

# Contents

List of Tables	x
Acknowledgements	xi
Introduction	xii

## Part I GETTING ORGANISED

<b>1 Pre-departure Decisions</b>	3
Which university?	3
Applying for a scholarship	8
Finding out your English level	12
International English language tests: TOEFL and IELTS	16
<b>2 Planning your Studies</b>	23
Planning your undergraduate degree	23
Planning your postgraduate programme	26
Enrolling in a university	28
<b>3 Improving your English</b>	32
Setting language learning goals	32
Pre-university English courses	35
Other ways of improving your English	37
Improving your English in the new country	39
University credit courses in English	41
Self-access centres	46
Learning new words	50
Steps in learning new words	55
Two students' stories	57

## Part II YOUR UNIVERSITY STUDIES

<b>4 Lectures</b>	65
The purpose of lectures	65
How are lectures organised?	67

Listening to lectures	71
Taking notes in lectures	75
Asking questions in lectures	79
<b>5 Small Group Learning</b>	<b>84</b>
Tutorials	84
Laboratory work	90
Seminars	92
Joint projects	98
<b>6 Reading</b>	<b>101</b>
Reasons for reading	101
What do university students read?	103
Library catalogues	106
Ways of reading	112
Recognising word parts	116
<b>7 Assignments and Examinations</b>	<b>120</b>
Common problems	120
Plagiarism	123
Types of assignment	126
Understanding the assignment	128
Advice from students	131
Students' questions about assignments	137
The teacher's feedback	140
Peer- and self-evaluation	145
<b>8 Writing a Thesis</b>	<b>150</b>
Steps in writing a thesis	150
Working with a supervisor	157

### **Part III UNIVERSITY LIFE**

<b>9 Communicating with Staff and Students</b>	<b>165</b>
Places and people	165
Reasons for contacting staff	172
Office, telephone and email contacts	174
Using a course website	181

<b>10 Dealing with Problems</b>	189
Study problems	189
Friends and health problems	192
Money problems	193
<b>11 Life Beyond Lectures</b>	195
University culture: What's different?	195
Making friends	202
Life outside university	206
<b>Glossary: A Mini-dictionary of University Words</b>	212
Index	218

# Part I

## Getting Organised

### Introduction

If you are interested in studying at a university overseas but still have a number of questions, the first three chapters of this book take you through three important stages. The first stage is deciding where to go and how to make sure that your English language is at a suitable level. Then comes the second stage, when you plan a programme that suits you and that fits a particular university's programmes. The third stage is for students whose English needs improving.

If you have already moved through all these stages then you are ready for Part II of this book.

# 1 Pre-departure decisions

*All over the world students are changing countries for their university studies. This chapter is written for people who are at the first stage of planning. They have already decided to go but are still thinking about which country and university would be right for them. Part of the decision depends on which courses are offered at which university but students also choose their place of study because they like the country, its language, and/or its culture.*

This chapter answers the following questions:

- How do students choose their university?
- How can students get scholarships?
- What tests and examinations measure students' English levels?

## ► Which university?

### **Why do people study overseas?**

We asked students why they had left their country to study at an English-language university in another part of the world. Here are some of their answers.

#### **Student 1**

*Adventure! I had never lived overseas and always wanted to. That's why, when I got a scholarship to go to another country, I jumped at it! I always wanted to go to Europe, so I went to study in Great Britain for a year and visited the Continent in my holidays.*

Although this student mentions adventure as the motivation, having a scholarship must also have been an important point. Later in this chapter you will read about applying for scholarships.

## 4 Getting Organised

### **Student 2**

*I actually had to go overseas to get into a university. I didn't want to go but in Korea it is very difficult to get into a good university. Your grades have to be very high, but mine weren't. In the United States it was much easier for me to enter university so I decided to go there.*

As you can see, for this student practical reasons were the reason for going overseas.

