



Guide to Higher Education in Europe (VERSION 2.0)

About this Guide

Generally speaking, this guide is meant for those people who want to pursue Higher Education (Masters and/or PhD) in Europe.

Individuals who want to pursue education at other levels (e.g., Bachelors or Diploma) or even in some other country can also benefit from various sections of this guide.

The contents of this guide are generalized and people from any country or any background (Engineering Sciences, IT & computer-related, MBA & Business related, Medical, Law, Arts, Social sciences & Humanities etc) can benefit from it.

- A lot of effort has been put into preparing this guide; I hope you benefit from it.
- Well, Yes this is a fat guide ☺ (nearly 60 pages), that's because it has got almost all the information and tips that one would require for studies and admission. If you read and follow it carefully and **carry out the procedure sensibly**, then you would definitely get admission wherever you want to.
- This guide can be freely distributed as long as all the original contents are intact, and nothing has been modified or added.
- Pass this guide to all your friends and anyone else you know who can benefit from it.

I wish all of you success and happiness in your lives and request you to pray for the same for me.

This is version 2.0 of this guide, for updates, new versions and other guides, visit:

<http://www.tauseefafzal.com>

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My Introduction:

My name is Tauseef Afzal. I did my B.E. (Electrical) from University of Engineering and Technology, Taxila, Pakistan in 2002. I secured aggregate 4th position in the university and got 84% marks. After that, I started working as Design Engineer at AERO (Advanced Engineering Research Organization), where I worked for 2 years. In 2004, I got admission in Technical University Munich (TUM), Germany in MSCE.



During the time I was preparing for admission to Masters, I did a lot of research about the European education system, their universities and living in Europe, so I decided to prepare this guide so that others can benefit from this.

If you benefit from this guide, what you should do is:-

Pray for me, Help others and Serve your homeland in any way you can.

Remember that as a nation, we are very much behind the rest of the world in Technology and Education, we should help each other, inshallah one day we would be able to achieve the heights that others are enjoying right now.

Just remember the following lines by a Pakistani professor, “I know that my place is dirty and may have many problems in it. People there try to interfere in my business; but I don’t know! I will go back there, as its mine! It made me strong and beautiful as I am now. So its weaknesses do not matter. I will support it to live long.”

You do have a responsibility that is to serve your homeland, as whatever you are right now or whatever you might become in the future, it would only be because of your homeland. So you must return the favor in any way you can.

Contributing Financially:

If you have benefited from this guide, kindly contribute for a good cause. Contribute what ever amount you can.

Make your cheques payable to:

**Tauseef Afzal. Account No: 17545-0
Habib Bank Ltd, SDv Branch, Saddar, Rawalpindi, Pakistan.**

Send your cheques, money orders or cash to the following address:

**Tauseef Afzal. c/o
House No. 129, Street No. 20, F-10/2, Islamabad, Pakistan.**

If you want to contribute through some other means (e.g., credit card, cash etc), kindly email me at: **tauseef_afzal@hotmail.com**

How to Contact Me:

You can contact me through my email address **tauseef_afzal@hotmail.com**

If you want to contribute to this guide or would like to add some useful information or links, kindly email me, and mention it in the subject of the email.

I have discussed almost all the things in detail in this guide, so there should be no questions concerning things mentioned in this guide.

The Guide

➤ WHEN TO GO FOR MASTERS?



This is the question that most students studying at the Bachelors level ask and think about i.e., whether to go for Masters right after completing their Bachelors or whether after doing job for sometime. Well, the answer is that there is no particular generalized RIGHT time. It depends on your own will, your circumstances and also on when you get the chance. Each of these two approaches has its own benefits.

- If one wants to go right after his Bachelors, then the plus point of this approach is that it would be comparatively easier for him to study as he would be in that studying routine.
- On the other hand, if one starts doing a job after completing his bachelors and plans to go for Masters after 2 or 3 years, then the plus point of this approach is that he would have acquired practical knowledge and would have seen the things in action that he had studied. However, it is recommended that in this case, the plan shouldn't be delayed too much, i.e., one should go for Masters after at most 2 or 3 years. The more delay there is, more are the disadvantages that one might face.

So you should decide (about when to go for Masters) yourself keeping in mind your mood, your circumstances and your future plans. As I say, do what suits you.

➤ SYSTEM OF EDUCATION IN EUROPE

European countries are social welfare states; therefore education is free in most of the European countries. In most of the European universities, there is no tuition fee, however in some cases, there might be some fees of student unions, social security funds or registration fee but these are very less. All the universities are state-funded; this is from where they cover up all their expenses. The industries also contribute a lot to research and provide funding. Note however, that a very few universities do charge regular tuition fees and other charges.

