score of a 7 in all subjects seems a little ambitious for a humble Div 11 nurse.

I hope that the ANF will argue these unrealistic expectations!  
(P.S. I just ran a spell check and so far not one mistake!)

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I am now eager to see how long it will take for the AHPRA to realise that the minimum score of a 7 in all subjects seems a little ambitious for a humble Div 11 nurse.

I hope that the ANF will argue these unrealistic expectations!  
(P.S. I just ran a spell check and so far not one mistake!)

Please help us!

With regards ...

(Name Withheld)

## Narrative Six - A nurse graduate and Australia citizen

Dear .....

I am a nursing student, I am currently doing my certificate IV in nursing course at RMIT in the state of Victoria, and I will finish our study in November. In July of this year, the federal nursing board ( AHPRA ) adopted a new policy which states that all registrant who received their secondary education overseas must sit a English test before they can lodge an application for Enrolled nurse registration, those born in Australia or received their secondary education in Australian will not be required to do the test.

I felt that I am affected by the policy and also this policy is an apparent discriminatory policy to those Australian citizens born overseas or received their secondary education overseas, Australian permanent resident who received their secondary education overseas. as to my own case, I cannot pursue my study for Bachelor of nursing because I need Div2 nursing registration for Div 1 course, and what even worse is, this policy will put me to unemployment and deprive me of the chance for further education which is my basic human right. On the contrary, Australian born or secondary educated students will not have that hurdle on their career path.

As to my case, I have no issue with the Board about sitting an English test, the centre of this issue is, and I need equal treatment for registration.

First of all nursing is a profession with its own terminologies most of which are originated from Latin words or Greek words, IELTS is a general English Test which means a registrant with a good score of IELTS does not mean a registrant can be a good nurse. Also if they want us to sit the test, all of us must sit the test for nursing language no matter where you were born or where you received your secondary education and the nursing board should organize the test for the registrant. As naturalized Australian citizen or permanent resident we can refuse to sit the test holds by the British cultural council because we pay tax to Australian government. Therefore after the nursing course all of us must sit a professional English test holds by an Australian organization rather than a British organization.

Secondly, I can understand that by adopting this policy, the aim is to protect the public, but my question is, can we make sure Australian year 12 study is enough to cope with the nursing language. After received Australian year 12 educations, does that mean the quality and literacy of all students are consistent? To protect the public can not be an excuse for adopting cultural discriminatory policy against registrant born overseas or received secondary education overseas! Equally speaking, the best option to protect the public is to test our nursing language ability no matter what is your race, what is your colour, what is your origin and what is your cultural background! The best evidence is, before we can get an offer of this course, we must sit a literacy test and they need to be aware of the truth that it does not mean the examinee who received their secondary education in Australia can get higher score than examinee who was born overseas. As a result, all of us need s to sit a professional English language test after finishing this course. Moreover, if we need so sit the test, for re-registration or renewal, and nursing educator whose secondary education that was not received in Australia, all applicants born overseas or received their secondary education overseas must sit a professional English test as well!

Thirdly, one of the camouflages they utilized as an excuse for discrimination is, the policy will protect the public. But before the adoption of this policy, how many registrants got their registration without doing the test? How did you protect the public before the policy took its effect on July 1<sup>st</sup> 2010?

Another issue is, we as a multi cultural country, our patient came from all over the world who speaks different languages, not all patient can speak English properly, what even worse is, some of our

patient are suffering from dementia and their bilingual ability is impaired. If the patient needs nursing service at 3 a.m. in the morning but unfortunately, they cannot speak English or they are suffering from cognitive impairment, how do we protect our public under such a circumstance?

Fourthly, this policy affects my life financially as well, because I have to pay 300-500 to sit a test and if I failed, I have to re-sit but I must wait for another seat for months. That means I cannot apply for the graduate program holds by some hospitals for Enrolled nurse because the more favoured registrant can apply straight away and I must sit the test first and wait for 3 weeks or more to get the result and what even worse is, if we didn't pass, we have to wait for months to re-sit.

Last but not the least, nursing board, made a discriminatory policy which put us into two categories and one is more favoured and the other is less favoured, setting up an intangible apartheid in our society by abusing the power and authority which was granted by the public. Those who was born in Australia or received secondary education in Australian can get registration straight away and another category is inferior therefore the inferior group must pay 500 \$ to sit a test. What even worse is, the registration now will take 3-4 months so let me put it this way, after I finish my course I need 2 months preparation for the test and then go to sit the test , if I failed at the first time, I need to wait for 1-2 months to get a seat for re-do. That will mean I will stay out of work for at least half a year just because I am inferior to the group of people who was born or received secondary education here.

The course I am doing now is a full time course so I don't have much time to work since the start of this course, the discriminatory policy will add up to my financial burden and I don't have money to pay for an expensive exam which will cost me 300- 500\$. It is also not my fault for the fact that my mom gave birth to me overseas! What makes me confused is why they don't give me notice of this policy so at the very beginning I can choose to do other course in TAFE. That will save the educational resource, money of tax payer and my own time and effort.

It is also necessary to mention, I decide to do this course after I attended a career expo held by Victorian government. The government official encourages me to do the course and join the work force. But now, another governmental organization makes a discriminatory policy to new migrant in Australia and did their best to keep new migrants and naturalized Australian out of work!

In accordance to the statement above, we hope that in Australian society naturalized Australian can be treated equally and have the same opportunity for training employment and education.



## Who is IDP Australia, IELTS Australia, British Council and Cambridge ESOL?

Most organisations and individuals believe that the IELTS test is owned and operated in Australia by a non-profit organisation, either IELTS Australia or IDP Australia. People are surprised to discover that Australian universities, that insist on IELTS test scores for admission by international students, also indirectly own the test through a fifty per cent shareholding in IDP Australia. Most of these universities also offer a fee-for-service for training courses for the IELTS test.

IELTS Australia is owned, in turn, by IDP Australia, which is a 50:50 partnership with the listed company, Seek Ltd. IDP Australia is rather coy about publicly mentioning their commercial partner at all, or if they do, they refer to their partner as an on-line recruitment organisation.

Many candidates for the IELTS test and OET believe that if they enrol in, and pay substantial fees for a training course offered by the same organisation who deliver the test, will have a good chance being successful in the test. The narrative by the first OTD explains how shocked he was to fail.

How many AHPRA National Boards are aware of the commercial background of the IELTS testing system? Would they continue to trust the IELTS tests now that they know who really owns the testing system in Australia and that the IELTS tests are a commercial business?

In a recent letter, their total ownership was not even mentioned to, when they wrote:

**IELTS is jointly developed, managed and administered by the University of Cambridge (acting by the University's international exams group), the British Council (the UK's international cultural relations body) and IELTS Australia (ultimately half owned by 38 Australian universities).**

The involvement of Seek Ltd was deliberately omitted and recently was trying to purchase a further 10 per cent of shares from IDP Australia, giving them a majority ownership in IELTS Australia. As a public company, Seek Limited has a fiduciary duty to maximise their profits. Seeks involvement in the IELTS testing system gives one a good understanding that there must excellent profits in their test

Why is IELTS so trusted by so many organisations?

The extent to why IELTS is trusted so much is partly due to whom the owners originally were so that is why IDP Australia does not want to disclose their true partners. As long as people believe that the IELTS test is fully owned by the universities, the IELTS test carries with it a halo effect, where one feels positive about Australian universities and this positive feeling spills over into one's feeling about the IELTS test. Today the universities own just 50 per cent and the listed company Seek Limited, who is extensively involved in the education sector, owns the balance.

Another surprise for many is that two of the three partners of IELTS are not Australian companies.

They are British companies, being the British Council and the University of Cambridge ESOL Examinations (Cambridge ESOL).

It is useful to look at the Charter of the British Council says what they are:

The Charter is our constitution. It sets out the objects for which we exist, namely '[to] advance any purpose which is exclusively charitable and which shall

- promote a wider knowledge of the United Kingdom;
- develop a wider knowledge of the English language;
- encourage cultural, scientific, technological and other educational co-operation between the United Kingdom and other countries;
- or otherwise promote the advancement of education'.

([http://www.britishcouncil.org/new/about-us/how-we-are-run/folder\\_how-we-are-run/who-we-are](http://www.britishcouncil.org/new/about-us/how-we-are-run/folder_how-we-are-run/who-we-are))

Furthermore, and despite the claims to the contrary by IDP Australia, that the British Council is the United Kingdom's international cultural relations body, the British Council's website makes it clear that they operate 'at arm's length from the UK government and it does not carry out its functions on behalf of the Crown.' ([http://www.britishcouncil.org/new/about-us/how-we-are-run/folder\\_how-we-are-run/who-we-are/](http://www.britishcouncil.org/new/about-us/how-we-are-run/folder_how-we-are-run/who-we-are/))

In describing who they are, the British Council emphasises its British loyalties:

All British Council communications should be constructed with our purpose in mind: to build mutually beneficial relationships between the UK and other countries and to increase appreciation of the UK's creative ideas and achievements.

Our purpose statement aims to sum up why we exist – what we do and why we do it – in one simple sentence. It ensures that our stakeholders see the value of investing in us.

Our brand reflects our purpose.

We build engagement and trust for the UK through the exchange of knowledge and ideas between people worldwide. © British Council 2008

(<http://www.britishcouncil-identity.org/explore-purpose.htm>)

The other British partner is University of Cambridge ESOL Examinations (Cambridge ESOL) and their mission statement is

'To provide language learners and teachers in a wide variety of situations with access to a range of high quality international exams, tests and teaching awards, which will help them to achieve their life goals and have a positive impact on their learning and professional development experience.'

(<http://www.cambridgeesol.org/what-we-do/index.html>)

It is claimed that Cambridge ESOL is a not-for-profit department of the University of Cambridge and part of the Cambridge Assessment group with the trading name of Cambridge Assessment is the trading name of UCLES. They promote themselves providing

'exams and tests covering a huge range of subjects and levels. All are respected for their quality, fairness and positive educational impact.'

They further claim that

Our exams are developed on the basis of a long-term process of academic and practical research. We do this so candidates can be confident our exams will be accurate, fair, reliable and relevant, and teachers know our exams will help their students achieve their full potential. We design our exams to encourage learners to develop the skills they need to use English effectively in the real world.

(<http://www.cambridgeesol.org/what-we-do/index.html>)

All the partners of the IELTS testing system have now been identified and it would be quite a stretch to assume that the IELTS testing system has a lot of Australian input or relevance.

The IELTS test has been principally designed to promote British English. However, some other dialects may be used but it is only to put the "I" (International) in the IELTS name. The different English dialects used come only from the exempted "White" nations

This goes to the heart of the problem on why we have so many OTDs who cannot be professionally recognised. The English dialect they have learnt is not a British one and they are penalised by not being able to be examined in their dialect such as Indian English, Chinese English, and so on. To take away someone's language is to also take away his or her cultural identity.

### **Confessions of a Chilean journalist and how she sat for her IELTS test**

It was 4 years ago when I first heard the word IELTS. I was in Chile reviewing a whole bunch of University Brochures that were handled to me at the Live in Australia Fair which is held yearly in my country to attract Chilean students to perform some studies in the Australian shores. The IELTS was mentioned as the professional tool that was meant to assess and validate my level of English in front of, in this case, Melbourne Uni. To get into the program I wanted, this is the Master in Arts (Global Media Communications) the School of Culture and Communication of Melbourne Uni required me to have an overall score of 7.

When gathering the evidence required to lodge my application at Melbourne Uni, I had a choice, I could choose between the TOEFL and the IELTS, to measure and prove my English proficiency level. My choice, as many outside of Australia, was the TOEFL. TOEFL is the American test. Chile is in South America, and as we know, South America is the backyard of the States. My contact with the English language through all my life in my Spanish Speaking country was 95% of the time American.

Is common for us to see American shows on TV, watch Hollywood movies at the cinema listening to the American English and reading the Spanish subtitles. Most of the English teachers in Chile speak with American accent and teach American grammar. On top of that, my own learning experience with the English language was a mix of American songs and American movies, and some grammar and structure lesson I picked from school. For these, and some other reasons I would have much rather gave the TOEFL instead of the IELTS. But I didn't have too much of a choice. In countries like mine, where the demand for these tests is not so high, you only have 1 chance every two months to sit the test, and wait 3 weeks for the results. Apply for visas, unis and organise you moving out of your country is a big task that involves lots of paper work and lots of deadlines so basically you just sit whatever test is not going to push you application for another year.

That's what I had to do. When I went to enrol my TOEFL (3 month before my deadline with the results) I was informed that USA had suspended the test for the next couple of months. I went to the British council then to enrol to sit the IELTS. That's when I learnt that there are two types of test, the academic and the general knowledge; I learnt as well that I need the academic form of the test so I can apply to uni. This was the first time I learn that the IELTS was an international measure system and that Cambridge University was in charge of running it. I was left with the impression that this test was an internationally recognised benchmark for English proficiency. That it was going to be useful in my life to get jobs (even in my country) because it will establish my level of proficiency in English. That explanation justified very well the big bill I had to pay to sit it. "Is and investment in your future" my dad said to me when I have to handle my monthly pay to the British Council, to secure my seat.

I asked a lot of questions, I was very scared of losing my month pay along with my application to Melbourne Uni. I tried to buy a book from them to prepare my exam, but they did not have books left, it was ok, because I could still acquire some material from the English bookshops in the posh side of the city. I drove 45 minutes to find the bookshop, and pay a third of my next month wage to get a book that mentioned IELTS as some of the test it would help me prepare for. I was very lost in the bookshop and no one seemed to know anything about this test, so I got the book that had a the cds, because the listening band is the most scary, since you might be exposed to a lot of texts and written English but is difficult to expose yourself to daily English conversations in a non English speaking country.

I learnt English mostly by myself and some classes I had in primary school, lucky me, my partner was a native English speaker, and on top of that was a teacher of English literature. She had sat the TOEFL a couple of times and was decided to train me for the IELTS. Every night I would come to her place after work and do IELTS exercises for 1.5 hour. Every night for a month, I listen to the cds and answered the questions, fill up the gaps, and complete the maps. Every night I would read a sample text and answer the questions and determine if the information asked was false, true or plainly not given (it took me a long time to understand the "not given" option since I've never been ask to determine that from a text before). Every day I would have to speak to my partner in English for 25 minutes and talk about, my favourite person, favourite food, or my memories. She would make sure I use different tenses and prepare some sentences for me, that I have to say, hardly made sense in my head by that time. I was advice at the British council to look after my structure in writing: first paragraph introduction, second paragraph: idea number 1, third paragraph: idea number 2, fourth

paragraph conclusion. I also had to learn how to read mathematical graphs since as a journalist and a linguistics teacher I hardly came across them in the last 10 years.

I study for the test. Over that month I certainly didn't improve my English, on the contrary I could see myself being better at answering the questions and doing the exercises, but my understanding of the words, my vocabulary and my ability to speak and communicate hardly suffer any change, except for the eroded trust in myself. I've learnt how to answer questions in a way they did not make any sense to me, therefore, every day I thought my English was worse.

The test proves me wrong for a little bit. I've got very good results 8.5 in listening, 9 in reading, 7 in writing and in speaking. My overall score was an 8. I have no idea how they came into these results. I remember they saying at the British council that if your marks had 3 point of difference the result were going to be delayed because they needed to cross check with the other examinations.

My experience to sit the test in Chile was very nice: small room, only 50 applicants. The place was silent and warm. The examinations were serious and harsh but polite at the same time. It was a complete different experience to sit the test in Australia two years later.

I came to Australia in Feb. 2007 and realized quickly that my score of 8 on the IELTS meant absolutely nothing. I was isolated because of my language skills for at least 3 months. The everyday life Australian accent full of inaccuracies and inappropriacies was doing my head in. I had to re learn that the Australian don't think, they reckon stuff, they don't arrive but they rock up to places, and that perhaps is shorted to "paps", and perhaps it can also be replaced by "Pepsi". You don't go to a service station, but to a servo, and you don't work in hospitality but in "hospo". Police man are "Coppers" and friends are "mates" you don't say hello, but in exchange you say something like Good Day but you should not pronounce the good but just the g. Things that are not for real are "fair dinkum" and the multiplicity of forms to pronounce any word in Melbourne is subject to the multiplicity of ethnics and races and cultural backgrounds that inhabit this territory. I was ok understanding my teacher, but my classmates (who were not facing me when talking so I missed the body language) speak in all sorts of accents that I wouldn't have heard in my entire life: Indian accent, Chinese accent, Malay accent, Mexican accent, Argentinean accent, Arab accent, wog accent, British accent... my god, English was the reason for my isolation.

By the end of 2008 I finished my degree at Melbourne uni. But I wanted to stay so I started gathering papers for my visa application. The IELTS validity of only 2 years stroke me for the last time when I learn that my results were no longer valid to lodge a visa application, therefore I had to pay the 300 dollars (a bit less with the GST discount offered to migration candidates). I remember thinking, if I got a point over the benchmark needed two years ago, and I have been functioning full time in English for the last 2 years, submitting papers every month at uni, and even writing a minor thesis in the last year, held a job a work with colleagues and customer in English for the last two year, why do I have to prove again that I can actually understand and manage my life in English? My own answer to that question was easy, due to my South American third world background: is just bureaucratic paperwork that gives back some more money into the Australian system. Yes the answer makes sense in my third world head, but does not make any sense in the Australian Democracy where the right of citizens and consumers are guaranteed to be protected against injustice.

As I want to stay, and I've learn the best way is to follow the rules 24/7 so I did not complain, not even when I went to enrol my IELTS and discovered there were not dates available in Melbourne for the next 2 months. The whole paperwork for the visa and the TAFE application left me with no choice more than to wait, I could not afford to travel interstate or to NZ as I was suggested to do at migration offices to accelerate the process. So I pay and took three month off work to remain in Australia as a tourist in order to gain time to gather all my paperwork (specifically the IELTS).

When I finally did the test on May, the conditions of the examination were ridiculous. It was raining and it was a very cold morning. NMIT gym wasn't the warm and nice examination room I face in Chile. It was cold and noisy, over 600 candidates awaited to be sitted. I had to take my jacket and my beanie off according to the invigilators I could be hiding a secret camera to steal the test. I was familiar with these conditions since I worked casually as an IELTS invigilator in 3 tests during my first 3 months in Australia (great pay, half an

hour training and the chance to scream “put that pencil down” to a whole bunch of scared candidates that are holding their breath and putting their life’s on hold to await a positive results). I had no intention to cheat, but I was cold, very cold. For a South American person born and raised in the dessert, Melbourne cold humidity is hard to cope with. I shivered the entire test, the cold was very distracting for the listening part, in between my shivers and the construction taking place in the test centre I miss one question. That incident remind me that I was being measure against the test, so I was careful of concentrating as much as I could in the test and not in the cold loud space I was sitting it.

The speaking test was nice, I had my jacket on and was feeling warm again after the 2 hours I spend sitting in that cold gym. Though there was a big confusion on which room was the one where I had to do my speaking test, I remember walking all around the place asking people who were not able to give me an answer. Fortunately for me, found my test room right on time, had the conversation with the lady, got nervous of her writing down stuff in a blank paper while we were talking, though I’m not shy normally, to speak day to day nonsense to a complete stranger taking notes on your performance is quite stressful and as I have discovered can make you feel pretty self conscious.

I went to pick up my results the day my letter said I had to. When I arrive to the test centre there was no one there, but a sign that said they had some problems with the test, suspicious of plagiarism or something so we should wait for the result to come down on the mail. They did come, not long after that day. I remember taking a picture of the sign with my mobile phone just in case I had problems at school or migration because of the delay.

My score was fine. 8 in listening (probably that point is the question I missed in between the shivers and the jackhammer); I kept my 9 on reading (3 years of experience in semiotics and discourse analysis help). After writing 10 x 2500 words essays for Melbourne uni, 5 x 5000 words, and 1x minor thesis of 13.000 words, I kept the same 7 for writing that I scored in Chile 2 years before. But pulled up my speaking by 1.5 points (8.5). My overall remained the same, an 8. 1 point more that what I need to apply for visas, so the IELTS wash off my mind until I started my degree in teaching and learn the rules of assessment used in Australia, and realized the IELTS is very far away from them.

I have no idea why do I have the results I have, I haven’t receive any feedback that would make sense if the IELTS was stating what’s my level of English (“Band 8: Has fully operational command of the language with only occasional unsystematic inaccuracies and inappropriacies. Misunderstanding may occur in unfamiliar situations. Handles complex detailed argumentation well). But if this is an exam I have to sit every 2 years until I can trade my passport for an Anglo-Saxon passport, I deserve to get some kind of feedback, someone to tell me how can I improve, since I’ll have to pay for it next year again, I would like to get a better mark even if is just for the sake of beating my own score.

### **The Committee should ask why Australians are being forced to adopt a British English.**

There are two reasons why one can score higher scores if one adopts a British English dialect. Firstly, the National Boards of AHPRA do not understand what is involved in the IELTS test, and secondly, what are the English language needs of their professions. There have been a lack of any needs analysis by these Boards to understand what they require. To make matters worse, COAG, through AHPRA thinks that it is a smart move to have the same standards for each of the health professions.

The Boards also failed to apply a rigorous due diligence in checking on the suitability of the IELTS for their members and just accepted what they were offered. One even contacted a university who has a large IELTS testing centre for advice about whether they should set the score at 8 rather than 7. What “impartial” advice do you think the Board received? The told that ‘8 is better than 7, but 7 is OK’. Therefore, that organisation recommended 7.

The problem is not just with the national Boards, but academics may be reluctant to research the IELTS test, as all of Australia’s thirty-eight universities are shareholders of IDP Australia.

It has now been shown that IELTS is not an “Australian” test and there is no localisation of the IELTS test for Australian conditions. By insisting that all OTDs must obtain high IELTS scores, one is forcing a change of one’s identity and subverting their cultural identity.

Under what authority do Australian Boards have to insist that people change their identity within a multicultural society? Clearly, this would be a breach of one’s human rights and be discriminatory. The Committee needs to ask why we are resorting to social engineering to have people speak a British English.

Is British English just one dialect or are there many forms of British English dialects? One just has to view some of the British television programs to realise that there are hundreds of different accents and many are unintelligible to most Australian viewers. In many instances, viewers are reduced to switching on the subtitles to try to make sense of what is being said.

This then begs the question that if the English speakers used by IELTS can include Australians, Irish, Scots, American, as well as speakers with a Southern accent, why are Indian, Chinese, Sudanese, Dutch or other speakers missing? Listening to a listening test by Cambridge, an Australian speaker, with a broad accent, was describing peregrine falcons. One could not escape the feeling that the speaker was speaking with an exaggerated Australia accent, with a speaking speed, which was unrealistically high. One would expect a speaker, where providing explanations, would speak slower than normal, not at increased speed.

Another flaw in the IELTS test is why should a person who wants to use the test to migrate to Australia need to listen to a southern American, or Irish, accent. An Australian accent should be sufficient and relevant to Australia. So, one does not need the “I” in IELTS!

Furthermore, in a real-life environment, if the listener did not understand something, they would ask for clarification. In the IELTS test environment, the test is contrived and unrealistic as no one can ask any questions. Therefore, the best course of action is to guess the answer. One common complaint there is not enough time allowed for the listening test so for any distraction, which takes away some valuable time, penalises that student.

It appears that many students just turn up at the IELTS test centre without any preparation, so they are surprised when they find speakers are speaking with accents, which they have never experienced before. One student commented that she was surprised that they there were so many different English accents!

However, what happens when test material conflicts with the cultural background of the IELTS test candidate. Many students from certain cultures, such as China (probably many others) are taught from an early age not to say anything unless they can contribute to the conversation and then do poorly in the speaking component of the test.

Furthermore, are Indians, with their accents, disadvantaged? Why are Indian speakers not used in the listening test, as Indian English is older than Australian English?

**The skills shortage of professionally recognised OTDs is due to the high levels of scores which they have to achieve in their IELTS or OET tests**

How does the widespread usage of the IELTS test in Australia influence the current skills shortage? The short answer is because so many OTDs cannot achieve seven in all bands and it has been observed that just 2.4 per cent of IELTS test candidates can do it. They also have to do it at one sitting! Why does AHPRA insist that the IELTS test be completed in one sitting? Because IELTS tells them that. AHPRA has put in no input into the English language proficiency testing process. It is a classic case of the letting the 'tail wag the dog'.

The Committee must investigate why so many suitable OTDs are being rejected by subjecting them to a language test, which has not been independently verified by most, if any, organisations who use the IELTS system?

One may argue that the IELTS language test is essential for all OTDs, as all Australians should have a good command of occupational English. Only this makes sense if it has been found necessary to do so after a needs analysis has been carried out. There is no evidence that AHPRA has carried out a single needs analysis of the English language requirements for their professions. Their requirements are more of a wish list.

In the absence of any solid research by AHPRA Boards, they resort to simple prejudices and rationales. For example, the Acting Chair of the Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia, Dr Lynette Cusack RN, is quoted as saying that the Board believed the revised draft of the English language requirements reflected the feedback provided to date, while ensuring the standard supports the Board's core role of protecting the public. A call to the Australian Nursing Federation enquiring how many patients had suffered as the result of nurses having low English language skills was answered with the comment that they were not aware of any nurse being accused of professional misconduct due to their poor English language skills.

MARA, when deciding that minimum standards of English language proficiency were to be required for all new migration agents, they referred to anecdotal evidence about problems DIAC were having difficult in understanding letters from migration agents. One is unsure whether the comment is made on the basis that migration agents' clients were being disadvantaged, or that DIAC was annoyed by receiving mail, which was written in poor English. This would not be surprising to anyone who knew that most migration agents were born overseas. Furthermore, many staff of DIAC were also born overseas.

MARA decided to set minimum English language proficiency standards for new migration agents in consultation with the consortium of universities who deliver the Graduate Diploma in Migration Law and Practice (GCMLP) by using the IELTS test. No one saw any conflict of interests by having the universities who are shareholders of the IELTS test in Australia, also recommending the use of the test. Again, a lack of good governance by MARA

## **Has actions by DIAC also aggravated the OTD skills shortage?**

In Australia, the IELTS test has been applied to people who are not born or educated in Australia, but those people who come from such countries as U.K., Ireland, Canada, USA, and New Zealand, and in some instances, from South Africa are exempted. This is rather a curious exemption and it would be interesting to know whether it is justified on methodological grounds, or some form of prejudice. DIAC (Department of Immigration and Citizenship) quaintly refers to these countries as being countries with English 'native speakers'. Canada also has native French speakers.

In July 2007, DIAC (Department of Immigration and Citizenship) changed method of delivery of the GSM (General Skilled Migration) program. The justification for the changes in the program were based on a report written by three academics Bob Birrell, Leslyanne Hawthorne, and Sue Richardson, called "Evaluation of the General Skilled Migration Categories". Major changes were proposed and adopted in the English language requirements and a strong requirement was placed upon applicants to achieve minimum English requirements based upon the IELTS test. Nowhere in the evaluation report was the integrity of the IELTS test challenged and there was complete trust in the test.

