Pearson
Test of English

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Establishing score concordance between the enhanced PTE Academic and IELTS Academic

Summary Paper

Executive summary

- The most comprehensive and up-to-date concordance study between PTE Academic and IELTS Academic.
- Provides updated overall score concordance and introduces concordance at the individual skill level.
- Institutions can refer to this data when reviewing score requirements, but should base their decisions on a range of information about performance standards.

In 2024, Pearson carried out a concordance study between the updated PTE Academic and IELTS Academic test. This study follows all established best practice criteria and is based on a large, representative sample of 1,522 test takers, making it the most comprehensive study of IELTS and PTE Academic's relationship to date. This table shows the updated Overall score concordance.

PTE Academic	24–30	31–38	39–46	47–54	55–62	63–70	71–78	79–85	86–89	90
IELTS Academic	4.5	5.0	5.5	6.0	6.5	7.0	7.5	8.0	8.5	9.0

A full technical report of the concordance study is available here: https://www.pearsonpte.com/research. The report includes the updated Overall score concordance values, which remain consistent with those found in the two previous Pearson concordance studies between PTE Academic and IELTS Academic (Clesham & Hughes, 2020; Zheng & De Jong, 2011). The report also introduces score concordance values for each of the four skills: Listening, Reading, Speaking, and Writing.

PTE Academic and IELTS Academic are both widely used for academic, professional, and economic migration, and it is essential for test takers, institutions, and governments to understand how scores from these tests compare. This study clarifies how scores from PTE Academic and IELTS Academic relate to each other.

Concordance studies can provide information to help institutions and governments setting entry requirements for language proficiency. However, institutions should understand that concordance studies provide an approximate relationship between tests and other information should be considered when setting entry requirements, such as alignment to language proficiency frameworks like the CEFR, and examples of test taker performance at different score points. Institutions do not need to change their score requirements if they are happy with the current standard.

Are PTE Academic and IELTS Academic similar enough to compare?

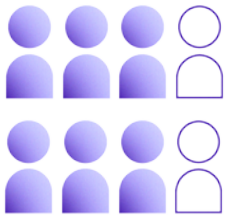
Scores from different tests should only be linked if the tests share similar characteristics and statistical properties (Kolen & Brennan, 2014). Prior research has shown that it is both appropriate and useful to link PTE Academic and IELTS Academic test scores (Clesham & Hughes, 2020; Zheng & De Jong, 2011). Pearson commissioned independent researchers at the University of Bedfordshire Centre for Research in English Language Learning and Assessment (CRELLA) to conduct a new study comparing the updated PTE Academic test with IELTS Academic. The study compared the items, texts, and scoring criteria of both tests to determine whether they measure similar skills. Their findings showed that, while there are differences between the tests, the skills they aim to assess are similar enough for a score concordance study to be meaningful and informative.

Given the substantial overlap between PTE Academic and IELTS Academic, including the academic English domains targeted, the cognitive processes elicited and the level of test taker performance expected, the two tests were found to have overall comparable constructs (Chan & Jones, 2025).

Study Overview

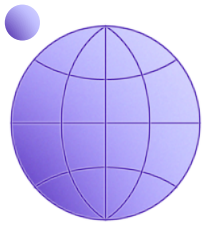
The concordance study followed rigorous best practice criteria to ensure the study would yield robust and useful results (Knoch & Fan, 2024). The study involved 1,522 participants who took both the updated PTE Academic and IELTS Academic tests within 90 days, ensuring that there was a balance in the order that participants took the two tests. Participants were recruited from India, China, Australia, and the United Kingdom, representing 54 nationalities and 43 languages, so that the concordance study data represented the major demographic groups in the actual PTE Academic testing population both in terms of test taker characteristics and levels of proficiency.

The tests were taken in official secure test centres. Participants' PTE scores were retrieved from Pearson's scoring system, and all participants provided their official IELTS score reports, which were reviewed and validated by the PTE research team. Participants were given preparation materials for both tests so that they were familiar with the tests and able to perform to the best of their ability.