A few years ago, the higher education in most of the European countries was in their native language. Now almost all the top universities conduct higher education in English. If a program is termed as **International**, then all of its courses would be in English, which is normally the case for most Masters programs. However, still a few universities conduct courses in their native language.

The study programs are available in all the fields including Engineering Sciences, IT, MBA & Business related, Medical, Law, Social sciences & Humanities etc.

The duration of masters in most of the European countries is two years, except in Sweden where it is 1.5 years and in U.K it is of one year duration. However, in U.K the education is

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not free. More detail about education in UK is given later in a separate section. The two year period consists of 4 semesters with exams at the end of each semester. Normally one has to take 5 courses per semester. The last semester is usually dedicated to the thesis.

The universities are very good and so are the faculties and the environment. The universities are very well equipped containing high-tech buildings, labs and class-rooms. Also there are lots of huge libraries containing thousands of books and other material.

➤ MAJOR EUROPEAN COUNTRIES

The major European countries are given below, along with their flags, websites, languages, currencies and country codes:

Country	Flag	Official Website	Languages	Currency	Country Code	Time
Germany		http://www.deutschland.de	German	Euro (€)	+49	GMT+1
Sweden		http://www.sweden.se	Swedish, English	Krona (SEK)	+46	GMT+1
Denmark		http://www.denmark.dk	Danish, English	Krone (DKK)	+45	GMT+1
Finland		http://www.finland.fi	Finnish	Euro (€)	+358	GMT+2
Netherlands		http://www.netherlands.nl	Dutch	Euro (€)	+31	GMT+1
Belgium		http://www.belgium.be	Dutch, French	Euro (€)	+32	GMT+1
France		http://www.france.com	French	Euro (€)	+33	GMT+1
UK		http://www.i-uk.com http://www.direct.gov.uk	English	Pound (£)	+44	GMT

Note that Pakistan Standard time is GMT+5.

In France, currently most of the courses are taught in French only, so if you want to go there, you would have to learn French first.

➤ THE ADMISSION CYCLE

To start with, you should have a fair & general idea about the field you would like to study in. Do some research, consult your seniors, friends, professors, and other professionals around you, see what are your interests and what are the fields which are currently on top and which fields have good scope in coming future (future job market). As you would continue with the admission procedure, you would soon be able to decide the particular fields and programs that you want to specialize in.

During the whole admission cycle, you need to do three things: **think** (about what you want to do), **obtain enough information**, and **communicate with others** with similar experiences and intentions.

During the process you need to be very clear (1) about what you want to achieve, (2) how would you achieve it and (3) possibly alternate backup plans if the original one fails.

Following are the **steps** that you would follow for seeking admission:

- 1) Decide which program and field you want to study
- 2) Search for and short list the universities where you want to apply, which offer the program of your choice, along with their department names, research strengths and TOEFL (& GRE/GMAT) codes
- 3) Download, fill and print the application forms
- 4) Prepare customized SoP and letter of recommendations
- 5) Complete the documents required (list given in a later section)
- 6) Check that the application set is complete in all regards
- 7) Post the application (ideally well before the application deadline)
- 8) Wait for the admission results
- 9) Apply for Visa

The details of all the above things are given in subsequent sections.

KEEP IN MIND THAT YOU WOULD HAVE TO START PREPARING FOR ADMISSION AT LEAST 10-11 MONTHS BEFORE YOUR INTENDED STUDIES START, E.G., IF YOU ARE PLANNING TO START STUDIES IN AUGUST 2005, THEN YOU WOULD HAVE TO START PREPARATIONS FROM ROUND ABOUT SEPTEMBER 2004.

➤ ADMISSION PROCESS

- The admission process and dates vary from university to university. Normally the admission process continues from January to March/April. The classes start in late August or September/October. Admissions are carried out only once a year.
- A few universities require you to apply online.
- For details and dates of a particular university, see the website of that university.

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- It is strongly recommended that you apply as soon as possible and well before the application deadline, as in most cases the seats are filled very early. An earlier application might give you a better chance of admission. Moreover, you will get the response earlier and would have enough time for decision or applying for Visa etc.
- Make sure that you have all the necessary documents (mark sheets, degrees, certificates, TOEFL score report etc) well in time. The list of the required documents is given below. It is strongly recommended that you prepare these documents before the start of the admission procedure.
- Also keep in mind that international mail normally takes about 7-15 days.

Since the European universities don't have any application processing fee, so it doesn't cost to apply. The only cost would be that of postage (which, in Pakistan, is approximately PK Rs. 200, if you send the application through registered mail). So apply to as many universities as possible (recommended is to apply to at least 5 universities), as the admission criteria vary vastly from university to university, year to year and also depends on the applications received. So be on the safe side and apply to 5-6 universities at least.