They assumed that native English speakers possessed excellent English language skills and need not be tested, but this assumption has now been debunked. A recent Skills Australia publication (February 2010), "Workforce Futures—a National Workforce Development Strategy for Australia" (p.4) mentioned that:

Adult Language, Literacy, and Numeracy (LLN) skills are now recognised as fundamental to improved workforce participation, productivity, and social inclusion. However the 2006 Adult Literacy and Life Skills Survey indicates that 40 per cent of employed Australians and 60 per cent of unemployed Australians have a level of literacy below the accepted standard needed to work in the emerging knowledge-based economy.

This leads one to question how many local Australians could pass the IELTS test and achieve more than 7 in all bands. Surely, a sample of Australian-born should be tested and their result could be used as a control. It would be reasonable to assume that IELTS Australia has done this many times but will not release those results. The most likely reason is that Australians would probably do poorly in the IELTS test and once this is known, the scores would be lowered and more people will pass on the first attempt and IELTS Australia will not have as much business as before. Remember, IELTS is a commercial business not a benevolent society.

Harper (Harper, Prentice, & Wilson, 2011) referred to Birrell's paper as being provocative but also mentioned that another reason put forward by Bretag, that some international students had low English language proficiency standards because of plagiarism. The point being made here is that there are other reasons being suggested which differed to that of Birrell, but DIAC was happy to accept his Evaluation report.

However, it was Birrell's report opened the door for DIAC to discriminate against certain nationalities under the guise of applicants possessing good English language skills.

According to one migration agent, poorly:

John Findley, a veteran education counsellor and migration agent, said the new emphasis on superior English looked like an exercise in racial discrimination.

He likened it to the use of European language tests under the old White Australia policy.

"If English is not the first language - you may read non-white - it is unlikely the applicant will make the cut," Mr. Findley said.

He cited IELTS data showing that only native English speakers (41 per cent) had a double digit chance of scoring eight or higher.

(Lane, B. (November 17, 2010). Language rules lift bar for sector. The Australian, p.1)



DIAC would most likely deny that the language test still applies, but in their Fact Sheet 8 - Abolition of the 'White Australia' Policy claims:

Australia's current Migration Program allows people from any country to apply to migrate to Australia, regardless of their ethnicity, culture, religion or language, provided that they meet the criteria set out in law.

The dictation test was not repealed until 1959 when the *Immigration Restriction Act* and all later migration statutes were replaced by the *Migration Act* 1958 s 4(1) and Schedule – now s 3(1) and Schedule, with most of the ACT including did not come into operation until June 1959. This is not true, as the English language test is not applied equally to all people in Australia (Robertson et al., 2005).

The connection between English language proficiency tests and its use for migration, education and employment purposes and its supposed protection of the public, has been generally recognised by some people for what it really is; a form of apartheid. Before this comment is ridiculed, the history of the language and dictation tests found their genesis in South Africa (Robertson et al., 2005).

The 'White Australia Policy' and the dictation test under which it was infamously enforced provided central policy tools in the quest to control Australia's immigrant population from Federation in 1901 until well into the twentieth century. Based on similar legislation that had been enacted in Natal, and that had also been cloned in some of the Australian colonies, the test was widely recognised as 'merely a convenient and polite device ... for the purpose of enabling the Executive Government of Australia to prevent the immigration of persons deemed unsuitable because of their Asiatic or non-European race'.

Robertson, *et al.* pointed out that the dictation test was specifically designed to keep out 'coloureds' and 'Asians' and after a few years it became a very effective instrument of exclusion.

The dictation test, a key element of the Immigration Restriction Act 1901 (Cth) has always been associated with the question of race. It was administered to 'coloureds' and 'Asians' in order to have an apparently neutral reason to deport them. The last person to pass the test did so in 1909. It became 'foolproof', as it was designed to be: the applicant would be given the test in a language that their background firmly indicated they would not know and, upon failing, they would be told that the authorities could go on giving them tests in languages that they did not know, infinitely.

Exclusion was not to be directed only for coloureds and Asians as many years later, in a footnote by Robertson, *et al.*,

Geoff Woodley, a former Deportations Officer, interviewed in Alec Morgan (dir), *Admission Impossible* (film, 1992). The same documentary records that by then the medical examination involved covert racial screening; that, in the urgent quest for migrant workers after World War II, Immigration Minister Arthur Calwell broke an undertaking of non-discrimination to the UN High Commission for Refugees by ensuring that as few Jews as possible were selected from the European displaced persons camps; and that, into the 1950s, applicants were required to state whether they were 'Jewish' or 'Not-Jewish' and whether they had any Jewish ancestry back to their great-grandparents.

The point being made with the foregoing is not to browbeat the Committee about the historical background, but to show how policies can glibly be rationalised and then quietly become acceptable policy, but when subjected to detailed examination and legal challenges, the regulations and laws usually fall over.

The use of the IELTS and OET tests to "prove" the English language proficiency of OTDs would in all likelihood would fail in a legal challenge. What is so surprising is that this has not happened yet. As more information about the efficacy of these tests are made public and more people understand the complexity of these tests, as well as their limitations, their use and recognition will be dramatically reduced.

Significant statistical work has already been completed and we can examine the requirement for applicants to the teaching profession. People from non-exempt countries are expected to achieve a minimum of 7 in the IELTS test for reading and writing, and eight in each of the speaking and listening bands. *On the face of it*, one might say this looks reasonable, but when one considers my research results that just 2.4% of people can obtain a minimum of seven each band, only 1.6% are able to fulfil the teaching requirements. Of 10,000 people sitting for the IELTS test, only 160 would be eligible for teaching.

Of these 160 candidates, probably just one or two would be interested in teaching. Therefore under the current English language proficiency requirements there is no way teaching organisations will be able to fill their vacancies with immigrants.

This research will explain why professional organisations will be unable to prevent the future skills shortage which some say, has already arrived.

The Australian newspapers reported, "**Shortfall of 1.4m workers threatens pension age**" on November 17, 2009, but simply reported what most of us already know. The mining industry in Western Australia and Queensland has already drained most of the rest of Australia of tradespeople and the different disasters of cyclones, floods, and fires, so where will one find the tradespeople for the rebuilding of Australia.

**AUSTRALIA faces a potential skills shortfall equivalent to 1.4 million workers by 2025 unless the workforce participation rate increases, according to new research that recommends raising the retirement age and boosting skilled migration.**

The Workplace Futures report, to be presented to the Victoria Summit in Melbourne today, urges federal and state governments to lift barriers to older workers and disadvantaged groups participating in the workforce.

Despite predicting strong population growth based on the continuation of high birth and net migration rates, the paper warns the ageing population will mean a decline in workforce growth, exacerbating labour shortages to levels worse than between 2006 and 2008. The paper, prepared by the Victorian Employers Chamber of Commerce and Industry, says the shortfall in the state by 2025 could potentially be 440,000 workers, if retirement and migration rates remain at current levels. One of the authors, Darin Ritchie, said yesterday that if workforce trends did not change, the projected participation rate nationally in 2025 would drop from 65.2 per cent to 61.8 per cent. "To meet moderate levels of labour-demand growth, Australia's participation rate would need to be 68 per cent," he said. "This could potentially leave a shortfall of 1.4 million workers.

"To address this workforce deficit, Australia needs to raise the average retirement age, increase the workforce participation of disadvantaged groups, increase migration, or offset labour demand through productivity growth."

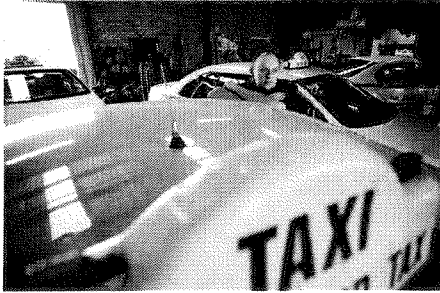
The forecasts are based on Australian Bureau of Statistics population growth projections of 1.6 per cent, jobs growth of 1.9 per cent, and an unemployment rate at 4.5 per cent. "The prominence of demographic change and skill shortages has recently been overtaken by the economic downturn of the last 12 months," the paper says. "With unemployment increasing over that period, it would be easy to assume we no longer have a labour or skills shortage problem. However, skills shortages still exist in many industries, and the reality of Australia's ageing workforce means we face a structural deficit of workers over the next 15 years."

(<http://www.theaustralian.com.au/politics/shortfall-of-14m-workers-threatens-pension-age/story-e6frgczf-1225798395249>)

There are indications that the skills shortage is already with us and has moved with the speed of cyclone Yasi.

## **Driver shortage for taxis as Indian student numbers fall**

Clay Lucas Melbourne Age February 10, 2011



Taxi operator Greg Collins can't find enough drivers to keep all his cabs on the road now that the flow of students from the Indian subcontinent is drying up.

GREG Collins runs 39 cabs, 16 of which sat in his West Melbourne depot last Saturday night - not because they weren't needed on the streets.

Mr. Collins, an operator whose family has been driving cabs since 1970, hasn't seen it like this for years. "Back in November, I would have had 10 more drivers than I had cars."

He is one of many taxi operators across Melbourne to suddenly be short of drivers.

Immigration agents say the shortage is due to the sharp drop in the number of students from the Indian subcontinent coming to Melbourne - the result of Australia's recent reputation in India for violence against Indians, the jump in the dollar, and immigration laws introduced last year that make getting residency tougher for some foreign students.

Thousands fewer from the Indian subcontinent are arriving, and Immigration Department figures show the drop is dramatic. In 2007-08 there were 47,639 visas granted to people from India, and in the following year there were 65,503. In 2009-10 the figure was 27,721.

Melbourne's taxi industry, plagued by problems over the past decade thanks to almost complete absence of regulation, relies on cheap labour - young foreign students or immigrants willing to work long shifts for as little as \$8 to \$12 an hour.

The Victorian Taxi Association, which represents the big dispatch firms such as Silvertop and 13CABS, says there is now a critical driver shortage.

Policy officer David Samuel said that in 2008, 83 per cent of Melbourne's new taxi drivers were Indian students. By last June that had fallen to 29 per cent.

The sudden drop in driver numbers has left the industry reeling, he said, and there must be a fare increase soon to keep - and attract - more drivers.

Harry Katsiabanis runs Taxi-Link, Melbourne's largest cab fleet. As with other operators, many of his 142 cars sit idle in his Huntingdale depot.

"We are covering about 60 per cent of our shifts," said Mr. Katsiabanis, 43, who started driving cabs in 1989. He has about 600 drivers on his books, and said in recent years only overseas students and new migrants were entering the industry. But now even that source is drying up.

Mr. Katsiabanis said the shortage was exacerbated by the long delay prospective drivers new to Victoria face before they can get a booking for an eight-day training course and test.

Administrative delays at the Victorian Taxi Directorate mean there is a three-month wait before candidates with a new Victorian licence even see a test official.

Oakleigh South operator Mark Longton, whose SE Taxis runs 50 cars, last week met Transport Minister Terry Mulder to lobby for change. He believes that under Labor the taxi industry was allowed to become dependent on the cheap labor of foreign students - and their absence is now keenly felt.

## **Organisations using the results of the IELTS test do not understand the IELTS test**

The Committee should be concerned with the lack of understanding of the process of the IELTS test amongst different National Boards of AHPRA. When a complaint was made to IDP Australia, assurance was given that IDP has an education program and advises all organisations using the IELTS test, so there was no need to worry.

Attendees at these education evenings report that only a description of the IELTS test is given. When the speakers were asked some hard questions, they simply shrugged their shoulders and were not able to provide answers.

This is part of the reply received from IDP Australia when asked about the IELTS test being used as the sole form of measuring a person's English language proficiency.

### **Use of IELTS**

IELTS does not agree with your statement that IELTS is being used as the sole method by the Department of Immigration and Citizenship and a wide range of professional organizations, who we understand apply additional measures when processing applications.

IELTS Australia works closely with stakeholders throughout the language teaching profession, higher education, professional registration bodies, immigration authorities and other users of the test to ensure IELTS remains fit for purpose as an English language proficiency test. Stakeholder activities include:

- The sponsorship of events, which provide an opportunity for stakeholders to speak directly with the IELTS partners about the purpose of the test;
- IELTS public information sessions for education providers and assessing authorities;
- The IELTS Australia e-newsletter 'Expressions' which is distributed 11 times a year to a rapidly expanding audience and offers updates and advice to stakeholders;
- The 'IELTS Scores Explained' DVD, which provides information specifically tailored to organisations wanting a detailed description of IELTS scores.

I trust that this information is helpful.

Raganna 

The Guardian has another view on the pervasive use of the IELTS test in our society and opined:

Given how pervasive language tests have become in daily life, it is ironic that in general so little is understood about them. For example, many would argue that tests provide a “neutral” means of sanction, selection or decision-making – “levelling the playing field”, by offering the same, systematic procedure to all. They would point out that tests are a practical, efficient, economic, and fairer means of selecting and sanctioning, and their outcomes can be rendered dispassionately. The problem with this view, however, is that tests are not always neutral. In defining what is measured and how it is measured, tests can also define what counts – who and what are valued.

(<http://www.guardianweekly.co.uk/?page=editorial&id=1317&catID=24>)

The discriminatory aspect of such a single high-stakes test as IELTS was mentioned in the Guardian (<http://www.guardianweekly.co.uk/?page=editorial&id=1317&catID=24>) and which applies to Australia:

There were excellent reasons for the Canadian government to withdraw the one-test option, but these were not clearly articulated in the debate sparked by the proposed changes. For example, it can be argued that requiring all prospective Canadian immigrants to take IELTS would have favoured those from educational cultures where testing is prevalent and who have test-taking skills that other immigrants lack. Many applying from predominantly oral cultures or ones where tests are uncommon would have been disadvantaged by the single-test option.

Test-wise test takers, typically knowledge workers, would have been advantaged; skilled workers – masons, tile layers, plumbers – may have been disadvantaged. A single-test approach could undermine Citizenship and Immigration Canada’s goal to attract more skilled workers to Canada – an unintended consequence of such a policy decision.

The IELTS test has been incredibly successful because the test user has no understanding of the test process and relies upon the interpretation and descriptors provided by the IELTS testing organisation for answers. Oddly, they have more confidence in the IELTS test than what IDP has. Even IDP Australia rejected the idea that the IELTS test result should be used as a measure of one’s English language proficiency. The Committee must understand this and reject the views of AHPRA that the IELTS scores must be high and decisions must be based upon the test results only.

In December 2010, John Belleville, IELTS Australia director, IDP Australia adopted a new line in warning people that the IELTS is not the sole consideration. It is doubtful that many organisations will heed his warnings. It is also interesting that Belleville is now promoting a new income stream for IDP Australia and he may well be successful if Australian organisations continue to blindly follow whatever his company claims.

**Universities choose IELTS as an exit test**

From: *The Australian*

December 15, 2010 12:00AM

**THE suggestion by Sophie Arkoudis that IELTS was developed to measure English-language proficiency for entry to university is misleading (HES, December 8).**

IELTS offers two versions of the test, academic and general training. The two tests are designed to meet the needs of differing candidate populations and differing stakeholders using the test scores. This is a strong reason why IELTS is recognised by more than 6000 organisations worldwide as a secure, valid and reliable indicator of an authentic ability to communicate in English for education, immigration and professional accreditation. It was taken by 1.4 million candidates last year.

To suggest that IELTS is being used as a measure of graduate English language proficiency by default because of its historical links with migration policy ignores that Australian universities actively choose IELTS as an exit test. Students recognise the value employers place on English language proficiency and use IELTS as an exit test to demonstrate this.

IELTS is a measure of English language proficiency. IELTS does not claim to be an indicator of graduates' language readiness for their chosen careers and professions. Research shows that correlations between language proficiency test scores and academic outcomes are often relatively weak, mainly as academic performance is affected by so many other factors. Likewise, there is a range of factors that contributes to work readiness.

**John Belleville, IELTS Australia director**

Belleville's statement that

IELTS is a measure of English language proficiency. IELTS does not claim to be an indicator of graduates' language readiness for their chosen careers and professions. Research shows that correlations between language proficiency test scores and academic outcomes are often relatively weak, mainly as academic performance is affected by so many other factors. Likewise, there is a range of factors that contributes to work readiness.

This is an extremely important as it is quite unusual for IELTS Australia to finally admit what many researchers have long discovered but not aggressively pursued, that the IELTS score is not a predictor of academic success and English language proficiency.

Furthermore, his comments is mostly concerned to an academic environment but there is the throwaway line about for work readiness, IELTS as a test of English language proficiency does not indicate whether a person will succeed at work or not. AHPRA and the Committee should take note.

Therefore, why is AHPRA using the IELTS test in the first place if it what it is supposed to test has little bearing on the original reason for why it was used in the first place. It does not measure the English language proficiency of a candidate for any meaningful reason.

In the absence of any conclusive proof that the IELTS test achieves what it claims, the question is asked why organisations have extended them such a high level of trust, blindly accepting their claims and explanations without question, promoting the test regularly, and then mandating the IELTS test results as a prerequisite for whatever purposes they choose.

To justify their reasons they often quote from IELTS' own promotional material.

There is a total lack of due diligence carried and it can be said, once again, that these organisations are at fault at letting the 'tail wag the dog'.

The Disclaimer is advising the candidates, but it should be directed at the organisations that use the test results as proof of a candidate's English language proficiency. Few, if any organisations are aware of the limitations of the IELTS test and the IELTS consortium have taken no steps to correct this mission.

## The Disclaimer

MARA, AHPRA, CPA, and other professional organisations have used the IELTS as a measure of a candidate's English language proficiency. If you cannot produce the IELTS test report with the minimum required test score, you then you cannot be registered.

There are some other grounds to which you can fall back on regarding whether your secondary education was in taught in the English language medium or not. It is strange that even completing a six-year university course using the English language as the teaching medium at an Australian university will not give you an exemption. Nevertheless, studying for three years at secondary school in India or the Philippines will give you an exemption.

However, all these organisations are incorrectly applying the IELTS test results. IELTS themselves through a Disclaimer, have warned all potential user's of the test results not to use the result as a single measure of a person's English language proficiency.

Where is the Disclaimer to be found?

One can find the Disclaimer at the bottom of the last page of the eight-page IELTS Booking Form, which a candidate has to complete to be able to sit for a test. As the candidate has to hand in the completed form, it is likely that they will never read the Disclaimer.

The Disclaimer is interesting as it effectively distances the promoters of the test for any responsibility for the test. What they are ready saying is that they have no confidence in their own testing system why do others?

The Disclaimer reads:

The International English Language Testing System (IELTS) is designed to be one of many factors used by academic institutions, government agencies, professional bodies, and employers in determining whether a test taker can be admitted as a student or be considered for employment or for citizenship purposes. IELTS is not designed to be the sole method of determining admission or employment for the test taker. IELTS is made available worldwide to all persons, regardless of age, gender, race, nationality or religion, but it is not recommended to persons under 16 years of age.

British Council, IDP: IELTS Australia and Cambridge ESOL and any other party involved in creating, producing, or delivering IELTS shall not be liable for any direct, incidental, consequential, indirect, special, punitive, or similar damages arising out of access to, use of, acceptance by, or interpretation of the results by any third party, or any errors or omissions in the content thereof.

If IELTS will not allow their product to be solely used as a measure of a person's English language proficiency, then why is DIAC, MARA, CPA and AHPRA and many other organisations doing exactly that? On what basis have they formed their decision to use the IELTS scores as a measure of a person's English language proficiency?

Looking at thousands of pages of Freedom of Information (FOI) documents, the recurring pattern is that different organisations have, with only the odd exception, just copied each other when it comes to deciding what their English language proficiency requirements are to be. An examination of the few who made the effort to work out what is required for their organisation, just contacted IDP Australia for their opinion.

Effect of IELTS Scores on Number of Candidates			
Min. Band Level	POST- JULY 2007		
	No. of Candidates	Sample Size	%
AT LEAST 7.0	59	1231	4.79%
AT LEAST 8.0	19	1231	1.54%
AT LEAST 9.0	2	1231	0.16%

**Figure 2. The scores of the sample were taken from candidates sitting at two IELTS testing centres in Australia.**

The results in Figure 2. vary from the results in Figure 1. because a different sample was used with a greater percentage of test candidates being resident longer in Australia.

The IELTS test was originally promoted as an aid to university administrators in assisting them in deciding which international students should be admitted to university. It was not a test to be used for migration, employment, or professional; entrance purposes.

Another study undertaken of candidate scores produced for even lower results.

	Frequency	Percent
More than 8 in all bands	43	0.7
More than 7 in all bands	142	2.4
More than 6 or 6.5 in all bands (but not 7)	895	14.9
More than 5 or 5.5 in all bands (but not 6 or 7)	2452	40.8
Other	2514	41.9
Total Candidates	6003	100.0

**Figure 3. The scores of the sample were taken from candidates sitting at IELTS testing centres from around the world with a large number of the candidates coming from Iran**

It is quite difficult to find any sets of IELTS results that can be used for statistical analysis. Has anyone seen the IELTS scores publicly published by the promoters of the IELTS test? VCE scores are regularly published in the newspapers for all to see and compare, but IELTS operates in absolute secrecy, subject to no independent scrutiny.



### **The excessive cost of the IELTS test – Is IELTS involved in retail price maintenance?**

One of the constant complaints given about the IELTS test is the high cost of their tests. The price never goes down but regularly increases.

A copy of the IELTS **Brand Guide Book** (Copyright and Commercial-in-Confidence 2006) explains why IELTS forbids discounting and promotes retail price maintenance of their products.

The **Brand Guide Book** carries the following comments:

**Test centres must not engage in or cause direct competition with other IELTS centres**

**Discounting**

**Do all you can to sell IELTS, DON'T ever sell it on sale**

Test centres must not offer price discounts to candidates (groups or individuals) under any circumstances. The IELTS Partners are committed to expanding recognition worldwide and continue to offer a test which is secure, valid and reliable. IELTS is a high stakes test and discounting undermines its value. Instead, you are encouraged to think creatively and explore alternative ways of attracting customers.

To provide examples please look at the following:

**Incorrect - discounting**

A centre offers a bundled package of an IELTS test, an IELTS preparation course and support sample material and text books. There is a 10% discount across this bundled package to candidates that take the test in the next month.

This is wrong as it discounts the IELTS test as part of an overall discounted package.

**Correct – Value Add**

A centre offers a bundled package of an IELTS test, an IELTS preparation course and support sample material and text books. The IELTS test is e.g. AUD \$190, the IELTS preparation course is e.g. AUD \$300 and the text books are provided for free to candidates up to the value of \$50 if they sign up within the next month.

This is the correct use of a value added incentive. This protects the price of IELTS and still allows the centre the flexibility to bundle other add-on items to make all elements attractive to the candidate.

The discounts mentioned here relate to offers made to candidates in the market.

It would be useful to examine subsequent copies of the **Brand Guide Book** to see if they still indulge in price-fixing, which is not to the advantage of the customer, especially while IELTS enjoys monopoly or oligarchy status within Australia.

## **Background to the English language proficiency requirements**

Australia is already facing a serious skills shortage, not because we do not have people in Australia with the right, or better skills, but we have set up Registration Boards who make it almost impossible for most applicants to get approval if they do not come from “White” nations.

It is claimed that the mining boom in Western Australia and Queensland is taking all our skilled workers but that is just part of the story. Poor decisions by DIAC and other professional organisations have accelerated the shortage of experienced OTDs by coming out with a fictitious story about OTDS have poor levels of English language proficiency and how the public needs to be protected. It sound wonderful but lacks logic, particularly in a multicultural society.

Not one case has yet been uncovered of an OTD causing the death of someone because of his or her lack of English language skills. By having a mix of people from different cultures working in Australia as doctors, it is now rare to have a parent bringing their child to the surgery where the child has to translate the conversation between the parent and the doctor. Obviously, misinterpreting part of the conversation could have serious consequences. Australia needs OTDs with different language skills other than British English, which is the English dialect which IELTS tests candidates

There is also the racial card, as not all OTDs need to sit for English language proficiency tests. If they come from certain exempt countries, the assumption was made that they already owned the minimum standards of English. This exemption was never applied by the various medical boards after any research, but was adopted with the use of the IELTS test.

The English language test requirements demanded in Australia by DIAC, MARA, AHPRA, CPA, and many other organisations, exempts people from completing IELTS test requirements, if they received their secondary studies in the following countries:

- ❖ Australia
- ❖ Canada
- ❖ New Zealand
- ❖ Republic of Ireland
- ❖ South Africa
- ❖ United Kingdom, and/or
- ❖ United States of America

The re-introduction of this language test, as one can see, generally applies to “white”, “Anglo-Saxon” or former British Commonwealth nations. The unproved assumption was that passport holders from these countries possessed high English language proficiency skills. It also reflects the high reliance on the British English dialect.

It is doubtful that citizens from these nations are so proficient with their English language skills that they can be justifiably exempted from an English language proficiency test.

Skills Australia thinks otherwise. In their 2010 publication, “Australian Workplace Futures”:

“...the 2006 Adult Literacy and Life Skills Survey indicates that 40 per cent of employed Australians and 60 per cent of unemployed Australians have a level of literacy below the accepted standard needed to work in the emerging knowledge-based economy.”

From the perspective of equality, and to address any charges of discrimination, the IELTS test must include all applicants. With a pass rate of just 2.4 per cent almost no OTDs would behavioural able to be registered.

The reason for the exemption was a historical one when the IELTS test was used for another purpose. Its original function was to assist university administrators to decide whether overseas students possessed an adequate English language proficiency to complete a university course.

The IELTS test was never designed to be used for any other purpose.

Surprisingly, few if any, ethnic organisations have complained to the relevant authorities that their members are being discriminated against. This is not surprising as many aggrieved candidates come from countries where they have a genuine and well-based fear of retribution if they question authority and prefer to keep quiet and few people understand what the IELTS test is all about.

What is surprising is that no organisation has made a detailed study of the IELTS test. They have simply accepted the claims by IDP Australia, the IELTS organisation, and their partners on trust, on face value. However, the continued use of an English language proficiency test, directed at certain cultural groups must concern the Committee as it excludes many OTDs. Tens of thousands of highly qualified professional people from countries such as India, Philippines, China, Singapore, etc. are regularly denied citizenship and the right to work in their trained professions, purely on the grounds of racial and cultural discrimination.

It does not go unnoticed that with the reintroduction of this language test, the test exemptions generally apply to “white” or “Anglo-Saxon” nationals. The assumption, true or not, is that passport holders from these countries do possess high English language proficiency skills.

There is also another side of this discrimination is that the membership of these profession organisations to mainly people from White or Caucasian nations. By holding a passport from any the above exempt countries, you will have an easy ride for your membership to be accepted.

One does not to be a mathematician to realise that by limiting the numbers of member from certain countries there is a small number of people who could apply to join a professional organisation or migrate to Australia. This will accelerate the skills shortage even more.