### **Student 3**

*For me the main reason was to learn English. My parents wanted me to get to know other cultures and to learn English well because this would be good for my career. I think I have learned a lot from living in another country.*

This student had language reasons as well as study reasons for changing countries. If you share this student's aim, read about making friends and about homestays (in Chapter 11).

### **Student 4**

*I had little choice. My subject, petrochemical engineering, is not very well developed in my country and I had to go overseas to study it.*

This student probably did some searching on the Internet to find exactly the right university for this specialised subject.

### **Student 5**

*I went to have a break really! I had finished my studies in computer science and decided to do a postgraduate diploma in Australia. One year of beaches, going out and a bit of studying sounded great – and it was!*

This comment goes to show the mixture of reasons people have for overseas studies. It sounds from the words 'a bit of studying' that the student chose a course that was not too difficult for him or her.

Some of the reasons we have seen so far include the following.

- Their subject is taught better elsewhere.
- They want to learn more English.
- They are interested in other cultures.
- It is difficult to get into university in their own country.
- They will get a better job.
- They like the idea of travelling to another country.

Once students have decided to go away, the next thing to think about is where?

### **How do students decide where to go?**

Next we asked students some questions about how they decided on the country and the university for their study. You could try answering the questions for yourself.

#### **Student 6**

*Money was an important reason for me to study in New Zealand. University fees are lower there than elsewhere and the cost of living is much lower too. Also we had a good exchange rate.*

This student is, very sensibly, thinking about money but of course exchange rates can change over three or four years of study.

#### **Student 7**

*I ended up studying at a different university from the one I intended. The university I wanted to enrol for turned down my application because of my grades. Another university in the same city was much easier to get into and I therefore ended up there.*

Here is a good idea. You needn't change your mind about a particular country or even a city just because you have a 'no' answer from one place.

#### **Student 8**

*I would have loved to study at Oxford or Cambridge or a place like that, but I just can't afford it!*

We call this student a realist. Dreams are great but the real situation may be different.

#### **Student 9**

*Many of my friends went to the States and I have an uncle who lives there, so I went there too.*

Having support from friends and family is very important, as we see in Part III.

In summary, here are the reasons people gave for studying at a particular university.

### **Quality**

Some universities have a very good 'name' and are famous around the world. However, as well as thinking about the 'name', think about whether the university you have in mind is strong in the subjects you want to study. Some universities are famous for particular departments.

### **The cost**

The cost of going to another country includes much more than the university fees. What the cost of living will mean for you and your family depends partly on the rate of exchange between the two countries and of course this rate can change from time to time.

### **Entry requirements**

The 'entry requirements' are the grades and qualifications you need to take the course of your choice. For example, if you want to become a (medical) doctor, some universities want you to prove that you are very good at English and maybe that you have taken subjects like English and History in high school. There is more on this topic later in the chapter.

### **The country**

Some students choose a country first and then a university. Maybe a family member has already studied there and enjoyed meeting the people and learning about the culture. Perhaps, like Student 5 who went to Australia, they like the climate in a particular country. Perhaps they have seen photographs of the country which suggest it has a beautiful landscape.

### **Meeting students from your country**

Another reason for choosing a particular country is because many people from your country are there. In that case you will be able to speak your own language sometimes and find food that is familiar.

### **Visas**

One big question to think about is how easy it is for someone with your passport to get a visa to study in a particular country. As world events change, so do the regulations. Ask at the Embassy of the country where you hope to study. Sometimes there are special arrangements between two countries or even between two universities.

### **Available places**

Sometimes it is very difficult to get a place on a particular course, such as Law, even though you have all the entry requirements. Popular courses or courses where equipment is needed, such as Fine Arts, often limit their places. If you are not accepted for the course you want at the university of your choice you could:

- try another country;
- try another university in the same country;

- try a different course;
- wait another year and try again when your grades are higher.

### Course dates

Year-long courses usually start in September in the Northern Hemisphere and in March in the Southern Hemisphere. However, many courses have a semester system which means you can start any course every six months or even at a Summer School.

