

Guidelines for applying

IELTS Joint-funded research program 2009/2010

All IELTS-related research activities are co-ordinated as part of a coherent framework for research and validation. Activities are divided into areas which are the direct responsibility of Cambridge ESOL, and work which is funded and supported by IELTS Australia and the British Council.

As part of their ongoing commitment to IELTS-related validation and research, IELTS Australia and the British Council are once again making available funding for research projects in 2009/2010. For several years now the two partners have issued a joint call for research proposals that reflect current concerns and issues relating to the IELTS test in the international context. [Click here](#) for a full list of research studies which have received grant funding since 1995. Such research makes an important contribution to the monitoring and test development process for IELTS; it also helps IELTS stakeholders (e.g. English language professionals and teachers) to develop a greater understanding of the test.

All IELTS research is managed by a Joint Research Committee which agrees research priorities and oversees the tendering process. In determining the quality of the proposals and the research carried out, the Committee may call on a panel of external reviewers. The Committee also oversees the publication and/or presentation of research findings.

What areas of interest have been identified?

This year the IELTS Joint Research Committee would like to encourage applications for research studies which fit within these three broad areas.

1. Test development and validation issues

- studies investigating the IELTS General Training Reading test, particularly stakeholder reactions to the revised section two
- investigation of the cognitive processes of IELTS test takers
- investigation of the process of writing IELTS test items
- Investigation of L1 Writing and Speaking features that distinguish IELTS proficiency levels

2. Issues relating to contexts of test use

- studies to establish appropriate IELTS score levels in specific contexts (for access to a university department or vocational training course)
- use of IELTS for professional registration purposes, or for purposes of migration, citizenship or employment
- studies investigating the use of IELTS and IELTS scores in local contexts, especially in-depth case studies focusing on individuals or small groups
- Investigation of IELTS usefulness compared to other tests in similar contexts

3. Issues of test impact

- Investigations of the role of interactive communication in the IELTS speaking or writing tests and the impact of this on candidates' preparedness for interactive communication in study or training contexts
- investigations of attitudes towards IELTS among users of test scores including admissions and academic subject staff in receiving institutions
- investigations of perceptions towards IELTS among test takers, teachers, learners and others engaged in preparing for IELTS (particularly in countries where there has been little or no previous IELTS related research)
- test impact relating case studies in local contexts (e.g., teachers' experiences of working with IELTS)
- Case studies on English language progression among overseas students in undergraduate or post-graduate contexts
- Case studies on in-session English programmes at English-speaking universities, particularly with consideration of the relationship between hours of study and typical score gains

Consideration will also be given to other issues of current interest in relation to IELTS.

Is access to IELTS test materials or score data possible?

Access to IELTS test materials or score data is often not possible for a variety of reasons, e.g. test security, data confidentiality. However, a limited amount of retired material (e.g. writing test prompts) may be made available for research purposes, and IELTS Official Practice Materials, IELTS Scores Explained DVD and other published practice tests can often be used as research tools. Cambridge ESOL may be able to supply writing scripts and speaking test recordings for the purposes of analysis, and a set of instruments and procedures for investigating the impact of IELTS on materials and on the teaching/learning context has also been developed in recent years; these are available for use by researchers following consultation with Cambridge ESOL (and subject to an appropriate research agreement).

Who can submit proposals?

As part of the IELTS policy of stimulating test-related research among its stakeholders, it is hoped that many of the research proposals submitted this year will come from researchers and organisations around the world who have a direct and ongoing connection with IELTS, e.g. consultants, examiners, IELTS Administration Centres and centres which have assisted in trialling IELTS. There is, however, no objection to proposals being submitted by other groups/centres/individuals.

Research Ethics and Confidentiality

All applications should follow necessary ethical clearance and confidentiality codes as required by your university, organization and/or region. Click here for a guide to ethics resources from the UK, Europe and the world.

What is the level and duration of funding available?

The maximum amount of funding which will be made available for any one proposal is £15,000/AUS\$36,000 (including institutional overheads/taxes). This upper limit may

be reviewed in exceptional circumstances. The research study will need to be completed and a full report submitted by the end of December 2010. Please note that applications for extensive travel or large items of equipment are not encouraged.

What is the procedure for submitting proposals?

Application forms, a **sample proposal** format and guidelines for submission (together with terms and conditions) are available on-line and from the British Council and IELTS Australia - **see below for contact details**. Proposals for funding should take the form of a typed/word-processed document of no more than 10 pages, and be accompanied by the completed application forms.

Who will evaluate the proposals?

All research proposals will be evaluated by the IELTS Joint Research Committee comprising representatives of the three IELTS partners as well as other academic research experts in the field of applied linguistics and language testing.

What criteria will be used to evaluate proposals?

The following factors will be taken into consideration when evaluating proposals:

- Relevance and benefit of outcomes to IELTS
- Clarity and coherence of proposal's rationale, objectives and methodology
- Feasibility of outcomes, timelines and budget (including ability to keep to deadlines)
- Qualifications and experience of proposed project staff
- Potential of the project to be reported in a form which would be both useful to IELTS and of interest to an international audience.

What is the timescale for the submission and evaluation of proposals?

The following time scale will apply

April 2009	Call for proposals
30 June 2009	Deadline for submission of proposals
July/August 2009	Preliminary review of proposals by IELTS partners
September 2009	Meeting of Joint Research Committee to evaluate and select successful proposals
October 2009	Applicants notified of the Committee's decision

Where and how to send application forms and proposals?

Applicants should submit application forms and project proposals in both electronic form and hard copy to either the British Council or IDP: IELTS Australia who are equal funding bodies for the IELTS Research Programme

For further information:

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