Take the teaching profession as an example. The NSW Institute of Teachers, as well as most other teaching organisations, require all prospective entrants, who are not exempt based upon their nationality, to complete the IELTS test for academic purposes, which is much harder than the general test. The Institute requires that the applicant be required to obtain a minimum overall score of 7.5, assuming an average of all four bands, including a minimum result of 8.0 in both the speaking and listening modules and 7.0 in reading and writing.

No one should be surprised to know that according to research, that if the applicant had completed the IELTS, based on either the general or academic test, only 118 people out of more than 7000 candidates could obtain such a high score, meaning 1.65%. If it was based on just the academic test, it most likely will be less than 0.5%, will attract just 35 people, assuming that all of them want to be teacher, which would be very unlikely.

Today, teaching recruitment organisations are probably still scratching their heads wondering where they will be able to source new teachers when the current ones leave or retire.

Is the use of the IELTS test for certain cultural groups unlawful? There are a quite a number of laws which would hobble the use of the IELTS and OET test because of its selective use against people from the non-exempt nations, based on racial grounds.

They include a number of international human rights agreements which Australia has ratified ([http://www.skwirk.com/p-c\\_s-16\\_u-134\\_t-388\\_c-1355/human-rights-issues-and-agreements/nsw/human-rights-issues-and-agreements/australia-in-its-global-context/challenges-for-australia-human-rights-and-reconciliation](http://www.skwirk.com/p-c_s-16_u-134_t-388_c-1355/human-rights-issues-and-agreements/nsw/human-rights-issues-and-agreements/australia-in-its-global-context/challenges-for-australia-human-rights-and-reconciliation)).

- *The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights* 1976
- *Convention on the Rights of the Child* 1989
- *Convention Concerning Discrimination in Respect of Employment and Occupation* 1960
- *Declaration on the Rights of Disabled Persons* 1975
- *Declaration on the Rights of Mentally Retarded Persons* 1971
- *Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and of Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief* 1981

In addition, these international agreements on human rights have led to federal legislation that is enacted in specific areas. The different legislation includes:

- *Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act* 2006
- *The Racial Discrimination Act* 1975 (Cth)
- *The Sex Discrimination Act* 1984 (Cth)
- *The Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Act* 1986 (Cth)
- *The Disability Discrimination Act* 1992 (Cth)

The use of a language test does have a previous history in Australia and this was used to maintain a “White Australia” policy. One finds it surprising when intelligent, rational people abandon reason in favour of something that is emotionally comforting, factually devoid of any actual evidence and ignoring any ethical consequences of their actions.

In America, a similar test was used to deny voting rights to the American Negroes and this “literacy test” was used to deny voting rights to many minorities and referred to the government practice of screening the literacy of potential citizens at the federal level, and possible voters at the state level. The U.S. federal government, as part of immigration policy in 1917, initially employed literacy tests. Southern state legislatures broadened its use much earlier in the late nineteenth century as part of the voter registration process. Its use became well known for denying the franchise to African Americans, while allowing many illiterate southern whites to vote.

The situation only changed relatively recently when in 1965 the Voting Rights Act of 1965 set aside the use of literacy tests in all states or political subdivisions in which less than 50 percent of the voting age residents were registered as of 1 November 1964, or had voted in the 1964 presidential election.

("Literacy Test." *Dictionary of American History*. 2003. Retrieved November 08, 2010 from Encyclopedia.com: <http://www.encyclopedia.com/doc/1G2-3401802405.html>)

President Lyndon B. Johnson signed into law the Voting Rights Act of 1965, but prior to doing this, he gave a speech on August 6, 1965, he stated:

The central fact of American civilization--one so hard for others to understand--is that freedom and justice and the dignity of man are not just words to us. We believe in them. Under all the growth and the tumult and abundance, we believe. And so, as long as some among us are oppressed--and we are part of that oppression--it must blunt our faith and sap the strength of our high purpose. (<http://www.nowpublic.com/world/voting-rights-act-1965-ended-use-literacy-tests>)

The Committee has to change the current situation where OTDs minorities are being unfairly discriminated in joining the medical professions for which they are trained in.

## **Organisations demand high IELTS scores but have no idea why they require such high scores**

Australia not just has a shortage of OTDs only as the demands for high English language proficiency standards have affected most professional organisations. Nevertheless, one thing that they all have in common is there has been an absence of understanding what the IELTS test is all about and what level of proficiency is required for each profession. They just copy each other as no one wishes to be seen as their organisation having members with “lower” standards.

One professor (name withheld out of personal embarrassment) wanted to have a minimum of 8 in each band of the IELTS test so that they can have better students. Not only did that professor know that very few people can achieve that level of English language proficiency, but that there would also be very few applicants for study in his faculty.

Another example of lack of understanding of the IELTS test is the teaching profession who have a different view on the English language proficiency of their members. The NSW Institute of Teachers requires all prospective entrants who are not exempt to complete the IELTS test for academic purposes that is much harder than the general test. The Institute requires that the applicant needs to obtain a minimum overall score of 7.5 including a minimum result of 8.0 in both the speaking and listening modules and 7.0 in reading and writing.

No one should be surprised to know that according to some research, that if the applicant had completed either the general or academic test, only 118 people out of more than 7000 candidates could obtain such a high score, meaning 1.65%. If it was based on just the academic test, it most likely is less than 0.5%. Teaching recruitment organisations should be wondering where they will obtain new teachers when the current ones leave or retire?

The tough entry levels are not peculiar

Why does the Institute accept the IELTS test? Well, “The test is widely accepted as an international standard for English language skills. Testing and locations can be found at <http://www.IELTS.org/>” Not only has the Institute failed to provide due diligence regarding their choice of the standard, but they steer prospective teachers to the website of a commercial organisation.

If you are already registered but not born in Australia then do not think that the demands for IELTS testing will not affect you.

MARA is canvassing the idea that all registered migration agents, who had fulfilled all of the requirements for their entry, should be subjected to the IELTS test and presumably, those failing, and which will be statistically common, will be deprived of their livelihood. One migration agent who migrated from Greece 40 years ago, worked 25 years in the Immigration Department, will have to prove his English skills, and if unsuccessful, will possibly be deprived of his livelihood.

What due diligence did MARA do when they introduced the English language proficiency standards for new entrants to become migration agents. A Freedom of Information disclosure showed none, other than a survey of existing migration agents that produced anecdotal comments but little hard evidence. The following exchanges took place at the MARA meeting held on 22 August 2008.

Mr Waters introduce the topic, noting that the board had passed the MARA to obtain expert advice on the most appropriate level of English language requirements for registered migration agents. In researching this topic the Secretariat considered the ANZSCO classification for migration agents (AUS) and immigration consultants (NZ) which is at Skill Level 1. and the requirements of other professional associations including the New Zealand and Canadian regulators, as well as consulting with the Centre for Macquarie English.

Mr Jones noted that he believes a recommendation, of level 7, would not necessarily improve the profession. Mrs Harris commented that she would prefer an option for agents to undertake an examination other IELTS. Ms Chao commented that the descriptive statement provided in relation to band seven would be the minimum that we should expect from a migration agent.

It should be noted that the decision to accept IELTS's own self-rating of 7 as the starting point for the minimum standard. No other evidence to support the decision was made other than "consulting" with the Centre for Macquarie English who is an active promoter of IELTS tests and delivers courses to teach people how to pass IELTS tests, for a fee.

The minutes also noted some good independent thinking.

Mr Jones, in response to Ms Chao's earlier comment, stated that he believes level 6 would be a sufficient minimum standard. He also asked the board to remember that this is the standard across the whole profession, not just for entry level agents.

Mr Moss commented that he does not trust that the IELTS test is as accurate as it purports to be. Miss Barber commented that, while there may be some problems with the IELTS test, she believes that level 7 is the appropriate level of which to set the requirement. Mr Jones stated that MARA has the funding to establish its own professional English test, and that this initiative might be considered in the future.

At no time, at the meeting was the effect of the new IELTS requirements considered from the perspective of human rights, equal opportunity other than concern about

"... where responsibility lies for ensuring that those with disabilities would not be disadvantaged."

Decision makers simply cannot understand that the application of high-stakes tests such as the IELTS test to areas where it may not be important is an act of wanton discrimination, a denial of basic human rights, and an abuse of power.

Just because an organisation has the power to make such rules, they do not necessarily have the right to do so, as it would be an abuse of power.

Anyway, these organisations cannot be trusted to make an independent decision. Not one of the organisations who introduced the IELTS test completed any independent research on what IELTS is about, and what it measures. In some cases, when questions were raised, the organisations contacted one of the IELTS testing centres, and keep in mind that IELTS is a commercial organisation, and asked them and dutifully accepted their opinion. There was a total lack of proper governance or due diligence.

### Why does DIAC keep tightening the English language proficiency requirements?

From 2007, people wishing to migrate under the GSM program must prove their English language proficiency and they were able to achieve an average of 6 or 7 in all bands of the IELTS test.

It has been argued (Mickan & Motteram, 2009) that the main catalyst for the DIAC language requirements was the Birrell Report (Golder, Reeder, & Fleming; 2009). However, it is believed that DIAC wanted to initiate the tightening of the English language requirements and Bob Birrell, *et al*, were commissioned in anticipation of the outcomes of the Report and they become the rationale for the change in policy. The report, "Evaluation of the general skilled migration categories" was often based on anecdotal evidence and subjective interpretations, which highlighted the need for skilled migrants to possess high English language skills.

Birrell's outspoken anti-international student views were well known and DIAC had a good idea what his Submission would say. An FOI request was specifically requested to ascertain what other reasons were available to DIAC but no other reasons were found.

However, the Submission opened the door for DIAC to discriminate against certain nationalities under the guise of applicants requiring good English language skills and, the situation is still the same today, IELTS has a monopoly in the testing of English language proficiency.

This policy was changed again, from July 1<sup>st</sup>, 2009, in anticipation of the Global Financial Crisis, which fortunately bypassed Australia, with the IELTS scores being changed from an *average* of 6 or 7 in all bands, to achieving 6 or 7 in each of *all* of the bands. These high scores become a very much harder task to achieve, and which reduced the candidates' chances of success in the test to less than 10% of their previous prospects.

This change dramatically changed the face of migration by reducing the number of eligible GSM applicants to just 10 per cent of previous numbers. This also gave a huge boost to the IELTS testing system and Seek Ltd's 50 per cent investment in IELTS Australia became a real winner.

On 11<sup>th</sup> November 2010, DIAC announced new English language proficiency requirements, which are to apply from July 1<sup>st</sup> 2011. They will not give any bonus marks for applicants scoring a minimum of 6 in each of the four bands. Applicants now scoring 7 or more will get 10 points and those receiving 8 in all bands will get 25 points.

For whatever reasons this decision was based on, and one has no idea why, DIAC thinks that a score of 8 or more in all bands is achievable, but research has shown that it would be quite rare for someone to do so.

DIAC should be forthcoming on what evidence they based their decision. The more likely answer is that someone simply thought that 8 is better than 7, and we want all migrants to speak excellent English. One is left gobsmacked wondering how many members of DIAC could also get 8 in *all bands*.

Suddenly, with last week's decision (Nov. 11, 2010), the emphasis is on higher qualifications and very high English language scores. By continuing their monopoly of the IELTS test, they are able to be culturally selective and just 3.1% of candidates can obtain bonus points. 14.9% will get no extra points and 40.8% who would have a functional level of English, similar to most other Australian citizens, would waste their time to even considering applying to do the test.

The reason why this information is useful is that some preliminary data shows that DIAC did not act upon the wishes of the majority of people who provided submissions regarding the use of the IELTS test when assessing a person's English language proficiency. One must conclude that the

introduction of the IELTS test exclusively, was never based on the community needs but because of prejudices and ignorance by different decision-makers. Hard research was never done to ascertain what level of English language proficiency was required.

What is interesting was that the FOI request would only be fulfilled if DIAC would be paid very high fees.

#### FOI Request - Charges notice

This letter refers to a request received by the Department of Immigration and Citizenship (DIAC) under the *Freedom of Information Act 1982* (the FOI Act) on 5 January 2011 for

*On 15th of February 2010, DIAC released a discussion paper inviting responses from stakeholders and the general public and more than 220 responses were received. May I have a copy of the 220 responses?*

In accordance with section 29 of the Act I have decided that you are liable to pay a charge in respect of the processing of your request. As per the Freedom of Information (Charges) Regulations 1982 my preliminary assessment of that charge is as follows:

Search and Retrieval Time: 17 hours at \$15ph	\$255.00
Decision Making Time: 301 hours at \$20ph	\$7520.00
Copies of documents: 675 pages at 10 cents/page	No charge applied.
Postage	No charge applied.
First five hours of decision making free of charge: 5 hours at \$20ph	\$100
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$7,675.00</b>

However, a public summary of responses was provided by DIAC after an FOI request and was based on 221 submissions they received and collated.



### The new English language proficiency requirements

What is of particular significance is that the English language question generated a large 52% of responses, only second to the issues of qualifications.

More interestingly, the majority of respondents wanted either average score being allowed, raising IELTS requirement to 7, or giving 20 points for 6.5. It also must be noted that DIAC ignored this request and increased the scores to the absurd level of 8. This meant the use of the IELTS test is considered a problem by a majority of respondents.

Notwithstanding this importance, DIAC chose to ignore the calls for change, upped the ante, and made the English language proficiency requirements even tougher. This behaviour by DIAC raises the question that the calling for submissions prior to change in policy is really a sham because the time given is usually short and there is a tendency to ignore key submissions.

Qualifications also scored highly with many respondents asking for overseas qualifications to be recognised which DIAC agreed to.

	Total no of responses
Individual	167
Organisations	54
<b>Total</b>	<b><u>221</u></b>
Late submissions	3

Responses on particular issues		% of total?
General/new factors	34	15%
Occupation	98	44%
Qualifications (Aus v OS)	127	57%
Work Exp	48	22%
English	116	52%
Age	108	49%
Higher degrees	90	41%
Partners	78	35%
Family Sponsors	77	35%
Regional Study/Work	64	29%
Community Lang	76	34%
State/Territory Sponsors	58	26%
PY	57	26%
<b>Totals</b>	<b><u>1031</u></b>	

Note these will not match above as some respondents commented on more than one topic

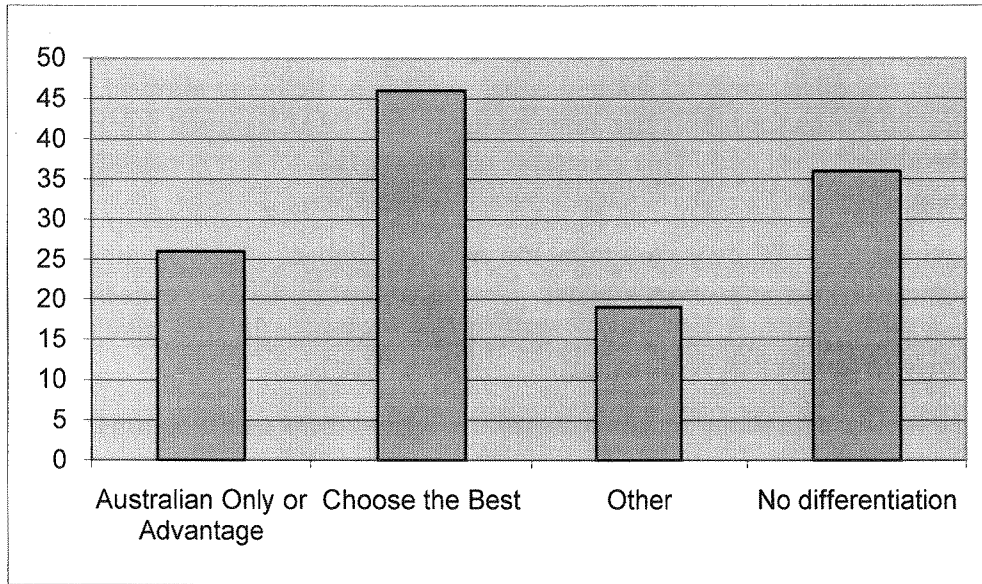


Figure 3. Responses regarding qualifications

Note on data: Merging the "Choose the best" column and the "No differentiation" column shows a clear majority of respondents want to see overseas qualifications recognised in some form

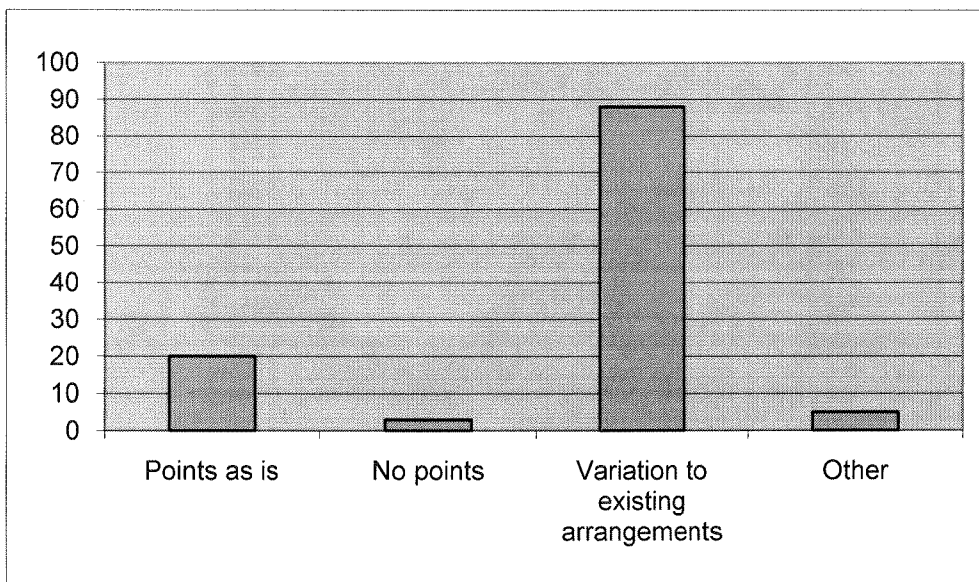


Figure 4. Responses regarding English language proficiency

**Note on data: The majority of respondents wanted either average score being allowed, raising IELTS requirement to 7, or giving 20 points for 6.5 but DIAC ignored their wishes.**

## **The validity and reliability of the IELTS test and other claims made by IELTS Australia**

Reliability is defined as the extent to which a measurement gives consistent results. Validity is defined as the degree to which the tool measures what it claims to measure. A test cannot have high validity unless it also has high reliability. However, a reliable test may not necessarily be valid. Therefore, IELTS can be reliable but may be invalid or unreliable but a valid test.

Depending on the type and purpose of a test, criterion-related validity may be examined from one or more of perspectives. Here, we need to examine the concurrent validity.

A test is said to have construct validity if the candidates would be ranked in the same way each time (Milanovic, 2002) but when the different tests for the two candidates Ind and LY are analysed, the IELTS test, lacks construct validity due to the wide range of results they achieved.

In all tests, it is accepted that there be a minimum of four principles applied to assessments. Many organisations go further and apply addition principles.

Within the Australia, all training organisations must comply with the following four principles to ensure that all assessment conducted within the organisation is reliable, flexible, fair and valid.

- **Reliable** Reliable means that all assessment methods and procedures will ensure that competency standards/modules are applied consistently and that there is always consistency in the interpretation of evidence.
- **Flexible** Flexible means that assessment will be offered in the workplace (on-the-job), in the training environment (off-the-job), in a combination of both or via recognition of prior learning/recognition of current competence. All assessment methods and practices must allow for diversity with regard to how, where and when competence has been/will be acquired.
- **Fair** Fair means that assessment methods and procedures will not, under any circumstance, disadvantage any client.
- **Valid** Valid means that assessment activities will always meet the requirements as specified in the unit of competence/module. Sufficient evidence will always be collected, and will be relevant to the standard/module being assessed.

It would be expected that the IELTS and OET comply with such minimum standards. As we will see for IELTS, they claim they do but these principles have many different meanings for different people.

Validity comes in many forms and the simplest is face validity. It is the simplest simply because it is subjective and not based on any objective test (Milanovic, 2002) and is in the eyes of the beholder. Milanovic noted that face validity is considered by many, not to be a true form of validity and is often referred to as 'test appeal'.

Throughout this Submission, there will be this continued reference to this trusting of the IELTS test without any attempt being made by any organisation attempting to verify why this trust is deserved.

Yet, when researched, there are many examples to why the validity and reliability of the IELTS should be questioned and not used beyond its original design purpose. The two sets of results which two candidates completed the IELTS test sixteen and seventeen times respectively indicates that the IELTS test is neither reliable nor valid. More datasets will be also tested to see whether the results are consistently unreliable and invalid.

David Ingram (2007) makes it clear that the IELTS test is being misused and it is unethical to do so.

No test is perfect, no test can do all things for all persons in all situations. One of the very serious problems with IELTS is that its ready availability has led to its being used for many purposes beyond what it was designed for.

IELTS is used not only for university entry but also for immigration purposes, to see whether an applicant for vocational registration has enough English to work, for example, as a teacher, a nurse or a tradesman. It is even used in Britain to check the English proficiency of overseas trained medical practitioners whose first language is English.

At best, such misuse is unethical, even if it is expedient. No test should be used for purposes for which it was not developed.

(<http://www.monash.edu.au/lls/China/learning/ingram4.xml>)

Ingram's words carry significant weight. He is an Honorary Professorial Fellow in the University of Melbourne and (consultant) and Director of a private language centre in Brisbane, Australia (IUC Pty Ltd). Ingram is recognised for his substantial experience in consultancies, in second language education and has published widely, especially in the areas of language policy, curriculum design, methodology, and language testing.

As one of the developers of the IELTS test, Ingram is the co-author of the *International Second Language Proficiency Ratings* (ISLPR<sup>®</sup>). He became a member of the Order of Australia in 2003 for

.... service to education through the development of language policy, through assessment procedures for evaluation of proficiency, and through research and teaching (D Ingram, 2007).

More specifically, Ingram claims that IELTS was developed in 1987-88 by a joint Australian-British team, which included himself as the Australian representative. On the test's release, he became Chief Examiner (Australia) for ten years, supervising the regeneration of the test in Australia. IELTS was designed to be administered *en masse*, throughout the world, with minimal control over the quality of the assessors (D. Ingram, 2005).

Ingram is not alone in warning against the misuse of the IELTS test for testing English language proficiency outside of its original purpose, which was to assess the admission of potential university students. Candlin (Hawthorne, 1997) also warned against using existing tests such as IELTS, except as an 'interim measure'. Candlin's advice is based on his experience. Candlin had previously 'been closely involved with IELTS for five years, including his role as Chair of the International Editing Committee' (Hawthorne, 1997).

In his view, IELTS is

'a test of English for Academic Purposes, it had limited capacity to access 'vocational' levels in the context of immigration to Australia (Hawthorne, 1997).

Professor Christopher Candlin words carry significant weight, as he is the Chair Professor of Applied Linguistics and Director, Centre for English Language Education and Communication Research, City University of Hong Kong. On the DIAC website he referred to Candlin as having

'.... chaired the committees which developed the International English Language Testing Service materials, and the access test for migrants coming to Australia.'

What is interesting is that Hawthorne was one of the three researchers who produced the Submission to DIAC, which tightened up the English language proficiency requirements in 2007. The report was called “*Evaluation of the general skilled migration categories*” and the authors were Birrell, Hawthorne and Richardson. It is surprising Hawthorne did not take an opposite attitude to that of the Submission, who now speaks against the use of the IELTS test.

The use of the IELTS for purposes, for which it was never designed, is unethical and even IDP Australia themselves also warn that the IELTS test should never be used by itself as a means of deciding a person’s English language proficiency. So, why does AHPRA insist on using IELTS?

Sophie Arkoudis, an associate professor in higher education and deputy director of the Centre for the Study of Higher Education at the University of Melbourne, commented in *The Australian*, under the heading “Outdated English-proficiency standards are a case of tail wagging the dog”

But IELTS and the other standardised language tests were developed to measure English language proficiency for entry to university. They were not designed to measure it for entry to the workplace.

Little is known about its validity and reliability in terms of exit testing or whether it is a genuine indicator of graduates’ language-readiness for their careers and professions.

John Belleville, IELTS Australia director, responds to Arkoudis’ article with a published letter to the Australian newspaper, headed “**Universities choose IELTS as an exit test.**” Belleville’s opening statement is that

THE suggestion by Sophie Arkoudis that IELTS was developed to measure English-language proficiency for entry to university is misleading (HES, December 8).

Belleville continues with

To suggest that IELTS is being used as a measure of graduate English language proficiency by default because of its historical links with migration policy ignores that Australian universities actively choose IELTS as an exit test. Students recognise the value employers place on English language proficiency and use IELTS as an exit test to demonstrate this.

IELTS is a measure of English language proficiency. IELTS does not claim to be an indicator of graduates’ language readiness for their chosen careers and professions. Research shows that correlations between language proficiency test scores and academic outcomes are often relatively weak, mainly as academic performance is affected by so many other factors. Likewise, there is a range of factors that contributes to work readiness.

Belleville leaves the reader wondering why IELTS is used in the first place if it cannot provide much information about the English language proficiency of a candidate.

Humphreys and Mousavi notes that

However, opting to use IELTS or any other proficiency test as an exit testing instrument raises a number of issues. It could be argued that IELTS was not specifically designed to be an exit test, although the IELTS handbook states it “is designed to assess the language ability of candidates who need to study or work where English is the language of communication” (IELTS Handbook, 2007, p. 2). Some have questioned the suitability of using IELTS Academic for this purpose. O’Loughlin was quoted in *The Australian* in January 2009 as saying IELTS “was not designed to be used as an exit test of attainment for graduates or for their workforce suitability...and its use for other purposes is questionable” (“English Tested,” 2009). He goes on to suggest there is a need for more valid assessments of graduate attainment and workplace readiness in specific professions and trades.

O'Loughlin and Arkoudis (2009, p. 46) state that more research is required to validate the use of IELTS as an exit test. Alternatives to exit testing based on reporting competencies and a language portfolio have also been proposed (Berry & Lewkowitz 2000).

Arkoudis was correct that IELTS was designed to assist university administrators in their decision whether an applicant who wished to enter their university possessed enough English language skills to enable them to successfully complete the course. It was the duty of care that forced the universities to ensure that all students were looked after and were skilled adequately enough to pass their course.

More interestingly, is how IELTS Australia is trying to push "exit tests" in the hope that it would become a new revenue stream. One presumes that by forcing all graduate students to complete the IELTS test on graduation, employers will demand graduates to produce their test scores as 'proof' of their English language proficiency.