### The university site

Perhaps the environment is important to you. Do you like to live near the city or in a quieter, more peaceful area? If you want to travel to town sometimes, how easy is the transport? Some universities have more than one campus.

### Finding out more

To find out as much information as you can about particular countries, universities and courses, try one of these ideas:

- Go to the university's website.
- Ask people who have been there.
- Find out what people in your future profession think about a degree from that university. Is it easy to find work with that degree?
- Although it is expensive, some families visit the universities they are interested in for their sons and daughters.

Here are some Internet addresses to help you in your search:

[www.unofficial-guides.com](http://www.unofficial-guides.com)

This site has information about universities in Great Britain.

[iiswinprd03.petersons.com/ugchannel](http://iiswinprd03.petersons.com/ugchannel)

This is one of many sites with information about universities in the United States.

[www.thegoodguides.com.au](http://www.thegoodguides.com.au)

This site lists and compares universities in Australia.

## ► Applying for a scholarship

For many students, studying overseas is very expensive, probably much more than it would be in their own country. As we mentioned earlier, in addition to the fees there is the cost of living, which includes housing, food, travel and clothing. These too may be much higher than at home. Students find the money for all these costs in many ways, and one way is to have a scholarship. A scholarship is money given to a student by a university or a government or some other place, to help with study costs. This section discusses scholarships and how to apply for them.

### Types of scholarships

A scholarship may pay for any or all of these:

- course fees;
- living costs;
- travel to and from the new country;
- research costs.

You may be surprised to learn that there are many different types of scholarship. Here are examples from students who talked to us:

1. Government scholarships for:
  - the children or grandchildren of soldiers;
  - people of a minority ethnic group;
  - students whose parents have a low income;
  - students from a particular country.
2. Business scholarships for students who
  - plan to be employed in business;
  - are already working in the company that gives the scholarship.
3. University scholarships for students who
  - have done well in the first year of their studies;
  - have some physical problem;
  - want to finish a piece of research;
  - belong to an ethnic group which the university wants to encourage.

In summary, there are scholarships for undergraduate and postgraduate studies, for specific areas of study (e.g. computing or medicine) and sometimes for students from certain countries. There are scholarships for women, for people of certain ethnic backgrounds, and many more. Ask about one that could apply to you.

Also, you want to know whether the scholarship comes with conditions such as these or others:

Applicants must agree to return and work in [*name of country*] for a minimum of three years after graduating.

On graduating, the scholarship holder must work for [*x company for y years*] or refund the scholarship in whole or in part.

Students who receive this postgraduate scholarship must agree to let [*the company that gave the scholarship*] use the results of their study.

### **Where to find out about scholarships**

There are several places to go for information about scholarships, both in your own country and in the country you are going to. If you have studied before, then your own university is the best place to start looking. The Scholarships Office will have information about scholarships that are available from companies, your own government, other governments and other universities. Often this information is also on the website of the university where you plan to study and there will probably be an office that helps students apply for scholarships.

A good place to start looking is one of these sites:

[www.iefacom](http://www.iefacom)

Here, international students can search for scholarships by area of study, by the country of origin, by the region where they want to study, or by the name of the university.

[www.isoa.org](http://www.isoa.org)

This site is specifically for international students already living in the United States.

[www.globalgrant.com](http://www.globalgrant.com)

Although this site charges a fee to help you find a scholarship, this kind of service may be useful when you don't have access to a university or if your university does not have someone to help you with your scholarship.

As well as scholarships, your own government may sponsor people to study overseas by paying travel expenses as well as tuition fees. A good place to look is at the website of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs or the Ministry of Education.

There are also scholarships given by international organisations such as the United Nations. These are usually awarded to students from certain countries or for students who cannot afford the tuition fees.

### **How to apply for a scholarship**

The first thing is to make sure you are eligible (can apply). As we saw earlier, eligibility depends on your age, nationality, qualifications, work experience etc. When you have decided that the scholarship is right for you, you must check what types of documents you need to send in.

