



LANGUAGECERT ACADEMIC CONCORDANCE STUDY SUMMARY



LANGUAGECERT Academic Concordance Study Summary: Comparing LANGUAGECERT Academic with IELTS Academic

Introduction

From 2022 to 2024, LANGUAGECERT conducted a concordance study to compare and analyse the test design, content and scores of LANGUAGECERT Academic and IELTS Academic. The study investigated areas of alignment and difference between the tests, including the emphasis given to the range of language skills assessed. The aim of the study is to provide empirical evidence of similarity and equivalences for decisions related to test recognition, score interpretation and usage.

The study was designed and conducted by the LANGUAGECERT Research Team, led by Dr Mike Milanovic and Leda Lampropoulou, and the Centre for Research in English Language Learning and Assessment (CRELLA), led by Professor Anthony Green and Dr Johnathan Jones. It was conducted in line with the principles of good practice in concordance studies (Knoch & Fan, 2024). The study was overseen and the findings verified by an External Validation Panel¹, comprised of leading academics from Australia, Canada, UK and the USA.

This summary presents the [LANGUAGECERT Academic Concordance Report, October 2024](#) key features and findings.

Test Taker Demographics

The demographic of interest for the study was individuals who wished to use their test scores for admission to higher education institutions where English is the medium of instruction. The study's sample population was carefully selected to closely mirror this target demographic:

- 1008 unique test takers who sat both the LANGUAGECERT Academic and IELTS Academic tests
- Most test takers were between 18 and 31 years, which strongly corresponded with the population of interest
- The study sample split of Female 60% to Male 40% strongly corresponded with the population of interest
- 46 different nationalities, which strongly corresponded with the population of interest



Test Score Data Integrity

To provide reliable evidence, free from bias, for equivalency analysis the study employed the following methodology to ensure the integrity of all data related to test scores:

- All the study's participants took both LANGUAGECERT Academic and IELTS Academic. A test taker's experience of taking one test could influence their performance on the second test, which would be an example of an order effect. The study followed a counterbalanced design, splitting participants into two groups, to mitigate against and offset potential order effects. Group 1 took LANGUAGECERT Academic first and IELTS Academic second; Group 2 took IELTS Academic first and LANGUAGECERT Academic second, within three months.
- By restricting the interval between tests to three months the study minimised the possibility of test takers' language proficiency improving from one test to another.
- All test score data was taken from official test reports, rather than using participants self-reported scores.

Content Comparisons

The study carried out a comprehensive comparison of the LANGUAGECERT Academic and IELTS Academic tests' targeted constructs and language use domains, task types and scoring methods. The study found that:

'the constructs and their assessment across the two examinations – LANGUAGECERT Academic and IELTS Academic – show high degrees of similarity. Mainly, they are both four-skill tests with the intention of measuring language competence in order to predict the ability to operate successfully in an academic setting. Having said that, there are several differentiating factors. The LANGUAGECERT Academic test is based in the academic context across all four skill components whereas IELTS Academic focuses entirely on the academic domain in the Reading and Writing tests, but is more General English in nature in the Listening and Speaking tests.'

The strong similarities between task and item types, scoring rubrics and marking methods allowed the study to effectively, reliably and meaningfully measure the correlation and alignment of overall test scores and component skill scores.



Correlations and Alignments

The following tables present the study's findings regarding correlations between LANGUAGECERT Academic and IELTS Academic, overall alignment and individual skill alignment. The equipercentile linking method was used to link scores on LANGUAGECERT Academic and IELTS Academic, and vice versa.

LANGUAGECERT advises that score users should not rely only on score comparisons when making decisions. Please refer to the [Recommendations for interpretation and use of linkage results for test users](#) section below.

Correlations between LANGUAGECERT Academic and IELTS Academic

Overall <i>r</i>	Reading <i>r</i>	Writing <i>r</i>	Listening <i>r</i>	Speaking <i>r</i>
.87	.76	.71	.71	.71

Note: r = correlation. All correlations were statistically significant at the $p < .001$ level. Sample size = 1008.

The strong correlation for Overall performance ($r=.87$) indicates the two tests measure similar underlying abilities (Knoch, 2021). The correlations for individual subscales ($r > .7$) suggest that LANGUAGECERT exams perform in accordance with the benchmark language test designed for similar purposes.

Overall alignment table for LANGUAGECERT Academic and IELTS Academic performance

IELTS Academic	LANGUAGECERT Academic	n-size of study sample at this level	Standard Error
4.5	38-45	27	1.56
5.0	46-53	74	0.79
5.5	54-60	185	0.43
6.0	61-66	225	0.40
6.5	67-72	189	0.46
7.0	73-80	148	0.47
7.5	81-87	104	0.59
8.0	88-94	42	0.78
8.5	95+	3	4.84
9.0	n/a	0	n/a

SE= Standard deviation of LCA scores at each IELTS half band level, divided by the square root of the sample size at that level.