Humphreys and Mousavi notes that

The literature on exit testing reveals mixed views in the English language academic community. Some have posited that exit testing may provide positive backwash if language competence assumes a higher priority as a result (O'Loughlin & Arkoudis, 2009), whereas others have suggested it may have a negative impact, particularly if the test is compulsory, as it is in Hong Kong (Berry & Lewkowitz, 2000). These same academics have also questioned whether it is even appropriate to expect students to demonstrate their proficiency at the end of their course of study after having met a language condition for entry. (2009)(2009)(2009)(2009)(2009)(2009)(2009)(2009)(2009)(2009)(2009)(2009)(2009)

Belleville also mentions that

.... IELTS is recognised by more than 6000 organisations worldwide as a secure, valid and reliable indicator of an authentic ability to communicate in English for education, immigration and professional accreditation. It was taken by 1.4 million candidates last year.

Presumably, he verifies the validity of the IELTS test on the basis that 1.4 candidates complete the test. What is not touched on is that many of the candidates are doing repeat tests and that Australia's 38 universities are shareholders in the IELTS testing system. This might strike one as a conflict in interests by recommending people to do the test, signing them up in their own training courses, and then testing them. Some who fail to achieve the score they want are offered alternative pathways, usually at additional cost, to allow them to get away with a lower score.

Therefore, if you have the money, the universities will find a deal for you, but if you do not have enough financial resources, the multitude of pathways and foundation courses will not help you.

The Disclaimer on the last page of the test booking form makes it clear that the IELTS test results should not be used by itself in deciding one's English language proficiency. So, why is it placed at such an obscure position at the very end of the application form? The only explanation is that no one will see it. At best, by doing this, IELTS Australia is behaving in an unconscionable manner by ensuring that most decision-makers have no idea about the veracity of the IELTS test.

### **How does AHPRA treat OTDs who cannot achieve the high levels of English language proficiency?**

For the purpose of this Submission, there has not been enough time to interview enough OTDs. Nevertheless, there have been a number of conversations with OTDs who do not want their story to be told because they have a fear of retribution.

For example, there is correspondence between a person who has been on Australia for 24 years and could not achieve a minimum of four 7s in each band. He applied to MARA for considerations and some of the reasons for rejection were preposterous! It just went beyond saying that he could not provide convincing evidence, but they fabricated reasons why he could not be considered.

There are reasonable suspicions that OTDs have met similar resistance and unsympathetic responses and the study of this applicant to become a registered migration agent will illustrate this. By doing this, the Committee can gain an understanding and appreciate how vindictive and petty decision-makers can become, how they are defended and protected by their organisation, and how the applicant is powerless against such unconscionable behaviour.

Amongst many extraordinary prejudicial claims MARA made against this person, which is discussed over the next few pages, a staffer at MARA decided to re-interpret one of Bob Birrell's research. When this was raised with MARA, they gave a patronising reply, omitting any of the points raised, and the applicant continues to be ignored for nearly a year. MARA made spurious claims to stop him working in an industry he successfully studied and passed.

Other reasons MARA levelled against this applicant was a very interesting claim, which is unintelligible and lacking in logic. Two more of MARA's objections were

23. In further consideration of education undertaken in Australia as an indicator of English proficiency, I have had regard to research conducted by Bob Birrell in association with Monash University in relation to the English language requirements of international students and outcomes for Australia's skilled migration program. The article examines why significant numbers of international students, who are required to have an English level of IELTS 6 to undertake bachelor level studies in Australia, are struggling to obtain an IELTS score of 6 on completion of their degrees in Australia. The report states "English deficiencies are widespread ...Even in the case of students coming from countries where most would do their secondary education in English, there was a sizable minority who could not achieve the 'competent' English standard. Two examples are Singapore and India, where the proportion not achieving 6 was 17.8 and 17.3 [per cent] respectively" (Implications of Low English Standards Among Overseas Students at Australian Universities", People and Place, vol.14, no. 4, 2006).
24. This article shows that a significant proportion of international students from countries where English is not the predominant business and community language, but where school education is conducted in English, who qualify for skilled migration in Australia after completing studies in Australia are unable to achieve an IELTS score of 6. I consider, therefore, that a significantly larger proportion would not achieve the score of IELTS 7 which is required to register as a migration agent. I consider this report demonstrates that studying in Australia does not necessarily improve English proficiency nor demonstrate a particular level of English proficiency. This supports my earlier findings that university level study in Australia, taken on its own, is not reliable evidence of English language proficiency.

The main points of rebuttal to MARA's constructive rejection of the applicant include:

- The applicant is not an international student aged in late teens. He is aged about 46 years.
- The article quoted is 5 years old.
- Applicant holds a masters degree (MBA) and is not starting a bachelor degree.
- Birrell claims that 17.8 and 17.3 per cent is a "sizable minority", but makes no mention of the 82 per cent which is overwhelmingly high and should have negated such an interpretation was his article peer-reviewed?
- The Singapore and Indian cohorts was taken from unpublished DIMIA data from 2005-2006, six- year-old data!
- Birrell's statistics are invalid as IELTS introduced half-band scores to the Writing and Speaking modules from July 1 2007. This would have a significant effect on his research and it should have been updated.
- Birrell's research is said show the results of the English tests required of overseas students who obtained permanent residence visas in 2005-06 after graduation. His conclusions reveal that at least a third scored less than the level usually required for employment as professionals in Australia. MARA assumes that their industry is a "professional" one but has no idea what are the minimum level of English is required as no needs analysis had ever been carried out.
- MARA had licensed migration agents whose level of English proficiency would have been very low, but failed to point out how many went on to become very successful business people. In other words, MARA assumes that English language proficiency has a predictive value in forecasting whether migration agents will become successful, but failed to use this evidence, but finds it useful to use unconnected research to reject an applicant.
- At no time does MARA explain what "English language proficiency" is, except their blind believe that IELTS delivers what they promise.
- Bob Birrell is co-director of the Centre for Population and Urban Research and Reader in Sociology at Monash University. He is not Bob Birrell a language or linguistics expert.
- Birrell's Centre publishes such nice articles in a magazine called People and Place with anti-international student articles as, "Implications of Low English Standards among Overseas Students at Australian Universities", "Quality in accounting education and low English standards among overseas students: is there a link?" and "The emperor's new clothes: yes, there is a link between English language competence and academic standards". One should be cautious when quoting from his papers and it is clear why DIAC like him so much.
- One reason related to a report which pointed out that about 17% of Singaporean university students had low English skills. MARA referred this, obviously to prejudice his application. That 83% did seemed not to cross MARA's mind and they referred to it as a "significant" minority of about 17%.
- Using such material from Birrell would, on the balance of probability be prejudicial to the applicant.
- The measure used to check on an individual's English language proficiency was IELTS whose reliability is highly suspect. Birrell's report depends upon the use of IELTS.



- At no time does Birrell mention that his employer, Monash University, is a shareholder of IDP Australia and part-owner of the IELTS testing system.
- The best is left last. On page 35 of this Submission, the IELTS Australia director, John Belleville, makes it quite clear that MARA's objection is groundless. The most damaging objection is that there are mixed opinions by researchers about the predictive value of IELTS in predicting the success or otherwise of a university to complete their university course and graduate.

IELTS is a measure of English language proficiency. IELTS does not claim to be an indicator of graduates' language readiness for their chosen careers and professions. Research shows that correlations between language proficiency test scores and academic outcomes are often relatively weak, mainly as academic performance is affected by so many other factors. Likewise, there is a range of factors that contributes to work readiness.

- Enough for now. But one has to wonder how many OTDs are treated in such an oft-handed way.

The article dealt with international students and would be irrelevant to the applicant's situation as he has been in Australia for more than 20 years, holds an MBA and is aged about 45 years of age.

They then proceeded to give another reason why the applicant ought to be rejected, which was based on the university students who had low English. This argument was considered important as it referred to a "significant" minority of about 17%.

Nevertheless, what really showed was the inability of organisations to understand what the IELTS test is about, by rejecting qualified applications on the grounds that the "IELTS test is a test of precision". Not even IELTS would make a wild claim, as it is common knowledge to most followers of the IELTS testing system, that the IELTS test involves a 'rounding off to the nearest number.

MARA was written to, pointing out some of their errors and a reply was received a few weeks later with no correction of any errors or procedures, just a typical patronising "Yes Minister" reply.

Dear (Name withheld)

It has been brought to my attention that your office is claiming that:

"The IELTS test is designed specifically to test the English language ability with precision."

This is just a wrong statement, even IELTS with their over-reaching claims, would never make such a false claim. It is not precise, or as statisticians say, the test is not reliable, and it was not designed specifically to test English language ability.

It was designed to assist university administrators, as one of their tools, to help them decide whether a person's English language proficiency would be enough for them to pass their university course. Even IELTS themselves underscores this with their Disclaimer on the IELTS candidate's booking form, which MARA appears to have ignored to take heed of.

The Disclaimer reads that:

The International English Language Testing System (IELTS) is designed to be one of many factors used by academic institutions, government agencies, professional bodies and employers in determining whether a test taker can be admitted as a student or be considered for employment or for citizenship purposes. IELTS is not designed to be the sole method of determining admission or

employment for the test taker. IELTS is made available worldwide to all persons, regardless of age, gender, race, nationality or religion, but it is not recommended to persons under 16 years of age.

British Council, IDP: IELTS Australia and Cambridge ESOL and any other party involved in creating, producing, or delivering IELTS shall not be liable for any direct, incidental, consequential, indirect, special, punitive, or similar damages arising out of access to, use of, acceptance by, or interpretation of the results by any third party, or any errors or omissions in the content thereof.

Previously I had warned MARA to not use IELTS but it used it without understanding its limitations and the many critics it has. MARA's position is not helped by using Bob Birrell of Monash University which it uses to support unsupportable arguments.

I would be surprised if MARA would be able to continue their English language requirements free of legal action and substantial monetary damages. But, I did warn you that MARA's demand for an English language level of IELTS 7x4 was untenable, but I was brushed off.

I am still happy to assist MARA with a more sustainable English language Policy which is free of racial connotations.

Warmest regards,

Michael [Suss]

Dear Michael

Thank you for your email. I apologise for the delay in responding.

I note the concerns you have raised about the reliability and purpose of the IELTS test. However, as previously advised by my Office, IELTS is widely accepted in Australia and internationally as a measure of English proficiency for a range of purposes. The disclaimer you have quoted indicates that the IELTS test is also designed to be one of many factors used by government agencies in determining admission for employment purposes.

The Office's use of the IELTS test is consistent with the purpose as described. Where an IELTS test score is required, it is only one of many factors that is taken into account when deciding a registration application.

I appreciate your offer to assist with the development of an English language policy for migration agents and am happy to consider any suggestions that you wish to make.

Yours sincerely

(Name withheld)

What is clear, AHPRA is known to use the same logic, 'because everyone else does it, it must be OK to use it'. After all, the IELTS test is a quick method to check on someone's English language proficiency and costs the Boards nothing as the costs are borne by the OTDs. There is an air of laziness about the whole process, as no one has bothered to check on the relevance of using the IELTS test.

The ability of MARA to ignore valid criticism is deplorable and one has to feel compassion for those people who apply for English language exemptions, but are rejected for invalid and constructed reasons.

In the case of the person now being discussed, it gets sorrier.

First, you should know what his qualifications are:

- Has lived in Australia for 24 years
- Has a Master of Business Administration at Victoria University
- Has a Certificate IV in Training and Assessment at William Angliss College
- Has a Graduate Certificate in Migration Law and Practice
- Has a Certificate IV in Small Business management

Secondly, he completed an IELTS test on 26 June 2010 and received an overall score of 5.5. For a migration agent, such a score would be quite common for the industry as many migration agents were migrants themselves. There is also a disconnect between his IELTS scores and his high number of qualifications so one may suspect that IELTS may not be a reliable test. In this Submission, more will be discussed about the reliability of the IELTS test with some actual case studies.

MARA has declared him to be, under Sec. 290 of the Migration Act, not to be a 'fit and proper person' because they think he could not carry out his migration work for which he is trained for and qualified in. Keep in mind that MARA never carried out a needs analysis to know what level of English language proficiency migration agents should have.

It is clear they have misconstrued the meaning of 'fit and proper person' within the Migration Act. His situation becomes more absurd when one realises that the migration course he successfully completed was designed and supervised by MARA themselves, and delivered by one of the approved universities, which was Victoria University in this case. Surely, a pass in their own course is good enough proof that he does possess the requisite knowledge to successfully carry out the work of a migration agent.

This all has an Orwellian madness to it!

Do you think that he is a 'fit and proper person' or not.

#### **MIGRATION ACT 1958 - SECT 290**

##### **Applicant must not be registered if not a person of integrity or not fit and proper**

(1) An applicant must not be registered if the Migration Agents Registration Authority is satisfied that:

(a) the applicant is not a fit and proper person to give immigration assistance; or

(b) the applicant is not a person of integrity; or

(c) the applicant is related by employment to an individual who is not a person of integrity and the applicant should not be registered because of that relationship.

(2) In considering whether it is satisfied that the applicant is not fit and proper or not a person of integrity, the Migration Agents Registration Authority must take into account:

(a) the extent of the applicant's knowledge of migration procedure; and

(c) any conviction of the applicant of a criminal offence relevant to the question whether the applicant is not:

(i) a fit and proper person to give immigration assistance; or

(ii) a person of integrity;

(except a conviction that is spent under Part VIIC of the *Crimes Act 1914*); and

(d) any criminal proceedings that the applicant is the subject of and that the Authority considers relevant to the application; and

(e) any inquiry or investigation that the applicant is or has been the subject of and that the Authority considers relevant to the application; and

(f) any disciplinary action that is being taken, or has been taken, against the applicant that the Authority considers relevant to the application; and

(g) any bankruptcy (present or past) of the applicant; and

(h) any other matter relevant to the applicant's fitness to give immigration assistance.

(3) In considering whether it is satisfied that an individual to whom the applicant is related by employment is not a person of integrity, the *Migration Agents Registration Authority* must take into account each of the following matters, so far as the Authority considers it relevant to the question whether the individual is not a person of integrity:

(a) any conviction of the individual of a criminal offence (except a conviction that is spent under Part VIIC of the *Crimes Act 1914*);

(b) any criminal proceedings that the individual is the subject of;

(c) any inquiry or investigation that the individual is or has been the subject of;

(d) any disciplinary action that is being taken, or has been taken, against the individual;

(e) any bankruptcy (present or past) of the individual.

(4) To avoid doubt, this section applies to all applicants (not just first time applicants)

([http://www.austlii.edu.au/au/legis/cth/consol\\_act/ma1958118/s290.html](http://www.austlii.edu.au/au/legis/cth/consol_act/ma1958118/s290.html))

To make matters even more distressing for the applicant, when MARA announced the new English language proficiency requirements, they claimed to have done so after consultation with experts. This was not true as the consultant was advised of what outcomes MARA was looking for prior to his appointment. MARA just wanted to validate their own position and go through a sham process.

*Dear (Name Withheld)*

*1. Below are the NZ Immigration Advisers Authority requirements relating to English language competency.*

*How is English language communication competency assessed?*

*There are a number of different ways in which advisers can demonstrate evidence of English language competence. These include:*

- *Completion of an International English Language Testing System (IELTS) test with minimum academic scores of Reading 6.5; Listening 6.5; Speaking 6.5; and Writing 6.5 with a minimum overall IELTS academic band score of 7.0 or over; or*
- *Completion of primary schooling (or equivalent) and at least three years secondary schooling (or equivalent) in schools where the education was conducted in the English Language; or*
- *Completion of five years secondary schooling (or equivalent) in schools where the education was conducted in the English Language.*

*The Registrar may consider other evidence of English language competence on a case-by-case basis.*

*2. The Canadian English Language standards relating to IELTS are the same as NZ. Their other equivalencies are on this page <http://www.csio-scci.ceicontent/Languageteststandards>*

*2. There were 129 responses to our request for submissions on the English language start date*

*Looking forward to receiving the report on Tuesday and meeting with you again on Wednesday at 11 am  
Maurene is planning on attending that meeting, time permitting.*

*Regard*

*Executive Officer*

*Migration Agents Registration Authority*

### **The discrimination shown by many organisations is simply an ‘abuse of power’**

Just because an organisation has the power to make such rules, they do not necessarily have the right to do so, as it would be an abuse of power.

Simon Brown L.J. observed in *Unilever (R v Inland Revenue Commissioner, ex parte Unilever plc* [1996] STC 681 that there is a distinction between

....on the one hand, mere unfair conduct which may be characterised as "a bit rich" but nevertheless understandable - and on the other hand a decision so outrageously unfair that be allowed to stand.

One cannot help but wonder that most, if not organisations have committed abuses of power by trusting IELTS regarding their claims without checking and verifying those claims, and then applying it in a draconian fashion to a selected segment of their existing or potential new membership.

AHPRA was very keen to have uniform registration requirements for the National Boards that they fail in their basic duty to ensure that such requirements were fair and reasonable and not in breach of Australian and international laws and agreements.

Australian ethnic organisations should object to the discriminatory behaviour of the different Boards towards their OTDs, and who ignore the multicultural nature of the Australian society and believe that a British-based test, with a symbolic inclusion of other English-accented persons really gives it an ‘international’ label. It may put the ‘I’ in IELTS by including Australian accents but Indian English is omitted, even though Indian English predates Australian English!

Sadly, ethnic umbrella organisations such as FECCA have done nothing to protect their own members.

## **Does IELTS hide behind “secrecy” and “security” to avoid scrutiny of their test?**

IDP constantly claims that they operate the IELTS test with the highest security. However, do they really do so? David Blackie, a well-known blogger who has a passionate dislike of the British Council had put in his Blog the lack of proper auditing. One often hears stories about IELTS test papers being distributed prior to a test and there have been many cases worldwide of impersonations of test candidates, collusion between test centre employees and candidates, fraudulent behaviour, and so on. A search of the Internet will find many more cases.

The claim by IELTS that they offer a secure is a marketing ploy but is not true. Throughout the year, many IELTS test results were delayed due to ‘irregularities’.

### **Our specialist IELTS examiner correspondent writes:**

Dear David,

Last December I wrote to you about my experiences concerning the British Council's monitoring of its own IELTS Test Centres. I explained that I had communicated with both Cambridge ESOL and the British Council detailing my concerns about the administration of IELTS at a particular British Council IELTS Test Centre. I received statements of concern about the "integrity and security of IELTS" yet neither Cambridge ESOL nor the British Council told me what, if any, action they were taking. They wouldn't even tell me whether they considered my concerns to be justified. My last emails went unanswered.

Then I discovered the Freedom of Information Act (FOI). Under this Act the British Council, as a Public Authority, is obliged to provide information to members of the public - unless the information falls under exemptions specified within the act. I therefore asked for all audit reports for the previous 3 years.

The British Council FOI Unit sent me two audit reports. The second report was a follow up audit to the first, made because the original audit showed many major problems.

The reports do not make happy reading. Despite the fact that over 20% of the first report was withheld as being exempt (I am currently disputing this), it shows an appalling level of compliance. Of the 202 criteria audited no less than 96 were not met. On top of this, 86 were deemed to present an unacceptable risk - 51 a 'significant' risk. When I asked for the date of the audit immediately prior to this I was told "there were no IELTS audits carried out prior to those you have been provided information on". This particular British Council IELTS Test Centre had been running for over 15 years - without being audited!

Whilst the results of the audit are clearly unacceptable, I was equally disturbed to discover some areas weren't checked properly. For example, the timing of the audit meant that only weekend Speaking interviews were checked - and, at that particular centre, these take place under very different conditions from the majority, which are conducted during the week. Much worse than this, my main concerns were not addressed at all. I had raised many issues concerning offsite testing, including the failure to pre-register candidates, and these were potentially even more serious than those at the main centre.

What does this tell us? If these audit reports are representative, and I suspect they are, we can conclude:

- 1). The British Council audits its own IELTS Test Centres. There appears to be no independent monitoring at all, not even monitoring by a different IELTS Partner.
- 2). British Council IELTS Test Centres can go many years without being audited at all and, when they eventually get an audit, the results may not only be appalling but important areas - even those previously notified to them as being a problem - are not checked at all.
- 3). If an IELTS examiner/invigilator raises concerns about a Test Centre these concerns are not acted on and no feedback is given. This shows a serious lack of transparency and accountability, even within the organisation itself.

These issues raise very important questions about the reliability of IELTS test results.

It's interesting to note that, had I been given the feedback I originally requested, I would have treated it according to my responsibilities as an IELTS examiner/invigilator; i.e. I would have had a duty to respect the confidentiality agreement I had signed. Now the situation is different. The information I have received in the audit reports cannot be considered to be confidential as it is available to any member of the public who cares to ask for it. Also, it was supplied to me as a member of the public rather than as an IELTS examiner. I am, therefore, under no obligation to treat the information in confidence. I feel a greater responsibility to inform the public of my concerns regarding the reliability of IELTS test results and that is why I am writing to you in the hope that you will publish this in your blog.

Yours sincerely,

Ian Pennington

[http://dblackie.blogs.com/the\\_language\\_business/2007/06/the\\_british\\_cou\\_1.html](http://dblackie.blogs.com/the_language_business/2007/06/the_british_cou_1.html)

It is difficult to draw many conclusions about the IELTS test as they operate in great secrecy. This secrecy is rationalised as being necessary for the security and integrity of the IELTS test, but it also may be used to cover up test anomalies and irregularities.

One can anticipate that there will be legal challenges to the secrecy of the IELTS test that will open it up to widespread scrutiny.

In NSW, the Office of the Board of Studies was reluctantly forced to disclose how their marking system works.

### **Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006**

In the Annual Report of the NSW Ombudsman (2008 – 2009), it was reported that:

The Office of the Board of Studies (OBOS) is the highest qualification for students leaving secondary school in NSW. Each year over 67,000 students sit for the HSC exams.

The Office of the Board of Studies (OBOS) NSW is responsible for conducting HSC exams and assessments and processing the calculation and awarding of marks.

A 'standards-setting' system is used to determine the achievement of HSC students. There are six performance bands. Each performance band for a course includes a description of the knowledge, skills and understanding typically demonstrated by students whose achievement falls within that band.

The 'raw marks' of students are changed into final marks through a process of alignment to the performance scale ranging from 1 to 100. A rigorous system is in place to decide which raw marks equate with the cut-off points between performance bands. The so-called 'cut-off marks' change each year to take into account the difficulty of exam papers and other factors that may vary from year-to-year.

To understand how the answers they gave in an exam paper (or their performance of an assessment task) are translated into the final mark they received for a particular subject, a HSC student would need to know their raw marks — that is, the marks allocated for each of their answers — and the cut-off marks that were used to align raw marks to the HSC performance scale.

After the 2004 HSC, a group of students tried unsuccessfully to access their cut-off and raw marks from the OBOS. The next year, 49 students who sat the 2005 HSC lodged a 'class action' FOI application with the OBOS for access to all the information needed to understand how their final mark was derived. The OBOS did not release any of the information requested. After another failed attempt in 2007 to obtain the same information, a student complained to our office and we decided to investigate the matter. The system for determining the achievement of HSC students is, from a public perspective, a mysterious 'black box' that is inaccessible to students, their families, teachers, tertiary institutions and prospective employers. The public

just have to trust the OBOS to process approximately 40 million individual marks awarded to students without error. No information is forthcoming which would adequately explain how a particular student's results were arrived at or to guide students who may wish to test, scrutinise, or challenge how their results were determined.

We found that the OBOS went to considerable lengths to prevent applicants from accessing the information sought after the 2004 and 2005 HSC. Some of the means adopted were contrary to principles of good administrative practice, while others ignored basic principles of good complaint-handling.

We also found that the OBOS displayed a poor understanding of certain aspects of the FOI system and did not act consistently with the objects of the FOI Act. In particular, they:

- incorrectly advised the complainant that the three sets of documents he requested either did not exist or could not be produced
- repeatedly failed to address the complainant's reasonable concerns or respond to his logical arguments about why the documents must exist or be able to be created
- incorrectly decided to treat the complainant's FOI application as 50 separate applications and failed to attempt to resolve the situation when the complainant disagreed with this decision, forcing him to escalate the matter to the ADT
- spent \$15,000 in legal fees, making no attempt during the 10 months in which the ADT proceedings were taking place to attempt to resolve what was, in our view, essentially a communication problem
- made the complainant submit a fresh FOI application when the issue should have been handled as part of an internal review misled the complainant into thinking that a decision had been reviewed by two different officers when in fact the same person who made the original decision subsequently reviewed that decision twice — but had the outcome of the review communicated to the applicant by other people.

We were also concerned about the way the OBOS responded to our involvement — at one stage this included misleading both us and the complainant. Without any apparent consideration for the detriment to 'public interest', the OBOS also claimed legal professional privilege over approximately 60 documents that were highly relevant to our inquiries. This substantially limited the evidence we could examine to determine why certain conduct had taken place.

We recommended that the OBOS consider introducing a more transparent system that allows students to see how their raw marks are transformed into final results. This would allow students who identify a possible error to have this investigated and, if necessary, corrected. We also recommended that future requests for raw marks and cut-off marks should be granted.

Although the OBOS initially rejected most of our major findings and recommendations, the Minister for Education and Training, and the newly appointed President of the Board of Studies accepted them. The Minister expressed her strong view that public sector agencies should cooperate with our office in our investigations and made it clear to the President that she expected that any future dealings with our office should be on this basis. Significantly, the President agreed to propose to the Board that they reconsider their current position not to release cut-off marks. He also directed the OBOS to release to the applicant his raw marks and the cut-off marks and marking guidelines for his subjects.

[http://www.ombo.nsw.gov.au/publication/PDF/speeches/SP\\_ANZELA\\_Conf-30Sept10.pdf](http://www.ombo.nsw.gov.au/publication/PDF/speeches/SP_ANZELA_Conf-30Sept10.pdf)

### **Why does IELTS fail to provide feedback?**

If one was to complete the VICROADS licence test, in addition to an actual driving test, there is a computer-based test where candidates have to complete a range of questions, the answers that are readily available from a road rules manual. On completion of the test, the candidates receive their score based on the percentage of correct answers and a list of questions where they provided a wrong answer. Furthermore, they will receive, together with their list of incorrect answers, a list of detailed explained answers.



Even then, if one passes, one gets a licence with severe limitations. No one expects a person who just passed a licence test will be a “good” driver. Experience is required. IELTS makes no allowance for subsequent experience when its results are a mandatory requirement, contrary to other research.

There is widespread concern about the IELTS test that it does not measure a candidate’s ability of the English language, but is the measure of the candidate’s preparation for the test, and the best way to pass the test. This is commonly referred to as Washback.

### **Five questions which the promoters of IELTS must answer instead of hiding behind “secrecy”**

The IELTS test is a “black-box” testing system and no one know how it works and how reliable the test is. Again, we have to trust the promoters of the test. Why do we do this? What level of due diligence and good governance is this? Yet, we condemn applicants to miss their career choices based on the results of a test decision-makers have no understanding how it works!

Now is the time for the Committee to find out how reliable is the IELTS test and ask the right questions. Organisations need to have the knowledge and understanding of the ‘science’ behind the IELTS test and to do so they should be asking themselves the following five questions and demanding answers from IELTS Australia.

Firstly, why are test candidates denied their right for feedback and advised what their errors were, so they have an opportunity to correct their errors and improve their future scores?