As with your general university application, applying for a scholarship can take time. Have a look at Figure 1, an example from one university. As you can see, you need to send different kinds of information. For example, one of the things that you normally need is a recommendation. It is not clear in this example what kind of recommendation they want but a recommendation is usually a letter saying one or more of the following.

- You are a very good student.
- You have experience studying at another university.
- You have done or are doing research in a certain field.

A recommendation needs to show that the person who recommends you is confident that you will be a successful student.

Sometimes you also need an *endorsement*, which is different from a recommendation. Usually you get one from the Ministry of Education in your country, saying that your country wishes to support you in your studies.

### **Application forms**

Application forms need to be written very carefully and clearly. Perhaps it's best to do your first draft on a photocopy. Also, if you want to make sure you don't make any language mistakes, have your application checked by someone else. One thing to get right is in what order to put your names (family name or surname, and given names). English names, as you probably know, are spoken with the surname last, but on forms the surnames usually go first.

Sometimes there is space on the form to say why you are applying for the scholarship. In that case it is very important to be clear and enthusiastic.

### Required Documents

In addition to completing and returning the appropriate application forms, scholarship applicants must provide the following documents:

- Certified copy of passport or birth certificate.
- Certified copy of degree certificates.
- Certified copy of tertiary academic transcripts.
- International English Language Testing System (IELTS) or Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) scores. The IELTS test must be the academic module and the TOEFL test must include TWE [Test of Written English] or Essay Rating.

#### *Minimum Postgraduate Requirements*

IELTS: Overall band 6.5 plus no band less than 6.

TOEFL: 575 plus TWE 4.5.

TOEFL (computer-based): 233 plus Essay Rating 4.5.

Note that some postgraduate programmes may have higher requirements.

- At least three letters of recommendation from people who have known the applicant in a professional capacity, such as past or present lecturers, employers, supervisors or work colleagues.
- Curriculum vitae, stating the applicant's education background and work history.
- Evidence of annual salary, such as certification from your employer or the government taxation department (if applying for an Asian Development Bank Postgraduate Scholarship).
- Certified Graduate Management Admission Test (GMAT) scores (if applying for admission to the Master of International Business programme).

**Doctoral applicants** must also provide:

- Evidence of research experience, such as an extract of your Master's thesis or publications.
- Doctoral research proposal.

Documents that are in a foreign language must be accompanied by certified English translations.

**Figure 1** Documents for university enrolments

You need to show what your plans are and how this scholarship can help you.

Here are two examples, the first showing how NOT to do it.

~~I like computers and therefore I want to study computing. I want to go to New Zealand because it is a beautiful country.~~

Now, here is an example of how to do it.

I have studied computer science in my country for three years and have obtained a Bachelor's degree. I am very eager to continue my studies by starting a Master's programme so that I can specialise in artificial intelligence. This is an important field and I believe that with this qualification I will be able to contribute to the technological knowledge in my country. The reasons why I want to study at your university are that computing science there has a very good international reputation and in addition the living costs are not so high. With the help of a scholarship I will be able to finish my Master's within one year.

As you can see, this student writes clearly, listing several reasons for applying for a scholarship. Obviously, a well-planned support statement has a better chance of success.

If all this information makes a scholarship seem very far away, remember, someone has to get it. Why not you?

### ► Finding out your English level

Before you can plan ways of improving your English, you want to know exactly what you do well and what needs improvement. One way to find out your present level is to do a diagnostic test. This is a type of 'needs analysis', which looks at your English language and tells you your strengths and weaknesses. From this you know what you need to work on.

We are going to look at one type of needs analysis, which has questions for you to answer. This example is made to be used on the computer but you can easily do it yourself using pen and paper.

#### Step 1

As you can see in Figure 2, it starts by asking how important a number of skills are to you. You choose from 'not important' to 'very important'. Start writing down all the skills you can think of. The example lists a number, but you can add others. For instance, as one of your skills you could write down 'writing summaries' or 'giving presentations'. Then write down how important each one is, as in the example.

