

Establishing TOEFL iBT Test Score Requirements for Entrance to Universities



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TOEFL iBT: Establishing score requirements

Outline

Overview of the test

Definition of standard setting

The dilemma

Standard setting methodologies

Sample judgments

Additional considerations





Overview of the TOEFL iBT test

- · Four sections:
 - Reading
 - Listening
 - 10 minute break
 - Speaking
 - Writing
- Test time: 4.0 hours
- Note taking allowed throughout the test





TOEFL iBT Reading

- · 3 5 reading passages from academic texts
 - Reading passages approximately 700 words long
 - 12 to 14 questions about each reading passage
- Purposes of reading:
 - Reading for information
- Reading to Learn (by categorizing information by filling in chart or completing a summary or by Paraphrasing)
- · Glossary feature
- Review feature helps test taker to track questions not answered





TOEFL iBT Listening

- · 4 6 lectures; some with classroom discussion
 - About 5 minutes each
 - Each has 6 questions
- · 2 3 conversations
 - About 3 minutes each
 - Each has 5 questions
- Questions measure:
 - Basic understanding
 - Connecting information
 - Pragmatic understanding





TOEFL iBT Speaking

- · 2 independent tasks about familiar topics
 - Responses based on personal experience
- 4 integrated tasks
 - 2 Reading/Listening/Speaking tasks
 - 2 Listening/Speaking tasks
 - Responses based on what was read and heard must include accurate content for highest score
 - Academic and campus-based material
 - Short listening and reading material





TOEFL iBT Speaking Section - Rating and Scores

- Each task is rated by a trained rater on a scale of 0 – 4. Responses are rated on topic development, delivery, and language use.
- The scores for the 6 tasks are then converted to a scaled score of 0 – 30.
- ETS-trained raters evaluate responses via ETS Online Scoring Network, re-calibrate before each rating session.





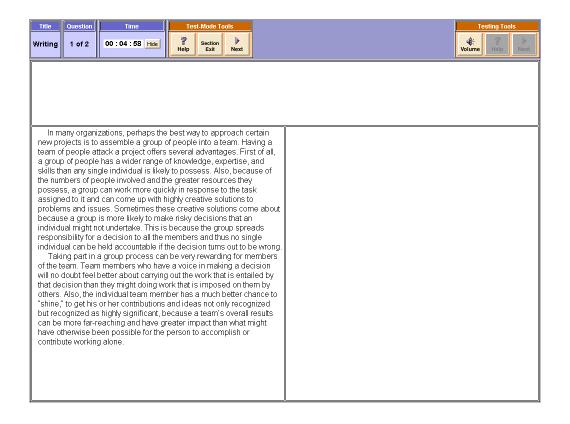
TOEFL iBT Writing

- 1 integrated task: Reading-Listening-Writing
 - Short academic listening and reading material
 - Response based on what was read and heard, must include accurate content for highest score
- 1 independent task
 - Response based on personal experience



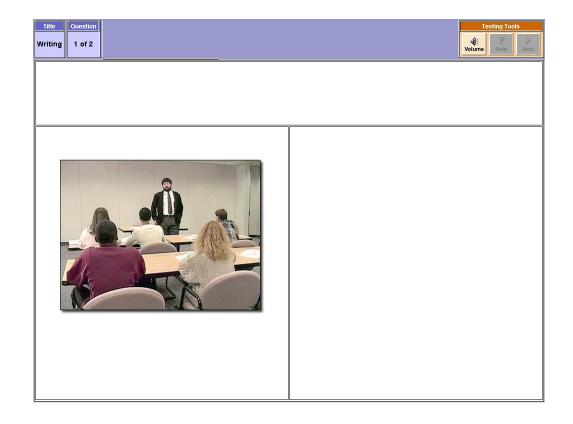


Sample Integrated Writing task





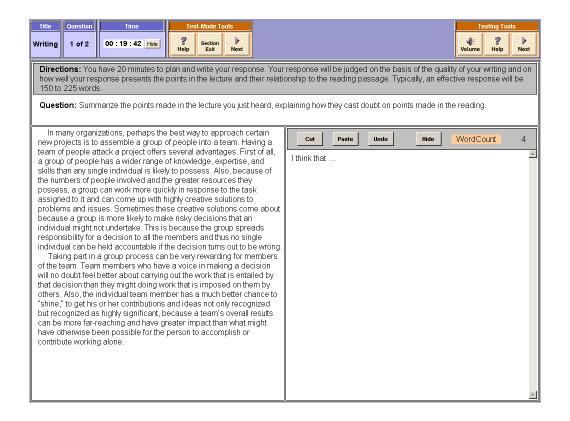
Sample Integrated Writing task







Sample Integrated Writing task







TOEFL iBT Writing Section - Rating and Scores

- Scoring guidelines for Independent writing task
 - Development of ideas
 - Organization
 - Quality and accuracy of language used
- Guidelines for Integrated writing task
 - Quality of writing
 - Completeness and accuracy of response
- ETS-trained human raters evaluate responses via ETS Online Scoring Network
- · Ratings are 0 5
 - Then converted to a scaled score of 0 30





TOEFL iBT score reports

Universities receive:

- · Four skill scores
 - Reading 0 30
 - Listening 0 30
 - Speaking 0 30
 - Writing 0 30
- A total score: 0 120

Students receive a total score, section scores, and performance descriptors.





