

# Exam preparation in the UK

Exam preparation courses are a necessary part of many language learning experiences, especially for students going on to higher education.

Ielts and Toefl preparation courses are a popular pursuit in the world of language travel and with an increasing number of international students interested in undergraduate study in the UK, demand for such courses is strong in the country.

Natalie Dawe from Bell International says that they have adapted their exam preparation course provision in order to meet student demand. "With increased competition for entry on a UK degree course, international students are more aware of the level of English language skills they need to enter a British university," she says. "Our Ielts courses have developed from an eight-week course to a four-week course, which is more intensive and focused solely on exam preparation." Dawe also notes that the school has introduced an online exam preparation course that specifically deals with reading skills. "The benefit is that students can access this resource at any time of the day," she adds.

Pat O'Donoghue, Principal at the Stafford House School of English in Canterbury, also notes that their provision of exam preparation courses has increased over the years. "We run Ielts courses every month now and have increased the number of hours available from six to 10 lessons," he says. Changes to the course are also being planned, as he adds, "We consider there to be a market for all-day Ielts preparation courses. This is something which will be reviewed each year and perhaps will change depending on trends and demand."

Anne Stokes from the University of Stirling in Stirling, Scotland, says that they have offered Ielts preparation classes for over 10 years, but relates that they now offer stand-alone exam preparation lessons as well as Ielts prep in conjunction with General English. "The number of hours per week devoted to Ielts preparation has increased," she relates. "Initially, Ielts preparation classes were offered [only] in conjunction with General English. Subject to numbers, we now offer discrete [separate] Ielts preparation classes."

As well as burgeoning demand from university-bound students, according to Susan Stirrup from The King's School Ely in Cambridgeshire, international secondary school students are just as keen to start preparing for language proficiency exams. Stirrup reports that they now offer exam preparation classes to year 12 students as well as year 13, helping to accommodate those keen to get a head start.

Language schools are also positioning themselves to handle growing numbers and Paul Johnston, Principal at Regent in Brighton, notes that exam preparation courses don't just attract university-bound students. "Often Asian students in particular welcome examination preparation programmes as they are goal-focused and follow a highly structured course with frequent tests," he says.

Some may argue Ielts is the preferred choice among students looking to measure their communicative ability but Guido Schillig from Anglo-Continental in Bournemouth affirms that the Toefl Internet-based test (iBT) is still making an impact. "Ielts has definitely been the 'flavour of the month' and has for a number of years been considered the main test of English," he says. "However, the new and improved Toefl iBT is quickly closing the gap so we expect similar demands for our Toefl preparation courses [as for Ielts] in the near future."


In terms of nationality trends, Andy Bungay, Principal at the Exeter Academy in Exeter, highlights an interesting diversification of nationalities taking the Ielts test. "In the late 90s, the Ielts candidates were predominantly Chinese," he says, "and in recent years there has been a very large increase in the number of Middle Eastern students needing the exam – this is due to the push for such students to receive a British university education."

| Location        | Name of school                   | No. of start dates p/yr | Courses for:  |             | Activities on offer? | Min. age of students | Min. lang. proficiency req. |             | Accommodation options: |       |        |
|-----------------|----------------------------------|-------------------------|---------------|-------------|----------------------|----------------------|-----------------------------|-------------|------------------------|-------|--------|
|                 |                                  |                         | Closed groups | Individuals |                      |                      | Language support            | Residential | Host family            | Other |        |
| Bournemouth     | Anglo Continental                | 13                      | ✓             | ✓           | ✓                    | 16                   | i                           | ✓           | ✓                      | ✓     |        |
| Brighton        | Regent                           | 52                      | ✓             | ✓           | ✓                    | 16                   | b                           | ✓           | v                      | ✓     |        |
| Broadstairs     | Hilderstone College              | 4                       | req           | ✓           | ✓                    | 17                   | req                         | req         |                        | ✓     |        |
| Canterbury      | Stafford House School of English | 52                      | ✓             | ✓           | ✓                    | 16                   | i                           | ✓           | v                      | ✓     | p, sc  |
| Croydon         | Royal Russell School             | 52                      | ✓             | ✓           | ✓                    | 11                   | -                           | ✓           | ✓                      |       |        |
| Eastbourne      | Geos-LTC International College   | 52                      | ✓             | ✓           | ✓                    | 16                   | i                           | ✓           | ✓                      | ✓     |        |
| Ely             | The King's School                | 1                       | ✓             | ✓           | ✓                    | 13                   | i                           | ✓           | ✓                      |       |        |
| Exeter          | Exeter Academy                   | 52                      | ✓             | ✓           | ✓                    | 18                   | e                           | ✓           |                        | ✓     |        |
| Glasgow         | Glasgow School of English        | 11                      | ✓             | ✓           | ✓                    | 16                   | i                           |             | ✓                      | ✓     |        |
| Glasgow         | Live Language                    | req                     | ✓             | ✓           | ✓                    | v                    | b                           | ✓           |                        | ✓     | sc     |
| London          | Crest Schools of English         | 52                      | ✓             | ✓           | ✓                    | 16                   | i                           | ✓           |                        | ✓     | h      |
| London          | Language Link                    | 52                      | ✓             | ✓           | ✓                    | 16                   | a                           | -           | ✓                      | ✓     |        |
| London          | Hampstead Garden Suburb Inst.    | 2                       | ✓             | ✓           | ✓                    | 18                   | i                           | ✓           | ✓                      | ✓     | p, bb  |
| Shrewsbury      | Severnvale Academy               | req                     | ✓             | ✓           | ✓                    | 20                   | e                           | ✓           |                        | ✓     | h      |
| Stirling        | University of Stirling (Celt)    | 2                       | ✓             | ✓           | ✓                    | 17                   | i                           | ✓           |                        |       | oc, sc |
| Tunbridge Wells | Cicero Languages International   | 3                       | ✓             | ✓           | ✓                    | 16                   | i                           | ✓           | req                    | ✓     |        |
| various         | Bell International               | 12                      | ✓             | ✓           | ✓                    | 16                   | i                           | ✓           | ✓                      | ✓     | sc     |
| various         | St Giles International           | 4                       | ✓             | ✓           | ✓                    | v                    | -                           | ✓           | ✓                      | ✓     | h      |
| York            | The English Language Centre      | 52                      | ✓             | ✓           | ✓                    | 16                   | i                           | ✓           |                        | ✓     |        |

a advanced b beginner bb bed & breakfast e elementary h hotel i intermediate oc on-campus residence p private accommodation req on request sc self catering v varies - information not supplied




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