**What areas are important ?**

Rate the different language skills below, ticking the buttons ranging from **'1. Not important at all'** to **'4. Very important'**.  
 A skill is important if you often need it during your studies or in your personal life. A skill is more important when it is important that you develop it soon.

Click 'OK' when you have finished.

	1. Not important at all	2. Not really important	3. Important	4. Very important
Academic English	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Grammar	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
IEL TS	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Listening	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Pronunciation	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Reading	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Speaking	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>
Vocabulary, Spelling	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Writing	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Cancel OK

**Figure 2** Choosing important language skills

## Step 2

The next step is to decide your present level and the level you would like to reach (your goal level). In the example in Figure 3 the computer has selected only the skills that the student has chosen as important or very important. You can do the same.

## Step 3

In the third step the computer calculates how important each skill is for you and tells you which skill you should work on first. You can do the same thing without the computer, by using this simple formula:

<p><b>A</b> For each skill that you chose as 'important' you count 3, and for each 'very important' skill, count 4.</p>	<p>Pronunciation = 3 Speaking = 4 Writing = 3</p>
<p><b>B</b> Take your goal level minus your current level for each of these skills. Speaking is the student's first skill in this example.</p>	<p><i>Speaking:</i> Goal level is 8 Current level is 6 Total = 8 - 6 = 2</p>
<p>Pronunciation is the student's second skill in this example.</p>	<p><i>Pronunciation:</i> Goal level is 8 Current level is 6 Total = 8 - 6 = 2</p>
<p>Writing is the student's third skill in this example.</p>	<p><i>Writing:</i> Goal level is 9 Current level is 5 Total = 9 - 5 = 4</p>
<p>Next multiply A and B for each skill</p>	<p><i>Pronunciation:</i> <math>3 \times 2 = 6</math> <i>Speaking:</i> <math>4 \times 2 = 8</math> <i>Writing:</i> <math>3 \times 4 = 12</math></p>
<p>Put the skills in order, the one with the highest score first. That is the most important skill for you.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <i>Writing</i></li> <li>2. <i>Speaking</i></li> <li>3. <i>Pronunciation</i></li> </ol>

**Step 4**

As you can see on the next screen (Figure 4), the computer has done this for one student. The next step is to describe your exact difficulties with those skills and how you are going to improve them. In the example you can see a space where you can write down how many hours per week you will spend on that skill and when you want to reach your goal level. (In the next section there is more on setting goals.)

**ELSA**

### What are your Goals ?

Please identify your current and goal skill levels for each of your Important and Very Important Skills.

Click [here](#) to get a list of IELTS scores and their meaning. As you will see IELTS has 9 levels whereas we only use 7.

We did not include the first two levels because all our students are at least on a lower-intermediate level.

Also the levels may not always correspond. The IELTS scores are only shown to give you some idea of the different levels.

			3. Pre-Intermediate	4.	5. Intermediate	6.	7. Upper-Intermediate	8.	9. Advanced
<b>Speaking</b>	Very Important	Current	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
		Goal	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<b>Writing</b>	Important	Current	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
		Goal	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>
<b>Pronunciation</b>	Important	Current	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
		Goal	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**OK**

**Figure 3** Choosing your current level and your goal level

### Step 5

Start working! Look back at your notes regularly to see if you need to make any changes. Are you still spending the planned amount of time on the skills? Do you think your goal level needs to be changed? What about the date of reaching it? Have your specific problems changed? Have you found better ways to work on them?

A diagnostic test is just one way to find out about your English. Another way is by talking with other people, or by thinking about your IELTS score. Perhaps you did very well on listening but not so well on reading. However you found out about your English, you are now ready to do something about

**Your Important Skills**

The following skills are of high importance to you. Skills that have high priority are at the top of the list. Priority is based on the skills you rated as important and how far you are from your goal level. Use this list to plan the time you have available for English language learning. Work on the skills that have a high priority first. To manage your time effectively, you will have to decide what *exactly* it is you need to work on by formulating the problem and a solution for each of these skills.