Importance of section scores

Which student with a total score of 80 has sufficient language proficiency to succeed at your university?

	Reading	Listening	Writing	Speaking	Total
Student 1	17	20	24	19	80
Student 2	20	20	20	20	80
Student 3	25	25	16	14	80

Consider the use of section scores as well as the total score!





Standard setting - Definition

Standard setting is a procedure for determining a recommended score for a specific purpose.

Also referred to as a cut score, score requirement, performance standard.

Standard setting:

- Is a judgment process
- Relies on the concept of a student with minimally acceptable skills (not a student with average skills)
- Focuses on a student for whom English is not a first language but whose English proficiency is *good enough* to cope in academia





The dilemma

How high to set the score requirement?

- If the score requirement is too high:
 International students may need to go elsewhere for their studies and not to your university.
- If the score requirement is too low:

 International students who do not have sufficient language proficiency to succeed will be accepted.





Methodology

- Modified Angoff method: relies on concept of a minimally able examinee
- For Speaking and Writing: Decide whether a test taker's responses meet those criteria of acceptable performance
- For Listening and Reading: Decide whether a person who has that defined level of minimal ability will answer each item correctly





Panel members

- Panelists need to be:
 - Familiar with the NNS population at the institution
 - Familiar with target language tasks
 - Familiar with ESL, at least some panelists
- Typically, a panel has 12-20 participants, including
 - University professors from a variety of disciplines
 - University administrators (eg, admissions staff, international student advisors)
 - ESL instructors





Overview of process for Writing (and

- Define language tasks of first year students
 E.g., writing assigned papers, synthesize information from multiple sources
- Define the minimally acceptable language user and skills
 - Describe strong writer and weak writer, and use those descriptions to come up with minimally acceptable writer
 - Panel needs to reach consensus about the definition of a minimally accepter writer





Sample description of minimal Speaking

- Accent doesn't hinder communication
- · Appropriate use of vocabulary, but not without some errors
- Has some flow, connected dialogue
- Has semblance of organization
- May mix formal and informal speech but meaning is clear
- · Reasonable pace
- * From university panel, not ETS standards





Sample description of minimal Writing ability

- Organized and logical, with clear evidence of chunking of ideas
- Generally cohesive, though some sentences may be choppy
- Register is generally appropriate for written discourse
- Uses mostly accurate vocabulary (meaning is clear, not distorted)
- Uses mostly accurate grammar (grammatical errors do not distort meaning)
- * From university panel, not ETS standards





Overview of process for Writing (and

Continued:

- Become familiar with the assessment tasks and the scoring guidelines
 - Two writing tasks
 - Scoring guidelines for independent task and for integrated task





Overview of process for Writing (and

Scoring guidelines for Integrated task at Level 5

A response at this level successfully selects the important information from the lecture and coherently and accurately presents this information in relation to the relevant information presented in the reading. The response is well organized, and occasional language errors that are present do not result in inaccurate or imprecise presentation of content or connections.





Scoring guidelines for Integrated task at Level 3

A response at this level contains some important information from the lecture and conveys some relevant connection to the reading, but it is marked by one or more of the following:

- Although the overall response is definitely oriented to the task, it conveys only vague, global, unclear, or somewhat imprecise connection of the points made in the lecture to points made in the reading.
- The response may omit one major key point made in the lecture.
- Some key points made in the lecture or the reading, or connections between the two, may be incomplete, inaccurate, or imprecise.
- Errors of usage and/or grammar may be more frequent or may result in noticeably vague expressions or obscured meanings in conveying ideas and connections.





Overview of process for Writing (and

Continued:

 Practice making judgments, by answering this question about a student's responses:

"Has this student demonstrated the minimally acceptable writing skills adequate for first-year studies at our university?"





Overview of process for Writing (and

Continued:

 Each panelist reads student responses to both writing tasks and individually makes Round 1 judgments for each student. Each judgment is based on this question:

"Has this student demonstrated the minimally acceptable writing skills adequate for first-year studies at our university?"

- · Discuss Round 1 judgments, entire panel
- Make Round 2 judgments, individually



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Overview of process for Reading and

Lictoning

- Begin with definition of minimally able student, with just enough language skills to succeed at university
- Become familiar with the test tasks
- Each panelist decides, for each test item, whether a student with minimally acceptable proficiency will answer the correctly.
- Discussion of initial judgements, then round 2.





Final recommendation for score requirements

Other information that informs decision:

Percentile data (based on 2009 testing year)

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http://www.ets.org/research/policy_research_reports/toefl-sur
TOEFL Score Percentile (2009 data)
80 45
100 81
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Score requirements of similar institutions





Questions?

Thank you for attending...