Under the Victorian Charter of Human Rights, paragraph 8 implies ‘the right for information’. Overseas testing organisations adhere to Codes of Conduct agreeing to advise all candidates of their results. IELTS ignores this most basic principle of fairness and it forces candidates to keep redoing the test many more times.

Secondly, what are the specific requirements of each band of the IELTS test? IELTS publishes a “public” version of their band descriptors for the Writing and Speaker bands. Is there a secret version? How is each skill weighted? Does each occupation require the same sub-skills? An example of the writing descriptors can be found at [https://www.teachers.cambridgeesol.org/ts/digitalAssets/113300\\_public\\_writing\\_band\\_descriptors.pdf](https://www.teachers.cambridgeesol.org/ts/digitalAssets/113300_public_writing_band_descriptors.pdf).

Thirdly, how are the raw scores converted into a final band score and how do they model their bands to produce a pre-determined range of band results. From a mathematical perspective, the candidate answers a test, their raw score is then processed and then classed to a “nearest number”, and then all four scores are then averaged to a nearest number. This means that the candidates score is adjusted three times and their final score is not a measure of their English language proficiency, but a ranking against some pre-determined criteria to what the IELTS believes is a valid ranking of a candidate.

This means, although the differences are subtle but significant, that IELTS is not a measure of one’s English language proficiency but a ranking of where that person stands when compare to some pre-determined computer modelling. The computer modelling of IELTS results are unpublished and tightly maintained by the test owners in total secrecy.

Fourthly, if the IELTS test is, as claimed, valid and reliable, why is it that a candidate can achieve a wide range of results, even when the different tests may be just a day or two apart? One would expect consistent results if the IELTS test is valid and reliable. Again, it may be just a play on words that has many different meanings. The IELTS partners claim that IELTS is valid and in a loose sense, they would be correct, if they were talking about ‘face validity’. Face validity means ‘on the face of it, it looks pretty good’. In local idiom we would say, “Don’t worry, mate, she’ll be right”.

Fifthly, what external independent organisations, not funded in any way by IELTS, have agreed that the IELTS test is valid, reliable, fair, and flexible? They might exist somewhere but they are nowhere to be found so this is another reason why the IELTS test should be opened for detailed external scrutiny.

### **IELTS refers to their test having a “Real-life approach”- is this true?**

The IELTS partners take care to promote their test as having a ‘real life approach. Why is this important for them to use this phrase? Milanovic (2002) answers this, that in language testing, there is a belief that task types should reflect real life activities wherever possible. The language test should be aligned to the requirements of an organisation or occupation and be developed after ‘a needs analysis of the language and language activities typically found’ on the relevant area (Milanovic, 2002).

So how can the IELTS test claim, when it delivered in Australia it represents Australian real life conditions? It is done by including the word ‘international’ in the name of the test and marketing the test as a test for the an international English, and not an Australian English, but the test still has a strong British pedigree to it.

Ethics and the use of language tests (Alderson & Banerjee, 2001) is something which has concerned many people and now some tests are subjected to a range of legal constraints. Tests and examinations have had a gate-keeping function for quite some time, especially when the government or authorities have sanctioned the use of such test. Tests which use methods which are discriminatory or not fair to all test candidates are not ethical (Alderson & Banerjee, 2001).

Alderson notes how Norton and Starfield (1997) observed, on the grounds of a South African case study, that unethical conduct becomes evident when second language students' academic writing are implicitly evaluated on linguistic grounds whilst ostensibly being assessed for the examinees' understanding of an academic subject. They argue that criteria for assessment should be made explicit and public if testers are to behave ethically. For the writing test, IELTS publishes a public version of their rubric and not the actual one examiners use. IELTS wishes the “private” version to remain secret to maintain the integrity of the IELTS testing system.

Ingram (D. Ingram, 2005) continues to warn about the limitations about the use of the IELTS test by pointing out that there is a serious gulf between the test and real-life experiences.

Despite the efforts made in IELTS to bridge the gap between the activities undertaken in the testing room and real-life use of the language, the gap remains considerable. First, the contexts within which the language occurs in most language tests are unavoidably limited and lack the richness and distracting features of normal academic activity. The conversation that is held between the Speaking assessor and the candidate is unavoidably dominated by the assessor despite the efforts that have been made in various versions of IELTS to throw some onus onto the candidate, and the range of topics that are discussed and the relationships between the interlocutors are limited by the test situation. In addition, the level of the test is pre-determined and, even though the test is designed to cover a span of the proficiency scales rather than focus on a single level, it is inevitable that, for some candidates, the test will be too hard, for others it will be too easy, and, for some, the topics that happen to be chosen will be either very familiar or very unfamiliar: in all cases, the actual proficiency of the candidates as it would appear in real-life usage will probably not be accurately identified.

In other words, the IELTS test does not live up to their claim that the test reflects real-life experiences.

Although, Rosen (D. Ingram, 2005) is referring to the IELTS test and its limited connection to real-life language performance, to that of university students, AHPRA should note that the same comments are relevant to OTDs.

There is no comparison between IELTS writing – 150 and 250 word tasks – and the reports, the literature reviews and the writing assignments of [the Monash preparation programme]. ... in the IELTS writing there is no requirement of referencing, no requirement to read relevant discipline-specific academic texts, and no requirement to write a sustained, well-mapped and integrated academic paper. ... A student could reasonably do well in .. [the IELTS] tasks and still be quite unprepared for university study. Similarly, the IELTS speaking test is an interview – an excellent indicator of everyday proficiency and even ability to speak about one’s future plans – but lacking in the focussed academic requirements of tutorial and seminar participation and presentation. The IELTS Listening and Reading tests vary in range of topics and may be good indicators of general skill, but certainly cannot predict ability to follow lectures or discipline-specific reading material. Research has shown that students often do badly at a one-off test. Each test is different and a student may strike a topic which is familiar on one occasion and one which is very unfamiliar on another.

## Is the IELTS test really 'fair' as promoted by IDP Australia?

Let one candidate give his view.

### Complaint made by Ind on 16<sup>th</sup> March 2010

- **No Feedback:** I have done IELTS for more than 14 times. My score varies between 5.0 and 8.5 band. I am trying my best to improve but until the time I will not have any record of mistakes I will not be able to succeed. There is no feedback about our results.
- **No Marking Guidelines:** We as an applicant have no proper record of what examiner expect us to write. There can be several way of saying the same thing. It is highly important to know what are the usual errors and how we get penalise for them.
- **Duration of test:** In my opinion, duration of the test is also one of the main concerns for many applicants. As we have to be physically present at the examination venue to get enrol before 8.00AM. The test is suppose to start at 9.00AM which usually is not the case it gets delay by 30 minutes due to enrolment taking more time then what is expected. The test itself is of 3 hours that actually end up finishing at around 12.30PM which is simply just too long and stressful. Moreover, if we need to go to toilet in the meanwhile we can do so either before registering else we have to go during the reading or writing test taken up by supervisors which end up loss of precious time of applicant.
- **Listening Module:** This module requires good concentration which sometimes hard to achieve. If a person sitting nearby sneezes or coughs it makes the other person miss the vital part of the conversation hence loosing marks. To add to that, Universities usually book large venue in order to accumulate more number of candidates which intern lead to the problem of voice echoing further reducing the ability to listen, think and reply.
- **No Pullover with pockets;** I don't quite agree with this concept as if it is the cold weather people from different countries have different body resistance. Application of this policy leads to uncomfortable environment for the applicant and hence reducing his/her ability to perform well. My question is if this a step to avoid cheating then why just pullover and why not the shorts and trousers as well? What if a person does not have a pair of clothes with no pockets on the examination day or what if a girl is wearing a shirt with pocket are we going to ask her to remove it before entering the examination hall. In my view that might attract some civil and social legal actions.
- **Ear Phones:** They can be of great help. In many countries, for example India, earphones with individual volume control are provided during the exam. It helps to overcome the concentration problem to quite an extent.

**Analysis of the Data for Candidate In**

The statistical examination of Mr Ind and Mr LY is possibly the first time such material has been publicly published and will assist the Committee in understanding how the IELTS test has been unethically misused.

The following table shows the scores of our candidate obtained in the sixteen trials along with the date of each test taken, *according to the Test Report Forms* held.

Test Trial	Date	Listening	Reading	Writing	Speaking	Range
First	02-Apr-05	6.0	6.5	6.0	7.0	1.0
Second	10-Mar-07	7.0	6.5	6.0	8.0	2.0
Third	29-Mar-08	7.5	6.0	7.0	6.5	1.5
Fourth	12-Jul-08	6.5	6.0	6.5	8.0	2.0
Fifth	08-Nov-08	7.0	6.0	6.0	6.0	1.0
Sixth	20-Nov-08	8.5	6.5	6.5	7.0	2.0
Seventh	31-Jan-09	7.0	6.0	5.5	7.5	2.0
Eighth	23-Jul-09	6.5	7.0	7.0	8.0	1.5
Ninth	08-Aug-09	6.5	7.0	6.0	7.5	1.5
Tenth	07-Nov-09	7.0	6.5	6.5	8.0	1.5
Eleventh	21-Nov-09	8.5	7.0	6.5	8.0	2.0
Twelfth	12-Dec-09	8.0	6.0	5.5	8.5	3.0
Thirteenth	09-Jan-10	8.5	6.0	6.0	7.0	2.5
Fourteenth	06-Feb-10	8.0	7.5	6.0	8.0	2.0
Fifteenth	06-Mar-10	6.5	6.5	6.5	7.5	1.0
Sixteenth	10-Apr-10	8.5	7.0	7.0	7.5	1.5
Range		2.5	1.5	1.5	2.5	

Figure 5. Test results recorded by IDP Australia

Despite IDP Australia’s claim to high security, and much to the chagrin of Ind, IDP Australia provided him with a slightly different set of results. It questions their much-heralded “reasons of test security and protection”!

The Twelfth test is the one, which differs from the original Test Report Form.

Test Trial	Date	Listening	Reading	Writing	Speaking	Range
First	02-Apr-05	6.0	6.5	6.0	7.0	1.0
Second	10-Mar-07	7.0	6.5	6.0	8.0	2.0
Third	29-Mar-08	7.5	6.0	7.0	6.5	1.5
Fourth	12-Jul-08	6.5	6.0	6.5	8.0	2.0
Fifth	08-Nov-08	7.0	6.0	6.0	6.0	1.0
Sixth	20-Nov-08	8.5	6.5	6.5	7.0	2.0
Seventh	31-Jan-09	7.0	6.0	5.5	7.5	2.0
Eighth	23-Jul-09	6.5	7.0	7.0	8.0	1.5
Ninth	08-Aug-09	6.5	7.0	6.0	7.5	1.5
Tenth	07-Nov-09	7.0	6.5	6.5	8.0	1.5
Eleventh	21-Nov-09	8.5	7.0	6.5	8.0	2.0
Twelfth	12-Dec-09	8.0	6.5	5.0	8.5	3.5
Thirteenth	09-Jan-10	8.5	6.0	6.0	7.0	2.5
Fourteenth	06-Feb-10	8.0	7.5	6.0	8.0	2.0
Fifteenth	06-Mar-10	6.5	6.5	6.5	7.5	1.0
Sixteenth	10-Apr-10	8.5	7.0	7.0	7.5	1.5
Range		2.5	1.5	2.0	2.5	

Figure 7. Test results recorded by Ind according to the Test Reports held by him

There has been chatter in various Forums on the Internet that if a set of test results, given in one test, have a range larger than three, then the IELTS Centre manager will smooth it out to a maximum difference of three.

It appears that IELTS holds the actual results but smooths out any “jagged” results and includes these “adjusted” results to the candidate on their certificate.

Inadvertently, it appears that IDP Australia sent the wrong results out to the candidate.

CENTRE	CANDIDATE	TEST DATE	GIVEN	FAMILY	MODUAL	LISTENING	READING	WRITING	SPEAKING	OVERALL
IN122		2/04/2005			G	6	6.5	6	7	6.5
IN122		10-Mar-07			G	7	6.5	6	8	7
AU166		29-Mar-08			G	7.5	6	7	6.5	7
AU055		12-Jul-08			G	6.5	6	6.5	8	7
IN122		8 Nov-08			G	7	6	6	6	6.5
IN122		20-Nov-08			G	8.5	6.5	6.5	7	7
AU166		31-Jan-09			G	7	6	5.5	7.5	6.5
AU166		23-Jul-09			G	6.5	7	7	8	7
AU166		08-Aug-09			G	6.5	7	6	7.5	7
AU240		7-Nov-09			G	7	6.5	6.5	8	7
AU240		21-Nov-09			G	8.5	7	6.5	8	7.5
AU166		12-Dec-09			G	8	6.5	5	8.5	7
AU166		9-Jan-10			G	8.5	6	6	7	7
AU166		6 Feb-10			G	8	7.5	6.5	8	7.5
AU166		6-Mar-10			G	6.5	6.5	6.5	7.5	7
AU240		10-Apr-10			G	8.5	7	7	7.5	7.5

Figure 7. Set of results supplied by IDP Australia to Ind.

**INTERNATIONAL ENGLISH LANGUAGE TESTING SYSTEM**  
**Test Report Form** GENERAL TRAINING

NOTE: Admissions to undergraduate and postgraduate courses should be based on the ACQ/IELTS Academic and Writing Modules. GENERAL TRAINING Listening and Writing Modules are not designed to test the full range of language skills required for academic purposes. It is recommended that the candidate's language ability as indicated in this Test Report Form be re-assessed after two years from the date of the test.

Centre Number: AU166      Date: [REDACTED]      Candidate Number: [REDACTED]

**Candidate Details**

Family Name: [REDACTED]      First Name: [REDACTED]      Candidate ID: [REDACTED]

Date of Birth: [REDACTED]      Sex (M/F): M      Scheme Code: Private Candidate

Country or Region of Origin: India      First Language: Hindi

Repeating IELTS (Y/N): Y      Previous Test Date: 08/AUG/2009      Previous Test Centre: MONASH

**Test Results**

Listening: 6.0      Reading: 6.0      Writing: 5.5      Speaking: 8.5      Overall Band Score: 7.0

**Administrator Comments**

Centre stamp: [Stamp]      Validation stamp: [Stamp]

Writing Examiner Number: 996232      Administrator's Signature: [Signature]      Test Report Form Number: [REDACTED]

Speaking Examiner Number: 996754      Date: 22/12/2009

**BRITISH COUNCIL**      **IELTS AUSTRALIA**      **UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE ESOL Examinations**

The validity of this IELTS Test Report Form can be verified online by recognising organisations at <http://ielts.uciesol.org>

Figure 8. Copy of Ind's original Test Report Form

**If IELTS was such a reliable test, why are End's results all over the Place?**

The following Line Charts shows the scores of our candidates in each test band and how they differ amongst each other. If the IELTS tests were reliable, the scores received by Ind for each band, would have to be smoothed out manually by the IELTS managers and not be "jagged". However, this means that the administrators manually adjust scores, which do not fit in with their computer modelling. One would assume that for over the five years of the tests he sat, there should be an ascending line from left to right, with the results being close to the line near the end of his series of tests. However, some results are as lower than what he received five years previously, despite attending further study in Australia for five years.

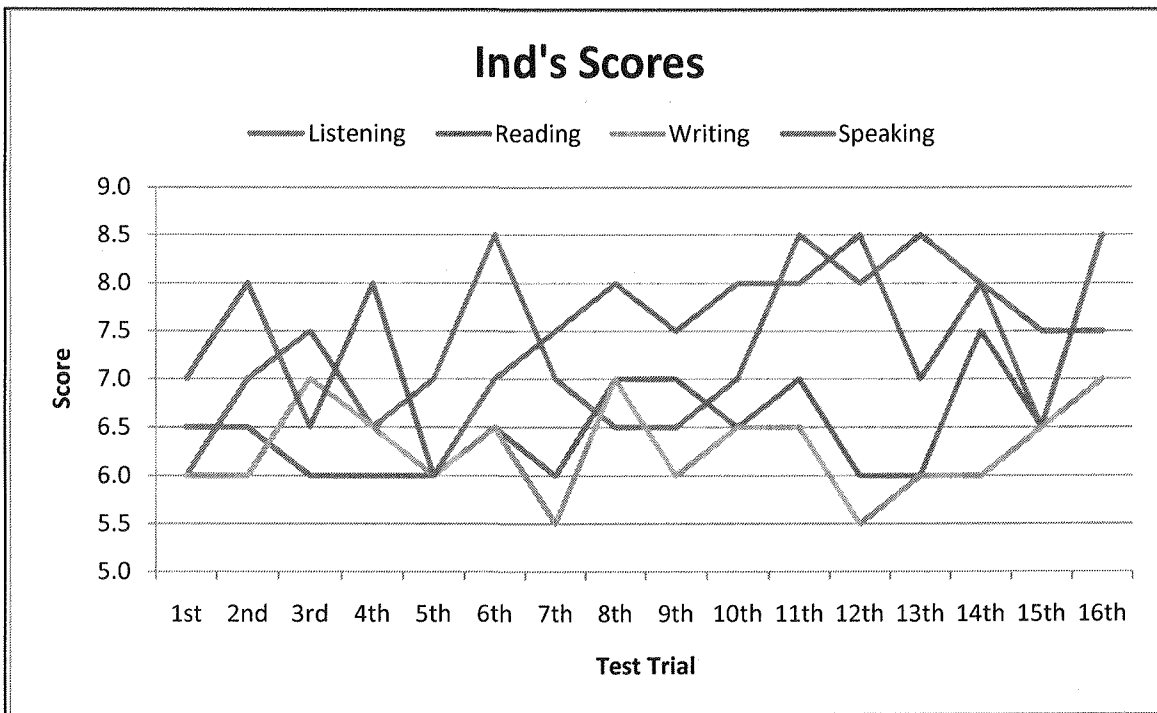


Figure 9. Ind's combined scores in all bands



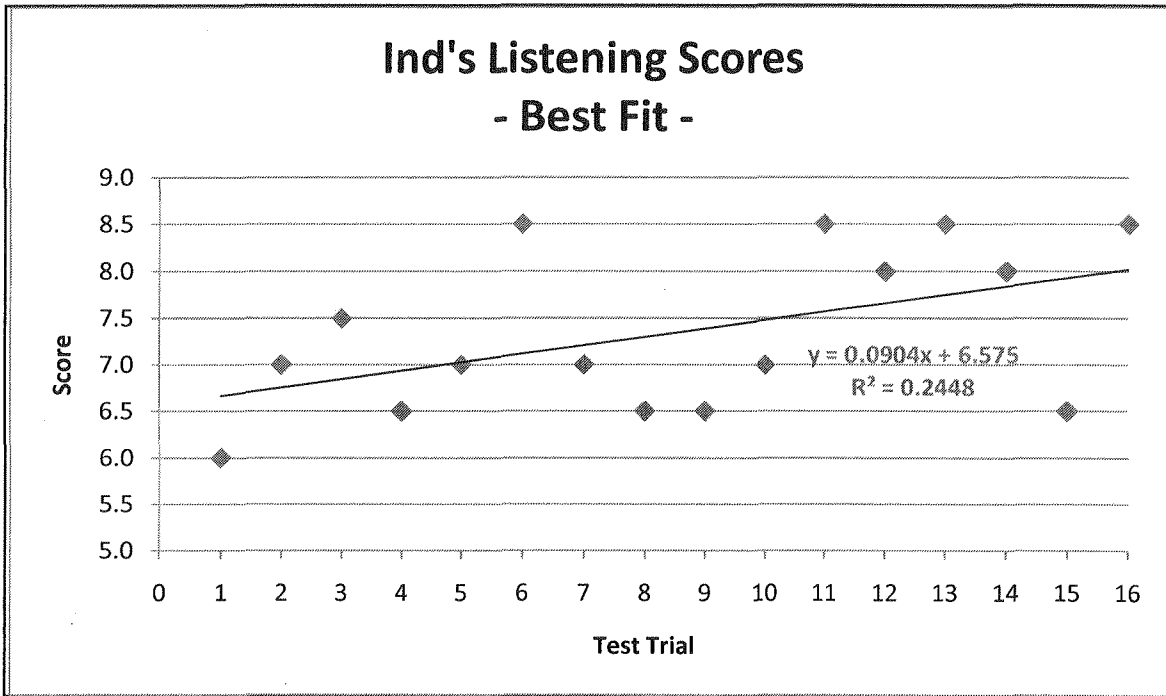


Figure 10. Ind's listening scores

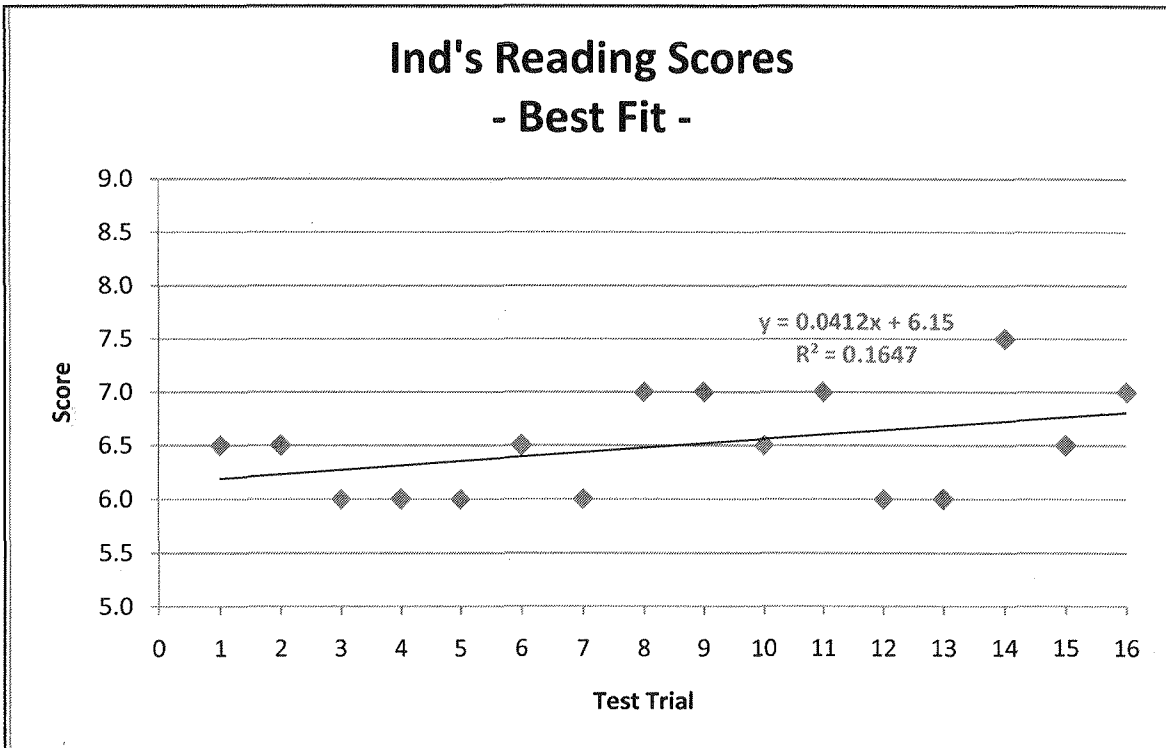


Figure 11. Ind's Reading Scores

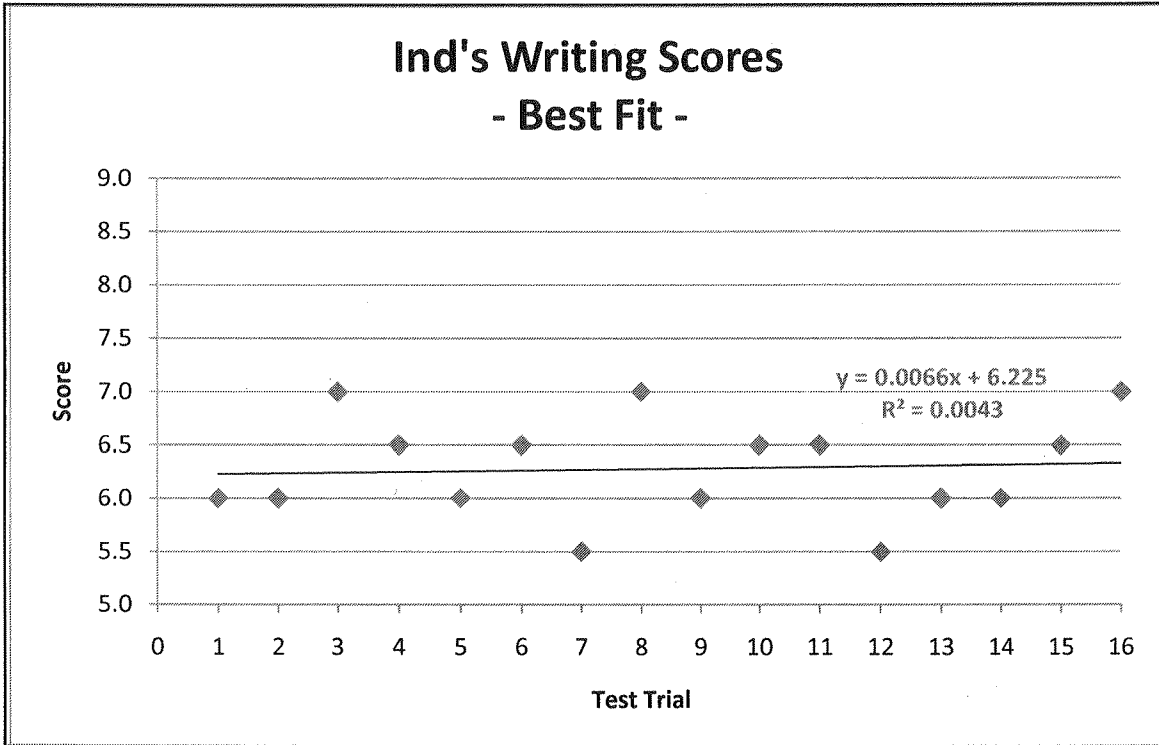


Figure 12. Ind's writing scores

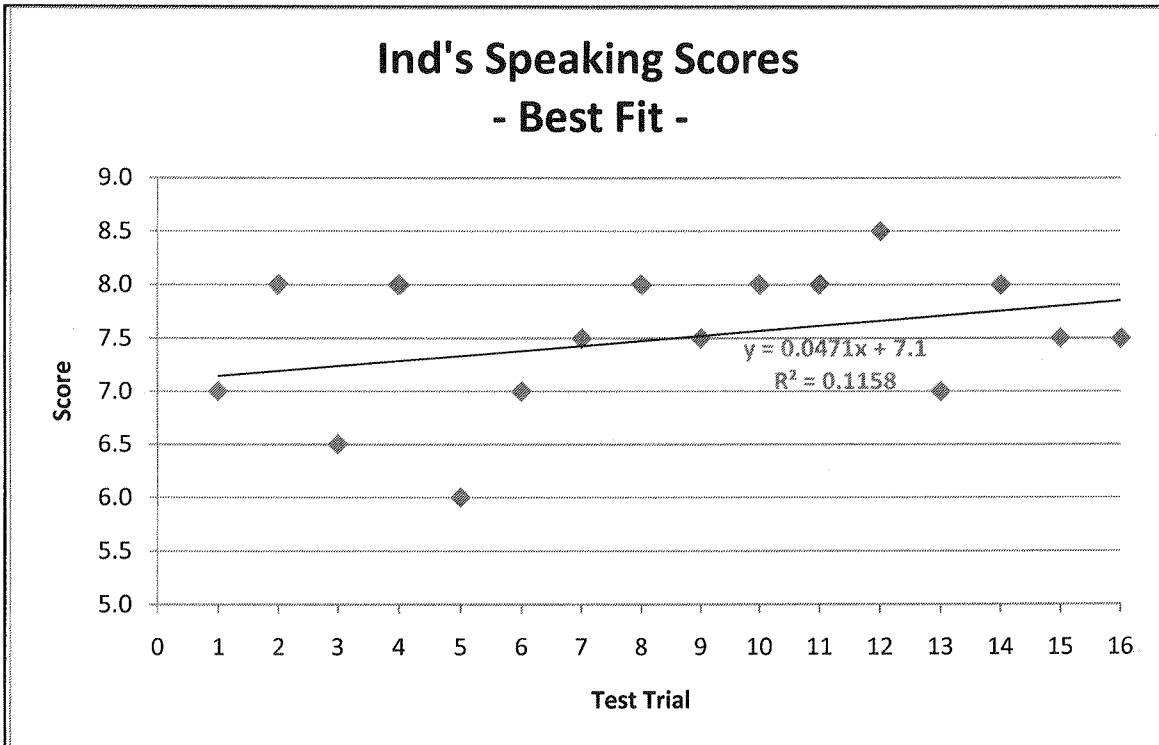


Figure 13. Ind's speaking scores

Visually, it is easy to see that the IELTS test that Ind sat for are not reliable. If it were, then there should be a high correlation between each of the test results.