If you want to learn more about setting goals before proceeding, [read this text by Marilyn Lewis](#), a lecturer in the Department of Applied Language Studies.

**Writing**

Problem Statement :	I have a habit of formulating an essay in Chinese in mind and then translate directly Chinese style- English
Solution Statement :	I will read a lot of essays by native speakers and compare my essays with them
By when ?	13/05/2003 <small>[Clear Date]</small> How much time per week will you spend on this skill ? 4 hours

**Pronunciation**

Problem Statement :	People don't understand me. I especially have difficulty with certain sounds.
Solution Statement :	I will pay close attention to how native speakers pronounce these sounds and try to imitate them. Maybe one of my English friends can help me and correct me.
By when ?	4/08/2003 <small>[Clear Date]</small> How much time per week will you spend on this skill ? 2 hours

**Speaking**

Problem	Not enough confidence to speak out and in public situation.
---------	---

Figure 4 Writing a problem and a solution statement

it. The next part of the chapter gives you information about international English language tests.

► **International English language tests: TOEFL and IELTS**

**What does the university want?**

International students generally have to prove that their English is good enough to study at university. There are different ways to prove this but often students must either get a certain score on an English language test such as the TOEFL, IELTS or others, or ask to be exempt for some reason. An exemption means that you don't need to sit a test. The reason for the exemption can be that you have studied at high school in the country where you plan to go to university or that you have lived in an English-speaking country for a long time. Check with your university what their exemptions are.

## Preparing for English language tests

The English language tests can be difficult and many students prepare for a long time by attending a special class or buying one of the many books which have copies of tests. You can take these language tests in your country or when you arrive in the new country.

The advantage of taking the test in the English-speaking country is that it will be easier for you to learn the language. Also, if you have joined a class you will be getting to know many other students with the same goals as you. On the other hand, if you take the test in the new country and fail, perhaps you will feel upset because you are far away from your family and friends. Many students who fail decide to study more and then sit the test again. You need to weigh up the advantages and disadvantages of taking the test in either place.

Let's look at the various tests and at ways of preparing for them.

### TOEFL

TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language) is an American language test that is widely recognised by universities around the world. There are two versions, a computer-based test and a paper-based test. It depends on where you take the test which version you will do.

### How is TOEFL organised?

The paper test for TOEFL consists of two parts. In the first part there are tests of listening, structure, written expression, and reading comprehension. In the second part there is a Test of Written English (TWE). You cannot take the TWE separately but only as a part of the whole test, but you will receive a separate score for these two tests. Scores for the TOEFL test range from 310 to 677 and the scores for the TWE from 1 to 6. Each university has different requirements but a common score needed to be accepted at university is around 550 for the TOEFL and 4.5 for the TWE.

For the computer-based TOEFL test you get scores for the listening, structure and reading sections separately, ranging from 0 to 30 each. There is also a writing section with a score of 0–6. You receive a total score of between 0 and 300. Most universities require around 215. There may be a minimum score for the writing section. This is often 4.0.

There is also a test called the 'Test of Spoken English' or TSE, which measures your ability to communicate orally in English. It takes about twenty minutes. It is not part of the TOEFL test and you take it separately, but it was developed by the same people and usually you take it in the same place as the TOEFL test.

### How and where can you take the TOEFL or TSE test?

For more information about how and where to take the test, check out the TOEFL websites.

[www.toefl.org](http://www.toefl.org)

You can also order materials to prepare for the test, such as CD roms, sample tests, etc. You can download sample questions and writing topics for free.

[www.scoreitnow.org](http://www.scoreitnow.org)

'Score it now' is a service offered by a company that lets you practise writing and gives you scores for your essays. There is a fee for using this service.