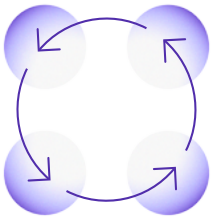
1,522 participants

All tests taken within 90 days



54 nationalities and 43 languages

Secure test centers, official score reports



18 days between tests, on average

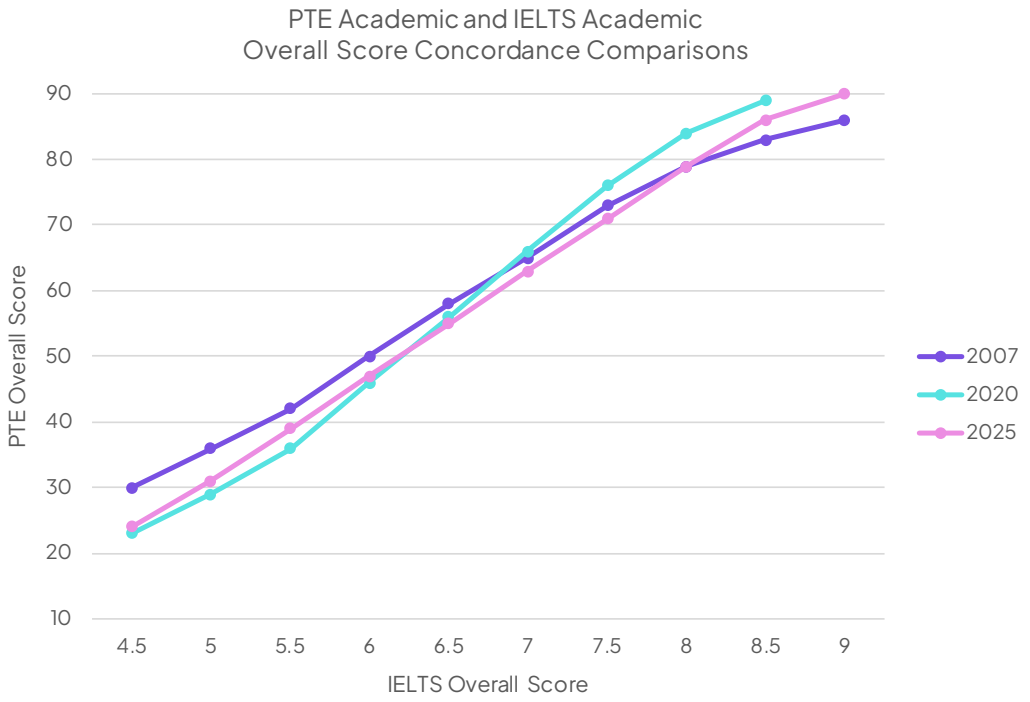
2025 PTE Academic and IELTS Academic Concordance Table

The table below shows the PTE Academic scores aligned to each IELTS Academic score band for Overall, Listening, Reading, Speaking, and Writing scores. The full report also contains information about the sample size collected at each level and information about the certainty of the concordance at different score points.

IELTS Score	PTE Overall	PTE Listening	PTE Reading	PTE Speaking	PTE Writing
4.5	24-30	26-32	29-35	14-23	17-28
5.0	31-38	33-39	36-41	24-38	29-40
5.5	39-46	40-46	42-47	39-53	41-50
6.0	47-54	47-52	48-53	54-65	51-59
6.5	55-62	53-57	54-58	66-75	60-68
7.0	63-70	58-63	59-64	76-82	69-76
7.5	71-78	64-68	65-69	83-87	77-84
8.0	79-85	69-74	70-74	88-89	85-89
8.5	86-89	75-80	75-80	90	90
9.0	90	81-90	81-90	-	-

How does the new PTE Academic concordance compare to previous studies?

The new concordance study provides an updated concordance for Overall scores, and it introduces new individual concordances for Listening, Reading, Speaking, and Writing scores. Previous studies only published the concordance for Overall scores. The findings for Overall scores are very similar to previous studies, which shows the relationship between the updated PTE Academic and IELTS Academic remains stable. The graph below shows how the new 2025 concordance study compares to previous studies. The pink line representing the 2025 Overall score concordance overlaps the lines representing previous concordances, meaning that all three studies have found similar results.



Why are there differences between the skill concordance values?

Score concordance is calculated using a method called equipercentile equating. This method aims to identify scores on each test that were achieved by a similar percentage of test takers. If the percentage of test takers achieving each score is different across the skills, then the concordance values will be different as well. For example, IELTS Academic has very few test takers who achieve a score of 9 in Speaking and Writing, but more test takers who achieve a score of 9 in Listening and Reading. This was found in both Pearson's concordance study and the recent concordance study conducted by IELTS and TOEFL (Ikeda et al., 2025). The differences in skill concordances are due to the way IELTS Academic scores are distributed.

What does the new concordance mean for score users? Should institutions change their requirements?

Score concordance is a helpful tool for institutions, governments, and other score users to support setting comparable requirements across different tests. However, it is important to remember that all score concordance studies, even those that meet the highest quality criteria, always give an approximate relationship between two tests.

Score requirements for university entrance, visa applications, or other high stakes decisions should be based on an understanding of the required performance standard – what an applicant needs to know and be able to do in order to communicate effectively in their destination environment.

Score concordance tables are only one piece of information that informs where institutions set their requirements. Institutions may also consider how test scores align to frameworks of language proficiency, like the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR), or exemplar materials that show real test taker responses at different score points. Note that PTE Academic's alignment to the CEFR has not changed.

Entry requirements should be reviewed regularly and may change over time. Pearson has and will continue to support governments and institutions in setting the right standards for their needs. For further guidance on setting score requirements, visit our website: https://www.pearsonpte.com/score-setting-guidance-institutions

Conclusions

Institutions, governments, and test takers can refer to this concordance study for the most accurate and up-to-date information on how PTE Academic and IELTS Academic test scores compare. The study, underpinned by robust data and adherence to best practice criteria, demonstrates consistency over time and offers key information to support institutions in making informed decisions about language proficiency requirements.

References

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