Listening skill alignment table for LANGUAGECERT Academic and IELTS Academic performance

IELTS Academic Listening	LANGUAGECERT Academic Listening	n-size of study sample at this level	Standard Error
4.5	35-40	40	1.48
5.0	41-48	108	1.13
5.5	49-56	147	1.03
6.0	57-61	152	1.03
6.5	62-66	135	0.99
7.0	67-72	109	1.30
7.5	73-79	100	1.28
8.0	80-88	78	1.31
8.5	89-94	77	1.20
9.0	95-100	25	1.51

Reading skill alignment table for LANGUAGECERT Academic and IELTS Academic performance

IELTS Academic Reading	LANGUAGECERT Academic Reading	n-size of study sample at this level	Standard Error
4.5	36-43	59	1.51
5.0	44-53	125	1.04
5.5	54-59	161	0.91
6.0	60-64	126	1.03
6.5	65-70	133	0.98
7.0	71-76	98	1.10
7.5	77-82	93	1.08
8.0	83-88	68	1.35
8.5	89-96	82	1.11
9.0	97-100	34	1.58



Writing skill alignment table for LANGUAGECERT Academic and IELTS Academic performance

IELTS Academic Writing	LANGUAGECERT Academic Writing	n-size of study sample at this level	Standard Error
4.5	33-44	18	3.34
5.0	45-55	91	1.01
5.5	56-63	221	0.56
6.0	64-70	389	0.36
6.5	71-77	199	0.48
7.0	78-83	65	0.71
7.5	84-88	11	1.06
8.0	89-92	2	9.00
8.5	93+	1	n/a
9.0	n/a	0	n/a

Speaking skill alignment table for LANGUAGECERT Academic and IELTS Academic performance.

IELTS Academic Speaking	LANGUAGECERT Academic Speaking	n-size of study sample at this level	Standard Error
4.5	44-53	34	1.79
5.0	54-61	107	0.92
5.5	62-69	211	0.71
6.0	70-75	275	0.49
6.5	76-81	171	0.60
7.0	82-86	109	0.70
7.5	87-88	45	1.16
8.0	89-92	19	1.52
8.5	93-98	8	1.22
9.0	99-100	3	3.38

Recommendations for interpretation and use of linkage results for test users

Score users, for example institutions who use certain test scores for decisions about test takers, are advised that score comparisons across tests, while based on empirical research, are estimates only and should be treated with caution for the following reasons:

- Tests differ, sometimes significantly, in the ways information about English language ability is elicited and assessed. Score comparisons are only meaningful to the extent that the tests are measuring the same ability or skill.
- Tests often differ in the length of the reporting scales used (for example one test may report on a 6-point scale and another on a 100-point scale). As a result, a one-to-one mapping of scores from one test to another is rarely possible.
- The choice of concordance study methodology may produce variations in results.
- The populations of test takers may differ (e.g., with respect to ages, nationalities, language backgrounds of test takers) from the population used in the research that generated the score equivalences.
- The sample sizes used for comparing scores from different tests are generally small across all levels/ranges, especially at extreme ends of the scale.
- Score concordance results are generally more robust for proficiency levels with larger numbers of test takers.
- Large Standard Errors show that score equivalences are particularly imprecise at certain points on the ability scale.

Because the score comparisons presented in the score comparison table are indicative only, score users are advised not to rely solely on published score equivalences in making their decisions. They should weigh evidence from additional sources where feasible.

Further information

- [LANGUAGECERT Academic Concordance Report, October 2024](#)
- [LANGUAGECERT Academic for Institutions](#)
- [LANGUAGECERT Research and Validation](#)

References

¹ External Validation Panel

- Professor Anthony Green, Principal Investigator for the LANGUAGECERT Concordance Study; Professor in Language Assessment, Director of the Centre for Research in English Language Learning and Assessment (CRELLA), University of Bedfordshire, United Kingdom
- Professor Liying Cheng, Professor of Language Education and Assessment, Graduate Faculty Director, Assessment and Evaluation Group, Queen's University, Canada
- Professor Sara Cushing, Professor of Applied Linguistics, ESL Senior Faculty Associate for Assessment of Student Learning, Georgia State University, USA
- Dr Jason Fan, Senior Research Fellow, Deputy Director of the Language Testing Research Centre (LTRC), University of Melbourne, Australia
- Professor James Tognolini, Professor and Director of the Centre for Educational Measurement and Assessment (CEMA), University of Sydney, Australia

Knoch, U., & Fan, J. (2024). Test score comparison tables: How well are they serving test users? *Language Testing*, 41(3). <https://doi.org/10.1177/02655322241239348>

Knoch, U. (2021). A guide to English language policy making in higher education. International Education Association of Australia (IEAA). www.ieaa.org

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