Many other companies offer online resources, sometimes free and sometimes for a fee. Below we have listed two. There are also many books and CD roms to help you practise for the TOEFL test. Check with your local bookstore.

[www.free-toefl.com/](http://www.free-toefl.com/)

[www.freeesl.net/TOEFL/](http://www.freeesl.net/TOEFL/)

### IELTS

Another test that is recognised by many universities is IELTS (International English Language Testing System). It is not as widely accepted in the United States as the TOEFL test but is very common in Great Britain, Canada, Australia and New Zealand. The IELTS also has two versions which measure students' ability to study in English: an academic test for tertiary study and a general test for all other study and immigration purposes. Most universities require you to have a score for the academic test. IELTS is different from TOEFL in a number of ways but the main difference is that it contains a speaking part, unlike TOEFL (although you can sit a separate test for that, the TSE: see above).

You will get a score between 1 and 9 for all four parts as well as an overall score. Generally you will need 6.0 or higher for university entrance and often you cannot have a score lower than 5.5 on any of the four components. Some university departments or courses may ask for higher scores. For example, some schools of Medicine want you to have 8.5!

For more information, visit the IELTS homepage at:

[www.ielts.org](http://www.ielts.org)

Here you will find general information as well as some practice materials. As with TOEFL, there are many books, tapes and videos to help you prepare for IELTS.

### How do the tests compare?

Table 1 compares the possible and required scores for the two tests.

Table 2 shows you what the various scores mean and how they compare between IELTS and TOEFL.

### Cambridge certificates and other language tests

There are other, less widely used language tests such as the Cambridge examinations. These are at different levels and have a pass/fail score, unlike the TOEFL and IELTS. If you get a high enough score on the examination, you get a certificate. If you don't have that score, then you don't get a

**Table 1** A comparison of the IELTS and the TOEFL tests

	Possible scores	University requirement
<b>TOEFL</b> (paper-based version)	310–677	550
<b>TWE</b>	1–6	4.5
<b>TOEFL</b> (computer-based version)	0–300	215
<b>TOEFL</b> (computer-based version) writing section	0–6	4.0
<b>IELTS</b>	1–9	6.0 (no band below 5.5)

**Table 2** How do the tests compare? (Adapted from ‘What is IELTS’ – [www.ielts.org/format.htm](http://www.ielts.org/format.htm) and LSE Language)

Description	IELTS	TOEFL (paper)	TOEFL (computer)
9.0 <b>Expert user</b> – Has fully operational command of the language: appropriate, accurate and fluent with complete understanding.	9.0	(700)	
8.0 <b>Very good user</b> – Has fully operational command of the language with only occasional unsystematic inaccuracies and inappropriacies. Misunderstandings may occur in unfamiliar situations. Handles complex detailed argumentation well.	8.0	650	280
		647	277
		643	273
		640	
		637	270
7.0 <b>Good user</b> – Has operational command of the language, though with occasional inaccuracies, inappropriacies and misunderstandings in some situations. Generally handles complex language well and understands detailed reasoning.	7.0	633	267
		630	
		627	263
		623	260
		620	
		617	
		613	257
		610	253
		607	
		6.5	603
600	247		
597			
593	243		
590			
587	240		
583	237		
580			
577	233		
573	230		
6.0 <b>Competent user</b> – Has generally effective command of the language despite some inaccuracies, inappropriacies and	6.0	570	
		567	227
		563	223
		560	220
		557	
		553	217
		550	
		547	210
		543	206

TABLE 2 *Continued*

Description	IELTS	TOEFL (paper)	TOEFL (computer)
misunderstandings. Can use and understand fairly complex language, particularly in familiar situations.		540	
		537	203
		533	200
		530	197
		527	
		523	193
		520	190
		517	187
		513	183
		510	180
	507		
	503	177	
	5.5	500	173
5.0 <b>Modest user</b> – 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.	5.0	450	133

certificate. In order of level from the easiest to the most difficult, here are some of these certificates:

- Cambridge FCE (First Certificate in English)
- CAE (Certificate in Advanced English)
- CPE (Certificate of Proficiency in English)

These three are used mainly in Great Britain and in other European countries for university entrance.