Of course, one can blame Ind and claim that he was having off days, etc., but would this be so for so many tests? Such differences in score results are quite common amongst repeat IELTS test candidates and as IELTS does not provide any feedback one does not know what to make of the different results

Feedback would be a great help to enable candidates to understand what happened and how they could improve themselves.

With such results, it is no wonder that IELTS prefers to maintain total secrecy.

**Detailed Reliability Analysis of Mr Ind’s test scores**

**SPSS Output**

**Case Processing Summary**

		N	%
Cases	Valid	4	100.0
	Excluded <sup>a</sup>	0	.0
	Total	4	100.0

Figure

a. Listwise deletion based on all variables in the procedure.

In statistics, **listwise deletion** is a method for handling any missing data, where an entire record is excluded from analysis if any single value is missing.

According to the Case Processing Summary table, the number of valid cases is four, which represent the four bands of the IELTS test: Listening, Reading, Writing, and Speaking.

**Reliability Statistics**

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.936	.933	16

The Reliability Statistics table (**Cronbach's Alpha**) shows that IELTS tests are 93.6 percent reliable. In other words, the variation of the tests scores is explained by 93.6 percent of the variation in the true scores. Any other variation would be explained by error, which may be due to known or unknown factors affecting test scores of the candidate.

The figures in red denote a negative correlation. How is this possible so many times? The candidate cannot be having so many ‘off’ days!

**Inter-Item Correlation Matrix**

	1 <sup>st</sup>	2 <sup>nd</sup>	3 <sup>rd</sup>	4 <sup>th</sup>	5 <sup>th</sup>	6 <sup>th</sup>	7 <sup>th</sup>	8 <sup>th</sup>	9 <sup>th</sup>	10 <sup>th</sup>	11 <sup>th</sup>	12 <sup>th</sup>	13 <sup>th</sup>	14 <sup>th</sup>	15 <sup>th</sup>	16 <sup>th</sup>
1 <sup>st</sup>	1.000	.764	-.674	.704	-.522	-.322	.572	.899	.944	.739	.191	.473	-.184	.506	.870	-.246
2 <sup>nd</sup>	.764	1.000	-.076	.845	.098	.335	.962	.659	.832	.966	.748	.928	.475	.799	.878	.414
3 <sup>rd</sup>	-.674	-.076	1.000	.000	.775	.750	.141	-.513	-.600	.000	.424	.263	.710	-.068	-.258	.730
4 <sup>th</sup>	.704	.845	.000	1.000	-.192	.051	.738	.841	.596	.953	.422	.719	.204	.356	.962	.136
5 <sup>th</sup>	-.522	.098	.775	-.192	1.000	.968	.365	-.662	-.258	.000	.730	.453	.917	.440	-.333	.943
6 <sup>th</sup>	-.322	.335	.750	.051	.968	1.000	.579	-.455	-.068	.249	.868	.658	.987	.581	-.088	.996
7 <sup>th</sup>	.572	.962	.141	.738	.365	.579	1.000	.435	.707	.904	.900	.992	.695	.868	.730	.645
8 <sup>th</sup>	.899	.659	-.513	.841	-.662	-.455	.435	1.000	.718	.749	.000	.360	-.308	.175	.927	-.375
9 <sup>th</sup>	.944	.832	-.600	.596	-.258	-.068	.707	.718	1.000	.730	.424	.614	.055	.750	.775	.000
10 <sup>th</sup>	.739	.966	.000	.953	.000	.249	.904	.749	.730	1.000	.645	.881	.399	.623	.943	.333
11 <sup>th</sup>	.191	.748	.424	.422	.730	.868	.900	.000	.424	.645	1.000	.930	.927	.868	.365	.904
12 <sup>th</sup>	.473	.928	.263	.719	.453	.658	.992	.360	.614	.881	.930	1.000	.767	.837	.679	.721
13 <sup>th</sup>	-.184	.475	.710	.204	.917	.987	.695	-.308	.055	.399	.927	.767	1.000	.652	.071	.998
14 <sup>th</sup>	.506	.799	-.068	.356	.440	.581	.868	.175	.750	.623	.868	.837	.652	1.000	.440	.623
15 <sup>th</sup>	.870	.878	-.258	.962	-.333	-.088	.730	.927	.775	.943	.365	.679	.071	.440	1.000	.000
16 <sup>th</sup>	-.246	.414	.730	.136	.943	.996	.645	-.375	.000	.333	.904	.721	.998	.623	.000	1.000

Figure 14. Ind’s Inter-Item Correlation Matrix results

The Inter-Item Correlation Matrix table shows very interesting findings.

- The correlations in very light blue represent associations between each item and itself.
- The correlations in very light gray are the same as the correlations under the very light blue correlations.
- The correlations in red are the zero and negative correlations.

Zero and negative correlations is a sign of negative correlations, meaning that one of the items measures something opposite to what the other item measures. In order for the reliability measures to work well, all items included in the scale should correlate positively and it is preferable to have them to be highly correlated.

### Item-Total Statistics

	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Squared Multiple Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
First Trial Test	104.125	89.896	.409	.	.938
Second Trial Test	103.625	79.396	.901	.	.927
Third Trial Test	103.750	90.750	.217	.	.941
Fourth Trial Test	103.750	82.917	.645	.	.933
Fifth Trial Test	104.250	89.417	.441	.	.937
Sixth Trial Test	103.375	82.229	.624	.	.934
Seventh Trial Test	104.000	77.167	.987	.	.924
Eighth Trial Test	103.375	90.229	.268	.	.940
Ninth Trial Test	103.750	86.750	.554	.	.935
Tenth Trial Test	103.500	82.500	.843	.	.929
Eleventh Trial Test	103.000	78.000	.930	.	.925
Twelfth Trial Test	103.500	67.500	.999	.	.924
Thirteenth Trial Test	103.625	77.229	.732	.	.932
Fourteenth Trial Test	103.125	79.229	.814	.	.929
Fifteenth Trial Test	103.750	87.750	.623	.	.935
Sixteenth Trial Test	103.000	84.167	.707	.	.932

Figure 15. Ind's Item-Total Statistics

The Item-Total Statistics table shows that four items, if deleted from the scale, the reliability of the IELTS tests increase. The four items are the scores of the First, Third, Fifth, and Eighth test trials – shown in red. These tests help to prove that the IELTS test is unreliable.

#### Deleting First, Third, Fifth, and Eighth Test Trials Scores

Case Processing Summary			
		N	%
Cases	Valid	4	100.0
	Excluded <sup>a</sup>	0	.0
	Total	4	100.0

a. Listwise deletion based on all variables in the procedure.

### Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.949	.953	12

We can see that reliability level increased from 0.936 to 0.949. This increase may affect the internal consistency (or correlation) of the remaining items scores although it is a slight increase. This may be explained in the following output.

### Inter-Item Correlation Matrix

	2 <sup>nd</sup>	4 <sup>th</sup>	6 <sup>th</sup>	7 <sup>th</sup>	9 <sup>th</sup>	10 <sup>th</sup>	11 <sup>th</sup>	12 <sup>th</sup>	13 <sup>th</sup>	14 <sup>th</sup>	15 <sup>th</sup>	16 <sup>th</sup>
2 <sup>nd</sup>	1.000	.845	.335	.962	.832	.966	.748	.928	.475	.799	.878	.414
4 <sup>th</sup>	.845	1.000	.051	.738	.596	.953	.422	.719	.204	.356	.962	.136
6 <sup>th</sup>	.335	.051	1.000	.579	-.068	.249	.868	.658	.987	.581	-.088	.996
7 <sup>th</sup>	.962	.738	.579	1.000	.707	.904	.900	.992	.695	.868	.730	.645
9 <sup>th</sup>	.832	.596	-.068	.707	1.000	.730	.424	.614	.055	.750	.775	.000
10 <sup>th</sup>	.966	.953	.249	.904	.730	1.000	.645	.881	.399	.623	.943	.333
11 <sup>th</sup>	.748	.422	.868	.900	.424	.645	1.000	.930	.927	.868	.365	.904
12 <sup>th</sup>	.928	.719	.658	.992	.614	.881	.930	1.000	.767	.837	.679	.721
13 <sup>th</sup>	.475	.204	.987	.695	.055	.399	.927	.767	1.000	.652	.071	.998
14 <sup>th</sup>	.799	.356	.581	.868	.750	.623	.868	.837	.652	1.000	.440	.623
15 <sup>th</sup>	.878	.962	-.088	.730	.775	.943	.365	.679	.071	.440	1.000	.000
16 <sup>th</sup>	.414	.136	.996	.645	.000	.333	.904	.721	.998	.623	.000	1.000

Figure 16

In the Inter-Item Correlation Matrix, we can see that the number of negative and zero correlation has decreased to only four associations (shown in red). The following output should indicate which items are to be removed from the analysis in order to eliminate the negative correlations and consequently obtain a higher reliability measure.

### Item-Total Statistics

	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Squared Multiple Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
Second Trial Test	77.125	65.229	.897	.	.941
Fourth Trial Test	77.250	68.750	.615	.	.949
Sixth Trial Test	76.875	67.729	.623	.	.949
Seventh Trial Test	77.500	63.167	.988	.	.937
Ninth Trial Test	77.250	71.750	.564	.	.951
Tenth Trial Test	77.000	68.167	.828	.	.944
Eleventh Trial Test	76.500	63.833	.937	.	.939
Twelfth Trial Test	77.000	54.500	.997	.	.939
Thirteenth Trial Test	77.125	63.229	.730	.	.947
Fourteenth Trial Test	76.625	64.729	.834	.	.942
Fifteenth Trial Test	77.250	72.917	.605	.	.950
Sixteenth Trial Test	76.500	69.500	.707	.	.947

Figure 17

The Item-Total Statistics table shows that two items – shown in red, if deleted from the scale, the reliability of the IELTS tests would increase.

### Deleting Ninth and Fifteenth Test Trials Scores

#### Case Processing Summary

		N	%
Cases	Valid	4	100.0
	Excluded <sup>a</sup>	0	.0
	Total	4	100.0

Figure a. Listwise deletion based on all variables in the procedure.

#### Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.953	.957	10

The Reliability Statistics table shows that reliability level has increased to 0.950 after removing the two items indicated before.

Inter-Item Correlation Matrix										
	2 <sup>nd</sup>	4 <sup>th</sup>	6 <sup>th</sup>	7 <sup>th</sup>	10 <sup>th</sup>	11 <sup>th</sup>	12 <sup>th</sup>	13 <sup>th</sup>	14 <sup>th</sup>	16 <sup>th</sup>
2 <sup>nd</sup>	1.000	.845	.335	.962	.966	.748	.928	.475	.799	.414
4 <sup>th</sup>	.845	1.000	.051	.738	.953	.422	.719	.204	.356	.136
6 <sup>th</sup>	.335	.051	1.000	.579	.249	.868	.658	.987	.581	.996
7 <sup>th</sup>	.962	.738	.579	1.000	.904	.900	.992	.695	.868	.645
10 <sup>th</sup>	.966	.953	.249	.904	1.000	.645	.881	.399	.623	.333
11 <sup>th</sup>	.748	.422	.868	.900	.645	1.000	.930	.927	.868	.904
12 <sup>th</sup>	.928	.719	.658	.992	.881	.930	1.000	.767	.837	.721
13 <sup>th</sup>	.475	.204	.987	.695	.399	.927	.767	1.000	.652	.998
14 <sup>th</sup>	.799	.356	.581	.868	.623	.868	.837	.652	1.000	.623
16 <sup>th</sup>	.414	.136	.996	.645	.333	.904	.721	.998	.623	1.000

Figure 18

The previous Inter-Item Correlation Matrix table shows that there is no more negative or zero correlations indicating that all the items included in the analysis are good to measure the reliability of the tests scores.

Item-Total Statistics					
	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Squared Multiple Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
Second Trial Test	63.625	55.396	.842	.	<b>.947</b>
Fourth Trial Test	63.750	58.750	.552	.	<b>.957</b>
Sixth Trial Test	63.375	56.063	.697	.	<b>.952</b>
Seventh Trial Test	64.000	53.167	.964	.	<b>.942</b>
Tenth Trial Test	63.500	58.000	.774	.	<b>.950</b>
Eleventh Trial Test	63.000	53.167	.964	.	<b>.942</b>
Twelfth Trial Test	63.500	45.167	.986	.	<b>.942</b>
Thirteenth Trial Test	63.625	51.896	.796	.	<b>.949</b>
Fourteenth Trial Test	63.125	54.563	.814	.	<b>.948</b>
Sixteenth Trial Test	63.000	58.000	.774	.	<b>.950</b>

Figure 19

The Item-Total Statistics table shows one item that, if deleted, would increase the reliability level. However, the increase in the level of reliability is very small and can be ignored, knowing that correlations among all included items are nonzero and positive.



### Candidate Two - Mr. LY

Candidate LY took the IELTS test seventeen times but booked the test nineteen times. Unfortunately, he had kept fifteen copies of his test reports, which are analysed in the following pages.

The following is the SPSS output of running the reliability analysis procedures on his (or her) scores data.

#### **SPSS Output**

##### **Case Processing Summary**

		N	%
Cases	Valid	4	100.0
	Excluded <sup>a</sup>	0	.0
	Total	4	100.0

Figure a. Listwise deletion based on all variables in the procedure.

##### **Reliability Statistics**

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.854	.847	15

**Inter-Item Correlation Matrix**

	1 <sup>st</sup>	2 <sup>nd</sup>	3 <sup>rd</sup>	4 <sup>th</sup>	5 <sup>th</sup>	6 <sup>th</sup>	7 <sup>th</sup>	8 <sup>th</sup>	9 <sup>th</sup>	10 <sup>th</sup>	11 <sup>th</sup>	12 <sup>th</sup>	13 <sup>th</sup>	14 <sup>th</sup>	15 <sup>th</sup>
1 <sup>st</sup>	1.000	.707	.707	1.000	.707	.577	.000	-.302	.640	.000	-.707	.000	.000	.000	.707
2 <sup>nd</sup>	.707	1.000	.500	-.707	.000	.000	-.500	-.426	.151	-.500	-.500	-.632	-.500	-.316	.500
3 <sup>rd</sup>	.707	.500	1.000	-.707	.500	.816	.500	.426	.905	.500	.000	.316	-.500	.632	1.000
4 <sup>th</sup>	-1.000	-.707	-.707	1.000	-.707	-.577	.000	.302	-.640	.000	.707	.000	.000	.000	-.707
5 <sup>th</sup>	.707	.000	.500	-.707	1.000	.816	.500	.000	.754	.500	-.500	.632	.500	.316	.500
6 <sup>th</sup>	.577	.000	.816	-.577	.816	1.000	.816	.522	.985	.816	.000	.775	.000	.775	.816
7 <sup>th</sup>	.000	-.500	.500	.000	.500	.816	1.000	.853	.754	1.000	.500	.949	.000	.949	.500
8 <sup>th</sup>	-.302	-.426	.426	.302	.000	.522	.853	1.000	.514	.853	.853	.674	-.426	.944	.426
9 <sup>th</sup>	.640	.151	.905	-.640	.754	.985	.754	.514	1.000	.754	.000	.667	-.151	.763	.905
10 <sup>th</sup>	.000	-.500	.500	.000	.500	.816	1.000	.853	.754	1.000	.500	.949	.000	.949	.500
11 <sup>th</sup>	-.707	-.500	.000	.707	-.500	.000	.500	.853	.000	.500	1.000	.316	-.500	.632	.000
12 <sup>th</sup>	.000	-.632	.316	.000	.632	.775	.949	.674	.667	.949	.316	1.000	.316	.800	.316
13 <sup>th</sup>	.000	-.500	-.500	.000	.500	.000	.000	-.426	-.151	.000	-.500	.316	1.000	-.316	-.500
14 <sup>th</sup>	.000	-.316	.632	.000	.316	.775	.949	.944	.763	.949	.632	.800	-.316	1.000	.632
15 <sup>th</sup>	.707	.500	1.000	-.707	.500	.816	.500	.426	.905	.500	.000	.316	-.500	.632	1.000

Figure 20.

Here, we can see many zero and negative correlations as in the previous Inter-Item Correlation Matrix table which suggests low correlations. Some items will be deleted from the scale to get a better measurement of the test reliability.

Item-Total Statistics					
	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Squared Multiple Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
<b>First</b>	<b>81.000</b>	<b>23.333</b>	<b>.359</b>	<b>.</b>	<b>.852</b>
<b>Second</b>	<b>81.000</b>	<b>26.167</b>	<b>-.160</b>	<b>.</b>	<b>.869</b>
<b>Third</b>	<b>81.000</b>	<b>22.500</b>	<b>.775</b>	<b>.</b>	<b>.836</b>
<b>Fourth</b>	<b>80.750</b>	<b>27.083</b>	<b>-.499</b>	<b>.</b>	<b>.873</b>
<b>Fifth</b>	<b>81.000</b>	<b>20.333</b>	<b>.634</b>	<b>.</b>	<b>.836</b>
<b>Sixth</b>	<b>80.875</b>	<b>23.229</b>	<b>.986</b>	<b>.</b>	<b>.838</b>
<b>Seventh</b>	<b>81.000</b>	<b>22.167</b>	<b>.867</b>	<b>.</b>	<b>.832</b>
<b>Eighth</b>	<b>80.875</b>	<b>22.729</b>	<b>.593</b>	<b>.</b>	<b>.841</b>
<b>Ninth</b>	<b>80.000</b>	<b>14.167</b>	<b>.948</b>	<b>.</b>	<b>.820</b>
<b>Tenth</b>	<b>80.500</b>	<b>22.167</b>	<b>.867</b>	<b>.</b>	<b>.832</b>
<b>Eleventh</b>	<b>81.000</b>	<b>25.167</b>	<b>.081</b>	<b>.</b>	<b>.861</b>
<b>Twelfth</b>	<b>80.750</b>	<b>20.750</b>	<b>.765</b>	<b>.</b>	<b>.828</b>
<b>Thirteenth</b>	<b>80.500</b>	<b>26.167</b>	<b>-.160</b>	<b>.</b>	<b>.869</b>
<b>Fourteenth</b>	<b>80.250</b>	<b>20.417</b>	<b>.829</b>	<b>.</b>	<b>.824</b>
<b>Fifteenth</b>	<b>80.500</b>	<b>22.500</b>	<b>.775</b>	<b>.</b>	<b>.836</b>

Figure 21

Looking at the items in red, in the Item-Total Statistics table, four items are affecting the analysis negatively and they should be considered for deletion from the scale, as this will increase the reliability level of the test.

#### Deleting Second, Fourth, Eleventh, and Thirteenth Test Trials Scores

##### Case Processing Summary

		N	%
Cases	Valid	4	100.0
	Excluded <sup>a</sup>	0	.0
	Total	4	100.0

Figure a. Listwise deletion based on all variables in the procedure.

Reliability Statistics		
Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.912	.946	11

Inter-Item Correlation Matrix											
	1 <sup>st</sup>	3 <sup>rd</sup>	5 <sup>th</sup>	6 <sup>th</sup>	7 <sup>th</sup>	8 <sup>th</sup>	9 <sup>th</sup>	10 <sup>th</sup>	12 <sup>th</sup>	14 <sup>th</sup>	15 <sup>th</sup>
1 <sup>st</sup>	1.000	.707	.707	.577	.000	-.302	.640	.000	.000	.000	.707
3 <sup>rd</sup>	.707	1.000	.500	.816	.500	.426	.905	.500	.316	.632	1.000
5 <sup>th</sup>	.707	.500	1.000	.816	.500	.000	.754	.500	.632	.316	.500
6 <sup>th</sup>	.577	.816	.816	1.000	.816	.522	.985	.816	.775	.775	.816
7 <sup>th</sup>	.000	.500	.500	.816	1.000	.853	.754	1.000	.949	.949	.500
8 <sup>th</sup>	-.302	.426	.000	.522	.853	1.000	.514	.853	.674	.944	.426
9 <sup>th</sup>	.640	.905	.754	.985	.754	.514	1.000	.754	.667	.763	.905
10 <sup>th</sup>	.000	.500	.500	.816	1.000	.853	.754	1.000	.949	.949	.500
12 <sup>th</sup>	.000	.316	.632	.775	.949	.674	.667	.949	1.000	.800	.316
14 <sup>th</sup>	.000	.632	.316	.775	.949	.944	.763	.949	.800	1.000	.632
15 <sup>th</sup>	.707	1.000	.500	.816	.500	.426	.905	.500	.316	.632	1.000

Figure 22

Looking at the Inter-Item Correlation Matrix table, we can see that most zero correlations lay under the first item that are the scores obtained in the first test trial of the candidate. It has also has negative correlation.

**Item-Total Statistics**

	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item- Total Correlation	Squared Multiple Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
First	58.250	24.417	.409	.	.916
Third	58.250	23.750	.796	.	.903
Fifth	58.250	21.417	.662	.	.906
Sixth	58.125	24.563	.992	.	.905
Seventh	58.250	23.583	.841	.	.901
Eighth	58.125	24.229	.557	.	.910
Ninth	57.250	15.083	.967	.	.905
Tenth	57.750	23.583	.841	.	.901
Twelfth	58.000	22.167	.740	.	.900
Fourteenth	57.500	21.833	.801	.	.897
Fifteenth	57.750	23.750	.796	.	.903

Figure 23

The Item-Total Statistics table showed that there is an item that maybe affecting the scale negatively, which is “First”. Deleting that item from the scale will lead to increased level of reliability.

**Deleting First Test Trial Scores**

**Case Processing Summary**

		N	%
Cases	Valid	4	100.0
	Excluded <sup>a</sup>	0	.0
	Total	4	100.0

Figure a. Listwise deletion based on all variables in the procedure.

**Reliability Statistics**

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.916	.956	10

Figure

Inter-Item Correlation Matrix										
	3 <sup>rd</sup>	5 <sup>th</sup>	6 <sup>th</sup>	7 <sup>th</sup>	8 <sup>th</sup>	9 <sup>th</sup>	10 <sup>th</sup>	12 <sup>th</sup>	14 <sup>th</sup>	15 <sup>th</sup>
3 <sup>rd</sup>	1.000	.500	.816	.500	.426	.905	.500	.316	.632	1.000
5 <sup>th</sup>	.500	1.000	.816	.500	.000	.754	.500	.632	.316	.500
6 <sup>th</sup>	.816	.816	1.000	.816	.522	.985	.816	.775	.775	.816
7 <sup>th</sup>	.500	.500	.816	1.000	.853	.754	1.000	.949	.949	.500
8 <sup>th</sup>	.426	.000	.522	.853	1.000	.514	.853	.674	.944	.426
9 <sup>th</sup>	.905	.754	.985	.754	.514	1.000	.754	.667	.763	.905
10 <sup>th</sup>	.500	.500	.816	1.000	.853	.754	1.000	.949	.949	.500
12 <sup>th</sup>	.316	.632	.775	.949	.674	.667	.949	1.000	.800	.316
14 <sup>th</sup>	.632	.316	.775	.949	.944	.763	.949	.800	1.000	.632
15 <sup>th</sup>	1.000	.500	.816	.500	.426	.905	.500	.316	.632	1.000

Figure 24.

The Inter-Item Correlation Matrix table shows that all correlations have increased and are positive. One correlation is found to be zero, which can be disregarded, as the rest of the correlations of the fifth item are positive and high.

**Item-Total Statistics**

	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Squared Multiple Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
Third	52.750	21.417	.750	.	.908
Fifth	52.750	19.417	.602	.	.915
Sixth	52.625	22.063	.976	.	.909
Seventh	52.750	20.917	.893	.	.903
Eighth	52.625	21.396	.630	.	.911
Ninth	51.750	13.417	.924	.	.919
Tenth	52.250	20.917	.893	.	.903
Twelfth	52.500	19.500	.789	.	.901
Fourteenth	52.000	19.167	.855	.	.898
Fifteenth	52.250	21.417	.750	.	.908

Figure 25.

The overall Cronbach's Alpha was found to be 0.916 and the Item-Total Statistics table shows that deleting any more of the items included in the present scale will not increase the level of reliability from 91.6 percent to a higher level. However, the "Ninth" item had a "Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted" of 0.919, which is higher than the overall alpha, but this increase is slight, so it is of little influence on the final scale. Moreover, this item has a very high total correlation, shown in red in the table, which is a sign that this item should be retained in the scale.

**It can be concluded that the IELTS test was 91.6 percent reliable for the candidate Liyi Sun based on his (or her) scores in the third, fifth, sixth, seventh, eighth, ninth, tenth, twelfth, fourteenth, and fifteenth test trials scores. Other test trials (first, second, fourth, eleventh, and thirteenth) scores are found to have negative effect of the reliability level of the overall test.**

### **Conclusion of Ind's and LY different scores**

If the IELTS results were reliable, both candidates would each have similar results each time with the suggestion that with longer time in Australia, the results would improve gradually.

However, if it was found that IELTS test is unreliable as there were negative correlations between some test results and each other. With negative correlation, it means that one test (variable) is measuring something opposite to what the other test is measuring, which should not happen. All tests (trials) should measure the same thing and they should all be positively correlated.

Presumably, IELTS would blame the candidate but one is aware of so many examples of unreliability that the IELTS test must be seen as unreliable, unless IELTS decides to be more open and prove otherwise to researchers.

**An in-depth analysis of test scores gained by a very large sample of IELTS test candidates.**

For whatever reason, candidates are prepared to do the IELTS test with the expectation that they will achieve the desired result. As the test costs \$320 one assumes that, they have a reasonable reason for doing the test besides just to get an understanding of their English language proficiency.

A detailed analysis of 6582 sets of IELTS scores were carried out, which would give one a greater appreciation of how many people, could achieve certain test scores. IT is believed that this is the first time such information has been ever been published.

One curious observation is the number of people who can achieve 7 in three bands is 11.1 per cent but this dramatically decreases to just 20 per cent of those who can get 7 in all bands. There is a strong suspicion amongst test candidates that these scores are adjusted to allow to high failure rates and to force more people to redo their tests. IELTS' obsession with secrecy does nothing to alleviate these suspicions.

**Overall results according to specific queries**

**Candidates who enrolled and who were absent or refunded**

	Frequency	Percent
Absent or refunded	532	8.1
Enrolled	6050	91.9
Total	6582	100.0

**Candidates who were absent in part or all of the tests**

	Frequency	Percent
Absent in part or all of the tests	573	8.7
Refunded	51	.8
Others	5958	90.5
Total	6582	100.0



**Candidates obtained more than 5, 6 or 7 in all bands**

	Frequency	Percent
More than 7 in all bands	142	2.4
More than 6 in all bands (but not 7)	895	14.9
More than 5 in all bands (but not 6 or 7)	2452	40.8
Other	2514	41.9
Total	6003	100.0

**Candidates obtained more than 7 in all bands**

	Frequency	Percent
More than 7 in all bands	142	2.4
Other	5816	97.6
Total	5958	100.0

**Candidates obtained more than 6 in all bands**

	Frequency	Percent
More than 6 in all bands	1037	17.4
Other	4921	82.6
Total	5958	100.0

**Candidates obtained more than 5 in all bands**

	Frequency	Percent
More than 5 in all bands	3489	58.6
Other	2469	41.4
Total	5958	100.0

**Candidates who received more than 5 in three bands but got less than 5 in one band**

	Frequency	Percent within whole candidate	Percent with candidates who sat for tests
Others	5091	77.3	85.4
Candidates who received more than 5 in three bands but got less than 5 in one band	867	13.2	14.6
Total (who sit for test)	5958	90.5	100.0
Totally absent or refunded	624	9.5	
<b>Total candidates</b>	<b>6582</b>	<b>100.0</b>	

**Candidates who received more than 6 in three bands but got less than 6 in one band**

	Frequency	Percent within whole candidate	Percent with candidates who sat for tests
Others	4765	72.4	80.0
Candidates who received 6 or more in three bands but got less than 6 in one band	1193	18.1	20.0
Total (who sit for test)	5958	90.5	100.0
Totally absent or refunded	624	9.5	
<b>Total candidates</b>	<b>6582</b>	<b>100.0</b>	

**Candidates who received 7 or more in three bands but got less than 7 in one band**

	Frequency	Percent
Others	5298	88.9
Candidates who received 7 or more in three bands but got less than 7 in one band	660	11.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>5958</b>	<b>100.0</b>

**Candidates who received 8 or more in three bands but got less than 8 in one band**

	Frequency	Percent
Others	5820	97.7
Candidates who received 8 or more in three bands but got less than 8 in one band	138	2.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>5958</b>	<b>100.0</b>

**Candidates who received more than 8 in three bands but got less than 7 in one band**

	Frequency	Percent
8 or more in three bands but less than 7 in one band	32	.5
Others	5926	99.5
Total	5958	100.0

**Candidates who received an average of 7**

	Frequency	Percent
Receive an average 7 score	1710	28.7
Receive less than 7 on average	4248	71.3
Total	5958	100.0

**Candidates obtained more than 7 in all bands**

	Frequency	Percent
More than 7 in all bands	142	8.3
Other (who score at least 7 on average)	1568	91.7
Total	1710	100.0

	Writing	Frequency	Percent
Receive an average 7 score	Less than 7	1059	61.9
	7 or more	651	38.1
	Total	1710	100.0

	reading	Frequency	Percent
Receive an average 7 score	Less than 7	367	21.5
	7 or more	1343	78.5
	Total	1710	100.0

	Listening	Frequency	Percent
Receive an average 7 score	Less than 7	152	8.9
	7 or more	1558	91.1
	Total	1710	100.0

	Speaking	Frequency	Percent
Receive an average 7 score	Less than 7	498	29.1
	7 or more	1212	70.9
	Total	1710	100.0

		Receive an average 7 score	
		Frequency	Percentage
Reading	7 or more	1343	78.5%
	Less than 7	367	21.5%
Listening	7 or more	1558	91.1%
	Less than 7	152	8.9%
Writing	7 or more	651	38.1%
	Less than 7	1059	61.9%
Speaking	7 or more	1212	70.9%
	Less than 7	498	29.1%

### Comparison of Academic and general results according to specific queries

<b>Candidates who enrolled and who were absent or refunded</b>			
Module specification		Frequency	Percent
Academic	Absent or refunded	181	7.7
	Enrolled	2178	92.3
	Total	2359	100.0
General	Absent or refunded	351	8.3
	Enrolled	3872	91.7
	Total	4223	100.0

<b>Candidates who were absent in part or all of the tests</b>			
Module specification		Frequency	Percent
Academic	Absent in part or all of the tests	29	1.3
	Others	2149	98.7
	Total	2178	100.0
General	Absent in part or all of the tests	63	1.6
	Others	3809	98.4
	Total	3872	100.0

<b>Candidates obtained more than 5, 6 or 7 in all bands</b>			
Module specification		Frequency	Percent
Academic	More than 7 in all bands	54	2.5
	More than 6 in all bands	325	15.0
	More than 5 in all bands	904	41.7
	Other	883	40.8
	Total	2166	100.0
General	More than 7 in all bands	88	2.3
	More than 6 in all bands	570	14.9
	More than 5 in all bands	1548	40.3
	Other	1631	42.5
	Total	3837	100.0

<b>Candidates obtained more than 7 in all bands</b>			
Module specification		Frequency	Percent
Academic	More than 7 in all bands	54	2.5
	Other	2124	97.5
	Total	2178	100.0
General	More than 7 in all bands	88	2.3
	Other	3781	97.7
	Total	3869	100.0

<b>Candidates obtained more than 6 in all bands</b>			
Module specification		Frequency	Percent
Academic	More than 6 in all bands	379	17.4
	Other	1793	82.6
	Total	2172	100.0
General	More than 6 in all bands	658	17.0
	Other	3202	83.0
	Total	3860	100.0

<b>Candidates obtained more than 5 in all bands</b>			
Module specification		Frequency	Percent
Academic	More than 5 in all bands	1283	59.2
	Other	883	40.8
	Total	2166	100.0
General	More than 5 in all bands	2206	57.5
	Other	1631	42.5
	Total	3837	100.0

**Candidates who received more than 5 in three bands but got less than 5 in one band**

Module specification		Frequency	Percent
Academic	Others	1869	87.0
	Candidates who received more than 5 in three bands but got less than 5 in one band	280	13.0
	Total	2149	100.0
General	Others	3222	84.6
	Candidates who received more than 5 in three bands but got less than 5 in one band	587	15.4
	Total	3809	100.0

**Candidates who received 6 or more in three bands but got less than 6 in one band**

Module specification		Frequency	Percent
Academic	Others	1708	79.5
	Candidates who received 6 or more in three bands but got less than 6 in one band	441	20.5
	Total	2149	100.0
General	Others	3057	80.3
	Candidates who received 6 or more in three bands but got less than 6 in one band	752	19.7
	Total	3809	100.0

**Candidates who received 7 or more in three bands but got less than 7 in one band**

Module specification		Frequency	Percent
Academic	Others	1879	87.4
	Candidates who received 7 or more in three bands but got less than 7 in one band	270	12.6
	Total	2149	100.0
General	Others	3419	89.8
	Candidates who received 7 or more in three bands but got less than 7 in one band	390	10.2
	Total	3809	100.0

**Candidates who received 8 or more in three bands but got less than 8 in one band**

Module specification		Frequency	Percent
Academic	Others	2085	97.0
	Candidates who received 8 or more in three bands but got less than 8 in one band	64	3.0
	Total	2149	100.0
General	Others	3735	98.1
	Candidates who received 8 or more in three bands but got less than 8 in one band	74	1.9
	Total	3809	100.0

**Candidates who received more than 8 in three bands but got less than 7 in one band**

Module specification		Frequency	Percent
Academic	8 or more in three bands but less than 7 in one band	19	.9
	Others	2130	99.1
	Total	2149	100.0
General	8 or more in three bands but less than 7 in one band	13	.3
	Others	3796	99.7
	Total	3809	100.0



Module specification		Frequency	Percent
Academic	.00	1538	70.6
	1.00	639	29.4
	Total	2177	100.0
General	.00	2800	72.3
	1.00	1071	27.7
	Total	3871	100.0

			Receive an overall score 7 or more	
			Count	Column N %
Academic	Reading	Less than 7	118	18.5%
		7 or more	521	81.5%
	Listening	Less than 7	47	7.4%
		7 or more	592	92.6%
	Writing	Less than 7	407	63.7%
		7 or more	232	36.3%
	Speaking	Less than 7	164	25.7%
		7 or more	475	74.3%
General	Reading	Less than 7	249	23.2%
		7 or more	822	76.8%
	Listening	Less than 7	105	9.8%
		7 or more	966	90.2%
	Writing	Less than 7	652	60.9%
		7 or more	419	39.1%
	Speaking	Less than 7	334	31.2%
		7 or more	737	68.8%

## How many words should one know to pass an IELTS test?

How many words should OTDs need to know to be able to be proficient in the English language?

A search facility on the computer, which this submission is being written on, is searching 135,000 files and producing 11.5 million keywords, and still counting! Depending on which test is taken, Academic or General, the number of words the candidate must know is far short of the number of words in the English language. Once again, sitting for the IELTS test and being confronted with so many different words, one hopes that one finds words that one is familiar with. It is really a lottery! It has nothing to do with English language proficiency.

There is a suspicion that the words chosen by the people who devise the composition of the word vocabulary of the IELTS test simply reflect the cultural background and political stance of the test designers. Furthermore, it has British-made written all over it.

One person in an Internet forum group wrote:

I responded to Dave's ideas a couple of years ago by pointing out that a student attending English classes 3 hours a week in China would need over 100 years to get the same amount of input as a six-year-old child has received growing up in the U.S.

.... Dave also cites Professor Kiesling's research into the spread of language through social media. I agree entirely that if we could get our students to start using English among themselves in social situations, their skills would improve rapidly. However, I don't understand how we can get our students to stop using Chinese outside class.

(<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/TEFLChina/message/16184>)

Unintentionally, two fundamental issues were raised.

Firstly, how many words should a person possess in their vocabulary when learning English and being able to possess a wide enough vocabulary to pass the IELTS test?

Secondly, asking students to use English outside the class, as the primary medium of communication is to take away part of their culture and identity. The connection between culture, language, and identity is extremely important within a multicultural society and it would be unlawful to force people to reject their cultural identities.

Of the many millions of different words or phonemes (the smallest phonetic unit in a language that is capable of conveying a distinction in meaning, as the *m* of *mat* and the *b* of *bat* in English [<http://www.answers.com/topic/phoneme#ixzz1DLcqxnlb>]) in the English language, how many words should one know to achieve satisfactory results in the IELTS test?

This question became more challenging when one student who was completing some IELTS test exercise, could not complete a writing exercise, as he did not know the meaning of 'poverty'. Why must one include this word as part of their primary vocabulary? The answer is simply because IELTS says you have to know it! Furthermore, poverty means different things to different people. For example, a person living in a mud hut may be considered to live in poverty, but if everyone around them has no hut to live in, the person with the hut may be living a comfortable life. These words have different interpretations beyond what IELTS thinks.

Another student had a similar problem came across the word, 'ritual'. He did not understand the meaning as it was a completely new word for him. This greatly impacted on his final score as it was covered in around 3-4 questions. He wrote

I was practising reading test of IELTS academic module and came across a word, 'ritual'. I did not understand the meaning because this was a completely new word for me. There were around 3-4 questions, the answers of which were based on the meaning of this word in given passage. I tried my best and because of wrong understanding of meanings of this word three of my questions were wrong. The word was in the last passage and my experience tells me that last passage is always very difficult.

IELTS would claim that one should know the meaning of all of these words by looking at its context. However, it is doubtful that they could substantiate such claims. If they cannot, then the IELTS test is seriously flawed, as it cannot be considered a fair test, despite what the IELTS promoters claim. With candidates trying to complete the reading task under tight time constraints, it is unreasonable to expect them to decipher unknown words. By the way, the requirement to finish the entire IELTS test under tight time restrictions, is simply unfair to test candidates for a range of reasons, but they will be discussed another day.

It makes more sense for the test candidate to be tested with words, which are to be used in the candidates' future work or life experiences, not with words that the candidate may never come across again in their life.

**Word Counts of earlier IELTS Tests**

ACADEMIC READINGS	Word Count	Different Words	AVERAGE	
			Word Count	Different Words
Cambridge Practice Tests for IELTS Volume 1	759	367	843	391
Cambridge Practice Tests for IELTS Volume 2	780	360		
Cambridge Practice Tests for IELTS Volume 3	858	391		
Cambridge Practice Tests for IELTS Volume 4	851	388		
Cambridge Practice Tests for IELTS Volume 5	888	412		
Cambridge Practice Tests for IELTS Volume 6	841	395		
Cambridge Practice Tests for IELTS Volume 7	908	416		
Official IELTS Practice Test	858	396		

Figure 26

READING WITH QUESTIONS	Word Count	Different Words	AVERAGE	
			Word Count	Different Words
Cambridge Practice Tests for IELTS Volume 1	1053	448	1161	471
Cambridge Practice Tests for IELTS Volume 2	1068	434		
Cambridge Practice Tests for IELTS Volume 3	1217	474		
Cambridge Practice Tests for IELTS Volume 4	1186	469		
Cambridge Practice Tests for IELTS Volume 5	1202	493		
Cambridge Practice Tests for IELTS Volume 6	1148	477		
Cambridge Practice Tests for IELTS Volume 7	1233	495		
Official IELTS Practice Test	1180	477		

Figure 27

READING WITH QUESTIONS & INSTRUCTION	Word Count	Different Words	AVERAGE	
			Word Count	Different Words
Cambridge Practice Tests for IELTS Volume 1	1067	452	1176	476
Cambridge Practice Tests for IELTS Volume 2	1083	439		
Cambridge Practice Tests for IELTS Volume 3	1232	478		
Cambridge Practice Tests for IELTS Volume 4	1199	473		
Cambridge Practice Tests for IELTS Volume 5	1217	503		
Cambridge Practice Tests for IELTS Volume 6	1164	485		
Cambridge Practice Tests for IELTS Volume 7	1248	499		
Official IELTS Practice Test	1196	481		

Figure 28

General READING	Word Count	Different Words	AVERAGE	
Cambridge Practice Tests for IELTS Volume 1	513	241	443	223
Cambridge Practice Tests for IELTS Volume 2	390	199		
Cambridge Practice Tests for IELTS Volume 3	449	229		
Cambridge Practice Tests for IELTS Volume 4	----	----		
Cambridge Practice Tests for IELTS Volume 5	486	250		
Cambridge Practice Tests for IELTS Volume 6	----	----		
Cambridge Practice Tests for IELTS Volume 7	527	261		
Official IELTS Practice Test	294	157		

Figure 29

READING WITH QUESTIONS	Word Count	Different Words	AVERAGE	
			Word Count	Different Words
Cambridge Practice Tests for IELTS Volume 1	682	288	598	272
Cambridge Practice Tests for IELTS Volume 2	516	238		
Cambridge Practice Tests for IELTS Volume 3	641	288		
Cambridge Practice Tests for IELTS Volume 4	----	----		
Cambridge Practice Tests for IELTS Volume 5	639	310		
Cambridge Practice Tests for IELTS Volume 6	----	----		
Cambridge Practice Tests for IELTS Volume 7	705	312		
Official IELTS Practice Test	402	198		

Figure 30

READING WITH QUESTIONS & INSTRUCTION	Word Count	Different Words	AVERAGE	
			Word Count	Different Words
Cambridge Practice Tests for IELTS Volume 1	695	292	611	276
Cambridge Practice Tests for IELTS Volume 2	538	245		
Cambridge Practice Tests for IELTS Volume 3	659	295		
Cambridge Practice Tests for IELTS Volume 4	----	----		
Cambridge Practice Tests for IELTS Volume 5	647	312		
Cambridge Practice Tests for IELTS Volume 6	----	----		
Cambridge Practice Tests for IELTS Volume 7	714	314		
Official IELTS Practice Test	410	200		

Figure 31

<b>Academic and General Reading</b>	<b>Word Count</b>	<b>Different Words</b>	<b>AVERAGE</b>	
			<b>Word Count</b>	<b>Different Words</b>
Cambridge Practice Tests for IELTS Volume 1	<b>645</b>	<b>267</b>	634	270
Cambridge Practice Tests for IELTS Volume 2	<b>572</b>	<b>251</b>		
Cambridge Practice Tests for IELTS Volume 3	<b>617</b>	<b>258</b>		
Cambridge Practice Tests for IELTS Volume 4	----	----		
Cambridge Practice Tests for IELTS Volume 5	<b>715</b>	<b>301</b>		
Cambridge Practice Tests for IELTS Volume 6	----	----		
Cambridge Practice Tests for IELTS Volume 7	<b>619</b>	<b>276</b>		
Official IELTS Practice Test	<b>633</b>	<b>267</b>		

Figure 32

## How is your English language proficiency?

A simple test will determine the difference between your literacy skills. Can you tell the difference between the different band descriptors? If not, do not apply to come to Australia, unless you are, or were, a citizen of one of the lucky exempt nations!

<b>BAND 8</b> Very Good User Has fully operational command of the language with only occasional unsystematic inaccuracies and inappropriacies. Misunderstandings may occur in unfamiliar situations. Handles detailed argumentation well.
<b>BAND 7</b> Good User Has operational command of the language, though occasional inaccuracies, inappropriacies and misunderstandings in some situations. Generally handles complex language well and understands detailed reasoning.
<b>BAND 6</b> Competent User Has generally effective command of the language despite some inaccuracies, inappropriacies and misunderstandings. Can use and understand fairly complex language, particularly in familiar situations.
<b>BAND 5</b> Modest User Has partial command of the language, coping with overall meaning in most situations, though is likely to make many mistakes. Should be able to handle basic communication in own field.

Figure 31

Once again, one is left wondering about how many of our policymakers actually understand what the IELTS test is about, how the test is delivered, and what the scores and descriptors mean. For example, does anyone really understand the difference between Bands 5 and Bands 8?

We all use a combination of language skills with a little bit of this skill and more of another, then why are OTDs expected to be extremely adept in all bands at the same time?

Furthermore, do the descriptors refer to each band of each skill or to the average of the four bands? IELTS is not forthcoming about what it means when they were contacted and it adds to the vagueness of the test and what the test results actually mean.

Only the candidates are left to ponder and wonder how they will be able achieve for them, a virtually impossible score.

By the way, as an afterthought, the word 'inappropriacies' is really a word, meaning "an inappropriate use of a word or an expression". Nevertheless, you knew that, didn't you? Incidentally, a search on Google shows that IELTS are one of the few organisations to use this word.



In the absence of any conclusive proof that IELTS (International English Language Testing System) test achieves what it claims, organisations have extended a high level of trust to them by blindly accepting their claims and explanations without question promoting the IELTS test regularly, and using the IELTS test results as a perquisite for whatever purposes. There is simply no due diligence carried out and it may be said that all these organisations are at fault at letting the ‘tail wagging the dog’.

If IELTS will not allow their product to be solely used as a measure of a person’s English language proficiency, then why is DIAC, MARA and AHPRA and many other organisations doing just that.

DIAC just announced new English language proficiency requirements that are to take place from July 1<sup>st</sup> 2011. They will not give any bonus marks for applicants scoring a minimum of 6 in all bands. Applicants scoring 7 or more will get 10m points and those receiving 8 in all bands will get 25 points.

## **APPENDIX 1 - Comments by Graduating Students**

The following “name withheld” comments were supplied as the results of carrying out a 2010 English Language Proficiency Survey, supervised by the Nursing Federation of Victoria of Nurses who graduated from the University of Ballarat.

These examples highlight can be repeated thousands of times based on people from OTDs and allied professions. The only reason for their exclusion is a perceived lack of English language proficiency they have, but no National Board has carried out any needs analysis to ascertain what level of English language proficiency is required for their work.

This omission is a failure to understand what is level of English language proficiency is required for OTDs to carry their work satisfactory and what test is appropriate. No National Board under AHPRA has done a detailed analysis of what IELTS is and what it measures. This is a serious failure in good governance.

IELTS is not the medium to judge any one's language proficiency. Sometimes a lay person can also get very good score in the test but the person doesn't knows how to speak English.

Also if a student have done Nursing course in Australia, they have done a degree in Australia, there should be enough assessment in their course to make them competent.

And also, when a student pursued his/her course in an English speaking country and 'TAUGHT & ASSESSED' in English. I believe, it is not an appropriate to test the language competence.

THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR YOUR HELP

Good idea having survey thanks

Nursing course completion country and the requirement of the course. How come a school is enrolling student into nursing course if they will not allowed the registration. Waste of time, efforts and money.

Now I am very much depressed because every single day passes with a nightmare regarding my future. These disturbances really intensified the agony of separation of family especially, kids, parents, life partners and belongings. It is really testing my men

It is nothing wrong if you provided information prior to the enrolment and shift the rules. But it happened only after when we reached at the middle of the course and by the time we surrendered everything to this programme. I expect a legitimate consideration.

As per the current the transition programme my seniors received the registration. We both stand at the same line. It is not right or there is no reason to smashed us back because of we are going to complete the course in July 2011. Please help us to get a

Thanking you

Sincerely

TG

Post registration nursing student,

University of Ballarat.

I find it a waste of time and money. Why can't the Nursing Board read our transcripts and realise that for us to qualify as nurses, we should be able to read and understand English.

Under the current registration requirements, when I finish my degree in December 2012, I have to re-take the IELTS again as my results would have expired by then. It's frustrating why students like myself have to keep proving that we can speak, write, listen and read.

Maybe they should make the entry requirements for English in TAFEs and uni stricter... that way, they don't give false hope to students that they can graduate and work in Australia and end up not being to do so.

I have classmates who came from India and Philippines. They don't need IELTS to get their registration as they have done their secondary education in English. However, many of them took IELTS recently for visa reasons and none of them achieved IELTS 7 on

From this case we can easily see that completing secondary education in English doesn't equal to IELTS 7, which makes the current English requirement unfair.

Thus I strongly suggest that all applicants from non-English speaking background should sit IELTS, not only people who have done their secondary education in another language.

Above my qualifications have been assessed by New Zealand Qualifications Authority and issued a assessment report on 26 August 1999. A copy of the letter been submitted to The Manager, Education & Training Centre (VIC Branch) recently.

Other qualifications in New Zealand: Record of Learning issued by New Zealand Qualifications Authority on 23 February 2001(NZQA ID: 000-334-5263).

I completed year 10 at high school, then i completed a trade apprenticeship as a boilermaker. Completing a cert iv in nursing and i am currently studying 3rd year bachelor of nursing at the university of Ballarat. I hope this proves i can read and write in

I sincerely appeal for your understanding and assistance. I hope that Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (AHPRA) can review my case and grant me a registration without any conditions. Australia is a democratic country. We should all be treat

Best regards,

JY

I am a registered nurse under conditioning till 2011. I started my job as RN1 at Epworth Hospital since Oct.2010. So far, all my patients have expressed that they can easily understand my English, and said that my English level even better than some old RN

Thank you to your ANF team for pushing my registration done. I hope there would be more positive news coming up for conditioning RNs in the future...

Kind regards,

JNW

I have been an accountant for over 20 years of which 11 years has been in Australia and 9 years in the UK. I did my Accountancy and Management studies in the UK.

If I was not proficient enough in the English Language I would not have been able to function as an Accountant nor would have been able to progress this far with my Nursing studies.

I'm studying IELTS to prepare for the third times attempt. As far as I know, even the local students, the student who complete their secondary school in English or the students have already registered because they were Div 2 nurses couldn't get 7 in this

Please review the standard.

Thank you very much for helping us.

The passing or failing of an examinee seems to fall on the subjectivity of the examiner.

Why not base the passing on the overall band score?

Kind Regards

RH

But I want to have test nearby my home. It is too hard to get up 2am, drive 4 hours to Melbourne for the test and then drive back another 4 hours in the afternoon.

Because I have to go to TAFE 4 days a week and work 3 days a week plus kids to look after.

All I am trying to register is an enrolled nurse. and I have not passed the English exam.

I AM GOT MY REGISTRATION BECAUSE I DID MY SCHOOLING IN ENGLISH ATLEAST I AM LUCKY IN THAT ASPECT OFCOURSE I AM REALLY THANKFUL TO ANF.

I suggest that students complete a special nursing English course (3-6 months) before registration

I have completed Certificate IV Community Service (Aged Care Work) and have been trained in many other courses during my years as carer.

I didn't register as a div 2 last year but most of the students in my batch have done it. What is the difference between them and the students who did not apply for div 2 registration? If they got exemptions why can't we get it?

I am so disappointed with this. I have spent a lot of money for studies. My future is completely depends on the results of my English test. If i could not meet this requirement my degree would be just a piece of paper. I am so depressed.

Thanks a lot!

Also, in my opinion, once you have passed IELTS whether general or academic, it should not have an expiration, simply because the English language skills continue to be enhanced and developed once you've started to live in a country like Australia.

If we manage to write our exams in English and get good grades as Australians, I don't see what else is there to prove.

This IELTS tests costs money and time and i think the markers are very biased, they forget that accents are hard to do away with. If we manage to talk to our patients and get messages across.

I don't understand what else needs to be proved.

I have been out of high school for over 10 years and finding proof of my education is relatively difficult.

It has been a rather frustrating process trying to register, considering I am have already been registered as an EN for the past 3 years, it all seems very pointless.

Perhaps English language testing or proof of language skills, should only be used on people born outside Australia, in non-English speaking countries.

Secondly, preparation for the test will cost me and my family .

They should appreciate and value nurses with multi-language skills and not discriminate against them. A lot of these multi-language nurses may have much better English than the average people who completed their high school in English. That is why they can

The requirement of IELTS test should be removed!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

Dear .....

I am writing to ask for your advice/help in regard to the new rules on English Skills that affects me as an Australian Citizen. I believe the new rules are unfair and need to be addressed.