On the following website you will find more information about these examinations:

[www.cambridge-efl.org/exam](http://www.cambridge-efl.org/exam)

### **Placement tests and needs assessments**

In addition to language tests that give a score for university entrance purposes, there are two other types of tests. A placement test will often be given by a language school when you first arrive, to decide what your level is. There are internationally used placement tests, such as the Quick Placement Test, but many schools develop their own. Usually you will not get a score for these tests.

A needs assessment is not a test. It is a way for your university or language school and for yourself to find out if you are likely to have any problems during your studies because of your English. Some universities ask students to do a needs assessment even if they already have an IELTS or TOEFL score. Again, you will generally not be given a score but if the needs assessment indicates that there are areas of your English that need improving, you may be directed to a language course or other support.

# Index

- abbreviations, 55
  - email, 179
  - chat, 187
- abstracts, 105, 154
- accents, 40, 72
- accommodation services, 170
- appointments, with staff, 165
- assessment, self, 147
- assignments
  - types of, 120
  - understanding, 118
- boarding houses, 207
- books
  - edited, 104
  - prescribed, 104
- campus, 166
- case study, 127
- catalogues, 106
- chaplaincy, 170
- chatrooms, 187
- communication *see* contacts
- contacts
  - with staff, 172
  - with students *see* friends
- counsellors, 169
- courses
  - credit, 41–6
  - degrees, 23
  - English language, 40, 135
  - online, 38
  - course website, 181
  - culture, 195, 205
- databases, 107
- degrees, 23
  - postgraduate, 26
- department, 167
- disability officers, 169
- discussion boards, 183
- doctorates, 26
- emailing
  - staff, 177
  - students, 178
  - problems with, 180
- enrolling, 28
- essays
  - feedback on, 140
  - types of, 126
  - writing, 126b
- electives, 25
- endorsements, 10
- entry requirements, 6
- exemptions, 25
- faculty, 166
- feedback
  - peer, 44, 145
  - teacher, 140
- flatting, 208
- foundation courses, 29
- friends, 192, 202, 205; *see also* problems

- goals, language, 32
- graduate degrees, 23
  
- health problems, 192
- homestays, 206
- hostels, 208
  
- international office, 169
  
- joint programmes, 98
- jokes, 73
- journal articles, 104
  
- laboratory work, 90
- language conversation exchange, 49
- language test
  - IELTS, 18
  - TOEFL, 16
  - comparison, 19
  - Cambridge, 19
  - others, 21
- learning
  - distance, 38
  - student centres, 50
- learning journals, 9
- lectures
  - purpose of, 5
  - organization of, 67
- listening, to lectures, 1
  
- mailing lists, 85
- major subjects, 4
- minor subjects, 5
- money, 8, 193, 205
  
- needs analysis, 12
- needs assessment, 22
- notetaking, 75
  
- peer feedback *see* feedback
- PhD *see* doctorates
- placement test, 22
- politeness, 205
- postgraduates, 26
- prerequisites, 25
- problems *see also* friends, money, health
- proofreading, 155
- provisional entry, 29
  
- questions
  - essay, 128
  - in lectures, 79
  
- reading
  - course readers, 103
  - reasons for, 101
  - scanning, 113
  - skimming, 113
- registry, 170
- reports, 128
- research, 104
  
- scholarships
  - conditions, 9
  - eligibility, 10
- self-access centres, 46
- seminars, 92
- staff
  - contacting, 172
  - offices, 174
- supervisors, 157
  
- thesis, topics, 150
- transport *see* travelling to university
- travelling, to university, 7, 209
- tutorials, 84

vice-chancellors, 167

visas, 6

vocabulary *see* words

words

beginnings and endings, 116

compounds, 118

learning new, 50

Link, 115

pictures, 54