Although I am still a nursing student, I will join ANF as a member once I graduate in early 2011. In August, I wrote to Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency to ask for an exemption for the "English Skills" test. However they have rejected my appeal.

For your perusal, my reasons for obtaining an exemption for the English Skills test are stated in the below email I wrote to them.

Best regards,  
(Name Withheld)

To: AHPRA  
Sir/Madam,

My question is about 'English skills' for nurse registration.

I thought I should be granted an exemption for the 'English Skills test'.

Would you please let me know if I could be exempted for the English test.

My reasons for having an exemption are as follows:

1. Presently I am a student of 'master in nursing practice', Monash University. I will be completing my studies in Feb. 2011.
2. I have studied in USA and received 'master of science' from Purdue University, USA.
3. I have studied and received 'doctor of business administration' from University of South Australia.
3. I am an Australian citizen. I have been using English as major communication language in my works, studies and daily life for the past 20 years.
4. Although my secondary subjects are not taught in English, all my postgraduate degrees are taught and assessed in English.

Best regards,  
(Name Withheld)

Dear .....

Hi, I am currently undertaking my Master of Nursing Science degree at Melbourne University.

As a final year student of a Master entry-to-practice degree, a permanent resident in Australia, and someone who obtained a BA degree in the United State, I do not understand the need of paying AUD317 to take the IELTS for the new English requirement under the new national registration.

There are other classmates who came from US, UK, or New Zealand, obtained their high school education and/or first degree in a English as first language country (Or someone who obtained their first undergraduate degree within Australia). I personally felt that the National registration board was not fully aware of the current changes, especially with the new Melbourne model.

There will be more nurses coming up with a Master entry-to-practice degree, and it seems silly to have a Master degree student to undertake a English language test when they are required to have a research paper completed in the master degree.

We are very concern about this new requirement as we are in our final semester finishing our degree and looking forward to be a Registered Nurse. I am glad that ANF is acting upon this issue and hope it will be resolved by the time when we will be getting our registration. Thank you very much for the effort ANF is putting into this issue.

Best Regards, (Name Withheld)

## **Re: Unfair treatment of overseas nursing graduates**

### **To The Department of Parliamentary Services:**

We are nursing students at Deakin University (third year). We were intended to be ready for graduate from nursing in July. We came here expecting to do a conversion course which would allow us to register as nurses automatically after we complete the course. We are trained and educated in Victoria of Australia, but with the sudden change of rules has put us in difficult and unforeseen situations, especially in regard to issues of continued/discontinued tenancy here. The protest is in regards to the application of a recent change in rules surrounding nurse registrations, specifically in the case of Deakin international nurses training in Victoria of Australia.

The facts appear to be as follows:

- When we enrolled for the course they were given to understand that a pass in the course would make them eligible for registration as nurses in Victoria.

The course was stated as running from 30/6/2009 to 30/6/2010

We were told we could apply for registration at the end of their course.

Towards the end of their course we were advised that there MAY be a problem with registration because from July 1st 2010 nursing registration would be the responsibility of the Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia instead of the Nursing Board of Victoria and that the rules may change.

- With the sudden decision, everyone is under financial and emotional stress. The study we have put so much effort is left in vein. Our course officially finished on 30/6/10. This really means they changed the rules almost as we finished the course - it was a retrospective change. This, also, is grossly unfair (According to NBV policy (now transition to national board of nursing and midwives, we should be covered to be registered. The rules should not apply to us who graduate in mid year as we are in the transition period. (see attachment)

- Now, we have been informed that they are subject to NEW rules which require a band 7 score in the IELTS language test before registration can be sought.

Clearly this is grossly unfair on several grounds:

1. We are being penalized retrospectively. They have had the rules changed at the end of a very expensive year of study. We have to pass exams and clinicals to pass the course — to pass both these streams they obviously must have a working knowledge of English. It will be difficult for us to comply with the new rules because many have student visas running out before the end of August.

2. Because we cannot apply for registration, we cannot be seriously considered for Graduate Nursing Positions in the mid-year intake at Victorian hospitals, despite some being interviewed and (I believe) short-listed. Obviously this situation puts a terrible and unfair pressure on us who have enough to do to just survive and thrive in our alien academic environment. Many of us have spent all our family savings to follow this dream .we cannot afford to stay on for more tuition and pay for IELTS tests. Everyone from the class is devastated and distressed with the news.

3. As you are aware that we are from different social backgrounds. Some of them left husband and children at home. Some of them came to study with parents support and



most people have resigned from their job before we came to Australia ( we are all experienced nurse in our country) we cannot go back like this

4. People will miss out on jobs and be forced to go home - we have spent a fortune to do the course because we understood that it would prepare us for registration here.

Therefore we would hope that you can investigate whole affair for us. We understand that there is a shortage of nurses in Victoria. We have had a full training course and be ready to be a nurse. We are looking forward to your intervention on behalf of the students, and to a just and equitable resolution to the impasse.

Best regards,

Nursing students from Deakin University

Dear .....

You can use any part of that email, please feel free to do so. As I have mentioned in the email, a lot of students in our school are either Australian Citizens by conferral, or permanent resident, our tuition is subsidized by Victorian government. We are in a dilemma at this moment because we cannot do division one course, because we must have div 2 registration. On the other hand, we cannot go for employment either, coz we are not registered. The reason for this dilemma is we were not born in Australia or in an English speaking country. Is this cultural discrimination?

Secondly, some students from Philippines have already registered under the current policy coz the claimed that their secondary education is taught in English in their home country. It sounds like AHPRA as an Australian Governmental Organization, is happier to give the employment and education opportunity to a foreign citizen rather than giving the same opportunity to Australian citizens who is from non-English speaking countries.

Thirdly, VIC government paid the schools to train a lot of people who are unemployable. At the beginning of the div 2 courses, we never heard about the policy, so our one year effort will bring us nothing, why don't we go to Centrelink for unemployment benefit last year.

Fourthly, the salary scale, scope of practice and responsibility of div 1 and div 2 nurses are completely different from each other, why the registration policy for us is the same? We people in the full time course were out of work for one year coz we need to go to school 4-5 days a week. The OET test will cost me 580\$, this is a real burden on my shoulder.

All in all, we hope APHRA can treat all Australian citizens in the same way, not matter where u from, what race and colour you are, and what your cultural background is. No matter you from commonwealth country or not, we can enjoy equal treatment.

Thanks so much for your reply

Darren

(Name Withheld)



## APPENDIX 2-FOI Request to AHPRA

This FOI request is to include all documents between the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency and any organisation providing English language tests.”

### Information Released

#### **Communiqués**

- All National Boards Meeting September 2009 (611 KB,PDF)
- All National Boards Meeting November 2009 (1.86 MB,PDF)
- All National Boards Meeting December 2009 (1.81 MB,PDF)
- Chiropractic Board of Australia Meeting October 2009 (1.44 MB,PDF)
- Chiropractic Board of Australia Meeting November 2009 (891 KB,PDF)
- Chiropractic Board of Australia Meeting December 2009 (1.88 MB,PDF)
- Chiropractic English language decision extracts (83.6 KB,PDF)
- Dental Board of Australia Meeting September 2009 (724 KB,PDF)
- Dental Board of Australia Meeting October 2009 (2.55 MB,PDF)
- Dental Board of Australia Meeting October 2009 - English Language Requirements Registration Standard (919 KB,PDF)
- Dental Board of Australia Meeting November 2009 (756 KB,PDF)
- Dental Board of Australia Meeting December 2009 (353 KB,PDF)
- Medical Board of Australia Meetings September 2009 to September 2010(1.29 MB,PDF)
- Medical Board of Australia Meeting October 2009 (2.36 MB,PDF)
- Medical Board of Australia Meeting November 2009 (2.13 MB,PDF)
- Medical Board of Australia Meeting December 2009 (1.62 MB,PDF)
- Medical Board of Australia Meeting February 2010 (1.86 MB,PDF)
- Medical Board of Australia Meeting March 2010 (787 KB,PDF)
- Medical Board of Australia Meeting April 2010 (398 KB,PDF)
- Medical Board of Australia Meeting May 2010 (468 KB,PDF)
- Medical Board of Australia Meeting June 2010 (985 KB,PDF)
- Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia Meeting September 2009 (142 KB,PDF)
- Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia Meeting October 2009 (479 KB,PDF)
- Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia Meeting October 2009 - English Language Requirements Registration Standard (489 KB,PDF)
- Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia Meeting October 2009 - Report(136 KB, PDF)
- Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia Meeting November 2009 (353 KB,PDF)
- Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia Meeting December 2009 (353 KB,PDF)
- Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia Meeting February 2010 (571 KB,PDF)
- Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia Meeting May 2010 (190 KB,PDF)

- [Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia Meeting June 2010 \(219 KB,PDF\)](#)
- [Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia Meeting July 2010 \(170 KB,PDF\)](#)
- [Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia Meeting August 2010 \(132 KB,PDF\)](#)
- [Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia Meeting August 2010 - English Language Skills Registration Standard \(146 KB,PDF\)](#)
- [Osteopathy Board of Australia Meeting October 2009 \(1.60 MB,PDF\)](#)
- [Osteopathy Board of Australia Meeting November 2009 \(879 KB,PDF\)](#)
- [Osteopathy Board of Australia Meeting December 2009 \(372 KB,PDF\)](#)
- [Osteopathy Board of Australia English Language Decisions 2009 \(67.6 KB,PDF\)](#)
- [Physiotherapy Board of Australia Meeting September 2009 \(112 KB,PDF\)](#)
- [Physiotherapy Board of Australia Meeting October 2009 \(127 KB,PDF\)](#)
- [Physiotherapy Board of Australia Meeting October 2009 - English language requirements registration standard \(1009 KB,PDF\)](#)
- [Physiotherapy Board of Australia Meeting November 2009 \(107 KB,PDF\)](#)
- [Physiotherapy Board of Australia Meeting February 2010 \(88.0 KB,PDF\)](#)
- [Physiotherapy Board of Australia Meeting June 2010 \(420 KB,PDF\)](#)
- [Physiotherapy Board - Letter from University of South Australia requesting waiver of English language standard \(391 KB,PDF\)](#)
- [Physiotherapy Board - Response to letter from University of South Australia requesting waiver of English language standard \(291 KB,PDF\)](#)
- [Physiotherapy Board - Response to email from University of Sydney regarding English language standards \(272 KB,PDF\)](#)
- [Psychology Board of Australia Meeting September 2009 \(282 KB,PDF\)](#)
- [Psychology Board of Australia Meeting October 2009 \(1.03 MB,PDF\)](#)

## Consultations

- [Medical Board of Australia - Consultation paper on registration standards and related matters October 2009 \(4.15 MB,PDF\)](#)
- [Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia - Consultation paper on registration standards and related matters October 2009 \(680 KB,PDF\)](#)
- [Physiotherapy Board of Australia - Consultation paper on registration standards and related matters October 2009 \(485 KB,PDF\)](#)[Submission from a student in nursing \(61.6 KB,PDF\)](#)
- [Submission from ACT Nursing and Midwifery Board \(125 KB,PDF\)](#)
- [Submission from an Osteopath \(58.1 KB,PDF\)](#)
- [Submission from Australian Catholic University - Schools of Nursing and Midwifery \(63.1 KB,PDF\)](#)
- [Submission from Australian College of Mental Health Nurses \(202 KB,PDF\)](#)
- [Submission from Australian College of Mental Health Nurses - Attachment\(155 KB,PDF\)](#)
- [Submission from Australian College of Midwives- registration \(232 KB,PDF\)](#)
- [Submission from Australian College of Nurse Practitioners \(272 KB,PDF\)](#)

- [Submission from Australian Health Minister's Advisory Council to Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia \(2.44 MB,PDF\)](#)
- [Submission from Australian Health Minister's Advisory Council to Osteopathy Board of Australia \(1015 KB,PDF\)](#)
- [Submission from Australian Medical Council \(751 KB,PDF\)](#)
- [Submission from Australian Nursing and Midwifery Council - registration standards \(1019 KB,PDF\)](#)
- [Submission from Australian Nursing Federation \(409 KB,PDF\)](#)
- [Submission from Australian Osteopathic Association \(379 KB,PDF\)](#)
- [Submission from Chiropractic and Osteopathic College of Australia to Chiropractic Board of Australia \(192 KB,PDF\)](#)
- [Submission from Chiropractic and Osteopathic College of Australia to Osteopathy Board of Australia \(209 KB,PDF\)](#)
- [Submission from Chiropractors and Osteopaths Registration Board Tasmania \(81.7 KB,PDF\)](#)
- [Submission from Chiropractors Board of Queensland \(144 KB,PDF\)](#)
- [Submission from Council of Deans of Nursing and Midwifery \(114 KB,PDF\)](#)
- [Submission from Council on Chiropractic Education Australasia \(165 KB,PDF\)](#)
- [Submission from Curtin University of Technology \(16.9 KB,PDF\)](#)
- [Submission from Curtin University of Technology - Faculty of Health Sciences \(61.4 KB,PDF\)](#)
- [Submission from Health Services Union \(118 KB,PDF\)](#)
- [Submission from National Prescribing Service Limited \(219 KB,PDF\)](#)
- [Submission from Nurses and Midwives Board of New South Wales \(125 KB,PDF\)](#)
- [Submission from Nurses and Midwives Board of Western Australia \(2.51 MB,PDF\)](#)
- [Submission from Nurses Board of Victoria \(4.65 MB,PDF\)](#)
- [Submission from Nursing and Midwifery Office Department of Health WA\(60.3 KB,PDF\)](#)
- [Submission from Nursing and Midwifery Board of South Australia \(288 KB,PDF\)](#)
- [Submission from Nursing Board of Tasmania \(47.2 KB,PDF\)](#)
- [Submission from Nursing Director \(41.4 KB,PDF\)](#)
- [Submission from Oriental Migration & Education Centre Pty Ltd \(27.0 KB,PDF\)](#)
- [Submission from Osteopaths Board of Queensland \(130 KB,PDF\)](#)
- [Submission from Pharmacy Board of NSW \(4.54 MB,PDF\)](#)
- [Submission from Pharmacists Board of Queensland \(157 KB,PDF\)](#)
- [Submission from Pharmacy Board of Tasmania \(158 KB,PDF\)](#)
- [Submission from Pharmacy Board of Victoria \(215 KB,PDF\)](#)
- [Submission from Pharmacy Council of New Zealand \(6.94 MB,PDF\)](#)
- [Submission from Pharmaceutical Council of Western Australia \(99.9 KB,PDF\)](#)
- [Submission from Pharmacist proprietor \(48.1 KB,PDF\)](#)
- [Submission from Queensland Nurses Union \(317 KB,PDF\)](#)
- [Submission from Queensland Nursing Council \(117 KB,PDF\)](#)

- [Submission from Pharmaceutical Society of Australia \(96.6 KB,PDF\)](#)
- [Submission from Society of Hospital Pharmacists of Australia \(72.6 KB,PDF\)](#)
- [Submission from Southern Health Victoria \(103 KB,PDF\)](#)
- [Submission from University of Queensland - School of Nursing & Midwifery\(229 KB,PDF\)](#)

### FAQs

- [Nursing and Midwifery Explanatory Notes and Frequently Asked Questions - English Language Skills \(165 KB,PDF\)](#)
- [Nursing and Midwifery Frequently Asked Questions - English Language Skills \(185 KB,PDF\)](#)

### Media Releases

- [NMBA Media Release - Board protects public and supports safe practice - 13 August 2010 \(265 KB,PDF\)](#)
- [NMBA Media Release - English language skills needed to provide safe care to Australian community - 5 August 2010 \(332 KB,PDF\)](#)

### Registration Standards

- [Australian Health Workforce Ministerial Council Approval of Registration Standards for Physiotherapy March 2010 \(1.08 MB,PDF\)](#)
- [Medical Board of Australia English Language Skills Registration Standard\(325 KB,PDF\)](#)
- [Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia English Language Skills Registration Standard \(299 KB,PDF\)](#)

### Resources

- [ANMC Report - Development of national standards for the assessment of internationally qualified nurses and midwives August 2009 \(751 KB,PDF\)](#)
- [CAE Letter to AHPRA regarding Occupational English Test October 2009\(84.1 KB,PDF\)](#)
- [IELTS Academic and General Training \(123 KB,PDF\)](#)
- [Information Sheet on Visa Requirements for International Nursing Students July 2010 \(108 KB,PDF\)](#)
- [Occupational English Test October 2009 \(4.21 MB,PDF\)](#)
- [Evidence in support of changes to English Proficiency \(135 KB,PDF\)](#)
- [PLAB Test Overview November 2009 \(3.83 MB,PDF\)](#)

## Topic/Scope of FOI Request

**Item 1:** "All documents involved in the administrative decision to set the English language requirements for all division 1 nurses registered by AHPRA to IELTS 7, including research reports and analysis relied upon in the decision making process."

**Item 2:** "All documents relied upon in harmonising the registration requirement from preceding State registration jurisdictions (Registration Boards), and documents relied upon for decisions by the AHPRA relating to registration of or speciality recognition for nurses."

**Item 3:** "All documents., discussion papers, briefing papers prepared by or for the AHPRA in relation to the transitional arrangements and/or the rollover of registration processes and decisions prior to the formal commencement of the AHPRA on 1 July 2010.' relating to registration transition for nurses and midwives only."

**Item 4:** "AHPRA Agency management Committee Board Minutes and Agendas and all Regional Board or Committee Minutes and Agenda's including attachments since the inception of AHPRA."

**Item 5:** "Submissions, correspondence, briefing papers and reports submitted or undertaken as part of the Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia's consultation process in October in relation to the proposed increase in IELTS requirements."

**Item 6:** "Correspondence with professional bodies, State and Commonwealth Health Departments and Ministers in relation to the registration processes of division 1 nurses and the change in English language requirements to IELTS 7."

**Item 7:** "Briefing papers provided to State and Commonwealth Health Ministers or Health Departments in relation to the registration processes of division 1 nurses and the change in English language requirements to IELTS 7."

**Item 8:** "All Minutes and Agendas for the Australian Health Workforce Council between 1 July 2009 and 30 June 2010."

## Information Released

### Agency Management Committee

- [Agenda Agency Management Committee Meeting No 1 \(62.2 KB,PDF\)](#)
- [Agenda Agency Management Committee Meeting No 2 \(127 KB,PDF\)](#)
- [Agenda Agency Management Committee Meeting No 3 \(127 KB,PDF\)](#)
- [Agenda Agency Management Committee Meeting No 4 \(129 KB,PDF\)](#)
- [Agenda Agency Management Committee Meeting No 5 \(128 KB,PDF\)](#)
- [Agenda Agency Management Committee Meeting No 6 \(130 KB,PDF\)](#)
- [Agenda Agency Management Committee Meeting No 7 \(129 KB,PDF\)](#)
- [Agenda Agency Management Committee Meeting No 8 \(131 KB,PDF\)](#)
- [Agenda Agency Management Committee Meeting No 9 \(129 KB,PDF\)](#)
- [Agenda Agency Management Committee Meeting No 10 \(51.8 KB,PDF\)](#)
- [Agenda Agency Management Committee Meeting No 11 \(128 KB,PDF\)](#)
- [Agenda Agency Management Committee Meeting No 12 \(126 KB,PDF\)](#)
- [Agenda Agency Management Committee Meeting No 13 \(123 KB,PDF\)](#)

- [Agenda Agency Management Committee Meeting No 14 \(121 KB,PDF\)](#)
- [Agenda Agency Management Committee Meeting No 15 \(125 KB,PDF\)](#)
- [Agenda Agency Management Committee Meeting No 16 \(124 KB,PDF\)](#)
- [Agenda Agency Management Committee Meeting No 17 \(124 KB,PDF\)](#)
- [Agenda Agency Management Committee Meeting No 18 \(131 KB,PDF\)](#)
- [Minutes of Agency Management Committee Meeting April 2009 \(451 KB,PDF\)](#)
- [Minutes of Agency Management Committee Meeting May 2009 \(160 KB,PDF\)](#)
- [Minutes of Agency Management Committee Meeting June 2009 \(127 KB,PDF\)](#)
- [Minutes of Agency Management Committee Meeting July 2009 \(174 KB,PDF\)](#)
- [Minutes of Agency Management Committee Meeting August 2009 \(149 KB,PDF\)](#)
- [Minutes of Agency Management Committee Meeting September 2009 \(306 KB,PDF\)](#)
- [Minutes of Agency Management Committee Meeting October 2009 \(150 KB,PDF\)](#)
- [Minutes of Agency Management Committee Meeting November 2009 \(278 KB,PDF\)](#)
- [Minutes of Agency Management Committee Meeting December 2009 \(245 KB,PDF\)](#)
- [Minutes of Agency Management Committee Meeting January 2010 \(186 KB,PDF\)](#)
- [Minutes of Agency Management Committee Meeting February 2010 \(241 KB,PDF\)](#)
- [Minutes of Agency Management Committee Meeting March 2010 \(208 KB,PDF\)](#)
- [Minutes of Agency Management Committee Meeting April 2010 \(175 KB,PDF\)](#)
- [Minutes of Agency Management Committee Meeting May 2010 \(154 KB,PDF\)](#)
- [Minutes of Agency Management Committee Meeting June 2010 \(151 KB,PDF\)](#)
- [Minutes of Agency Management Committee Meeting July 2010 \(144 KB,PDF\)](#)
- [Minutes of Agency Management Committee Meeting August 2010 \(151 KB,PDF\)](#)
- [Minutes of Agency Management Committee Meeting September 2010 \(155 KB,PDF\)](#)

### **Communiqués**

- [AHWMC Response on National Registration and Accreditation - 12 February 2010 and 22 April 2010 \(506 KB,PDF\)](#)
- [AHWMC Final Decisions and Actions Arising - 22 April 2010 - Attachment 1 \(161 KB,PDF\)](#)
- [AHWMC Final Decisions and Actions Arising - 22 April 2010 - Attachment 2 \(45.9 B,PDF\)](#)
- [AHWMC Final Decisions and Actions Arising - 22 April 2010 - Attachment 3 \(38.7KB,PDF\)](#)
- [AHWMC Final Decisions and Actions Arising - 22 April 2010 - Attachment 4 \(66.4KB,PDF\)](#)
- [AHWMC Letter approving registration standards for Nurses and Midwives – March 2010 \(63.3 KB,PDF\)](#)
- [All National Boards Meeting December 2009 - Revised common English language standard \(1.68 MB,PDF\)](#)
- [Nursing and Midwifery Board Letter to Australian Nursing Federation - July 2010 \(134 KB,PDF\)](#)
- [Nursing and Midwifery Board Letter to Patrick Crookes on English Language Skills Registration Standards - August 2010 \(212 KB,PDF\)](#)
- [Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia - Draft National Registration Migration Matrix \(398 KB,PDF\)](#)
- [Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia - Registration Transition Plan\(1.11 MB,PDF\)](#)



- [Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia Meeting September 2009 \(38.1 KB,PDF\)](#)
- [Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia Meeting October 2009 \(457 KB,PDF\)](#)
- [Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia Meeting October 2009 - Report\(33.2 KB,PDF\)](#)
- [Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia Meeting October 2009 - English language requirements registration standard \(489 KB,PDF\)](#)
- [Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia Meeting November 2009 \(374 KB,PDF\)](#)
- [Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia Meeting December 2009 \(348 KB,PDF\)](#)
- [Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia Meeting February 2010 \(404 KB,PDF\)](#)
- [Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia Meeting May 2010 \(165 KB,PDF\)](#)
- [Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia Meeting June 2010 \(204 KB,PDF\)](#)
- [Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia Meeting July 2010 \(77.9 KB,PDF\)](#)
- [Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia Meeting August 2010 \(132 KB,PDF\)](#)
- [Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia Meeting August 2010 - English Language Skills Registration Standard \(146 KB,PDF\)](#)

### **Consultations**

- [Submission from a student of nursing \(61.6 KB,PDF\)](#)
- [Submission from ACT Nursing and Midwifery Board \(46.4 KB,PDF\)](#)
- [Submission from Australian Catholic University - Schools of Nursing and Midwifery \(66.8 KB,PDF\)](#)
- [Submission from Australian College of Children and Young People's Nurses \(86.0 KB,PDF\)](#)
- [Submission from Australian College of Mental Health Nurses \(205 KB,PDF\)](#)
- [Submission from Australian College of Mental Health Nurses - Attachment\(155 KB,PDF\)](#)
- [Submission from Australian College of Midwives - SA Branch \(15.2 KB,PDF\)](#)
- [Submission from Australian College of Midwives on accreditation standards\(142 KB,PDF\)](#)
- [Submission from Australian College of Midwives on registration standards\(128 KB,PDF\)](#)
- [Submission from Australian College of Nurse Practitioners \(99.3 KB,PDF\)](#)
- [Submission from Australian Health Ministers Advisory Council \(1.06 MB,PDF\)](#)
- [Submission from Australian Nursing and Midwifery Council \(677 KB,PDF\)](#)
- [Submission from Australian Nursing Federation \(407 KB,PDF\)](#)
- [Submission from Australian Private Midwives Association \(179 KB,PDF\)](#)
- [Submission from Council of Deans of Nursing and Midwifery \(128 KB,PDF\)](#)
- [Submission from Curtin University of Technology \(16.9 KB,PDF\)](#)
- [Submission from Curtin University of Technology - Faculty of Health Sciences \(6.42 KB,PDF\)](#)
- [Submission from Dean, Judith \(20.7 KB,PDF\)](#)
- [Submission from Health Services Union \(136 KB,PDF\)](#)
- [Submission from Nurses and Midwives Board of Western Australia \(1.63 MB,PDF\)](#)

- [Submission from Nursing and Midwifery Board of South Australia \(274 KB,PDF\)](#)
- [Submission from Nursing and Midwifery Department of Health Western Australia \(25.3 KB,PDF\)](#)
- [Submission from Nursing and Midwifery Southern Health Victoria \(33.1 KB,PDF\)](#)
- [Submission from Nursing Board of Tasmania \(58.0 KB,PDF\)](#)
- [Submission from Nursing Director \(41.8 KB,PDF\)](#)
- [Submission from Oriental Migration & Education Centre Pty Ltd \(27.0 KB,PDF\)](#)
- [Submission from Queensland Nurses Union \(208 KB,PDF\)](#)
- [Submission from Queensland Nursing Council on accreditation standards\(151 KB,PDF\)](#)
- [Submission from Queensland Nursing Council on registration standards\(64.6 KB,PDF\)](#)
- [Submission from University of Queensland - School of Nursing and Midwifery \(249 KB,PDF\)](#)

### **Registration Standards**

- [Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia English Language Skills Registration Standard \(297 KB,PDF\)](#)

### **Resources**

- [Information Sheet - Mail out from AHPRA to all registrants in South Australia \(173 KB,PDF\)](#)
- [Transition to a new registration type under the National Law \(1.35 MB,PDF\)](#)

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