- **When starting applying for admission, make a separate folder for each university that you apply to, to store the admission information, related documents and subsequent correspondence. This'll help you to keep things organized and manageable.**
- **All the communication between you and the university should be proper and neatly typed or printed.**

HAVE PATIENCE AND PERSEVERANCE THROUGHOUT THE ADMISSION PROCESS (OR ANYTHING ELSE FOR THAT MATTER). SOMETIMES THINGS MAY NOT WORK THE WAY YOU WANT THEM TO, BUT DO NEVER LOOSE HOPE AND KEEP ON TRYING. SOONER OR LATER YOU WILL GET WHAT YOU WANT.

➤ **REQUIRED DOCUMENTS**

The exact documents that each university requires would differ, however in general, while applying for Masters, following are the documents (attested photocopies) that universities require you to submit along with the application:

- **Application Form (provided by the university)**
Fill the application form carefully. You would either have to *print and fill* the forms or *fill and print* the forms. It is recommended that if possible; use either computer or type-writer to fill the forms. If asked for, use your own hand-writing. Fill the application forms carefully and properly.
- **Bachelors Degree + Detailed Mark Sheets + Certificates**
- **HSSC / F.Sc / A-Level Certificates + Mark Sheets**

- **SSC / Matric / O-Level Certificates + Mark Sheets**

- **TOEFL/IELTS Score Report**

A few universities require that official Test scores (TOEFL, GRE, GMAT) be sent to them directly from ETS. You would have to arrange this on the test day as mentioned in the following section. For details and preparation of TOEFL & other tests, see the next section.

- **Your C.V (Curriculum Vitae)**

Unless you are a very big scholar or researcher, limit your C.V to two pages at max. Tips for preparing a good CV are given in a later section.

- **SoP (Statement of Purpose)**

SoP is very important for the admission procedure. Details and tips on how to prepare it and sample SoP are given in a section later on.

- **Two Letters of Recommendation by your Professors or Employer**

The contents of these letters and the recommendations matter a lot in the admission procedure, so make sure you get them from your well-reputed professors. These letters should be enclosed in properly signed and sealed envelopes. Also note that some universities might have specific format for the recommendation letters which they ask your referees to fill out, answering short answer type questions, or ranking you among the students they have taught. If this is the requirement, it would be mentioned alongside the list of documents required, follow it.

It is recommended that you get one letter from your university and one from your employer (if you are doing a job).

See the section titled “*How to prepare your Letter of Recommendations*” for tips on how to prepare these letters and a sample letter.

- **Your Photographs (passport size)**

- **Experience Certificate (in case you have done or are doing job somewhere)**

Having a professional background in the field you are applying for Masters, would help you a lot, as some universities give quite importance to the work experience in the related field.

- **You can also send your additional related documents (e.g., merit certificates, distinctions, certificates for other qualifications etc)**

Additionally, following documents may be required by some universities:

- Photocopy of your passport
- Medical Certificate
- Financial Certificate
- GMAT Score Report (in case you are applying for business related fields)
- GRE Score Report (in case the university has requirement of GRE)

Also note that if any of your degrees, mark sheets or certificates are in a language other than English, then you would also have to submit their English translations along with the photocopies of the originals.

- MAKE SURE THAT THE INFORMATION YOU PRESENT IN THE FORM OF THE REQUIRED DOCUMENTS OR ANY OTHER ADDITIONAL INFO, SHOULD BE COHERENT AND SHOULD NOT CONTRADICT EACH OTHER.
- DON'T MISLEAD, DECEIVE OR PRESENT FALSE INFORMATION.
- DON'T SEND ANY UNNECESSARY AND UNRELATED DOCUMENTS.

When you make sets of photocopies of documents, letters of recommendations & SOPS etc, it is recommended that you make TWO OR THREE EXTRA SETS, as you might require them at some later stage.

➤ EDUCATIONAL REQUIREMENTS

The following section covers the educational requirements that you should have in order to be eligible for admission to Masters.

✚ Bachelors Degree:

- For admission to Masters, you should (or about to) have a Bachelors degree from a recognized university in the related field for which you are applying for Masters.
- Although the exact criteria varies from university to university; but usually many universities prefer applicants who have achieved good marks & grades throughout their educational career. The applicants having achieved positions and other distinctions are obviously preferred more.
- If you have some publications or research papers in some journal or conference, it would be a great plus for your admission.
- However, this is not the case every where; students with lower grades or marks may also be admitted if they have excelled in other fields, projects and they have a strong professional career.
- Just bear in mind that if you WANT to pursue higher education and make reasonable efforts for admission and do it sensibly, then no matter whatever grades you have, you have quite good chances of getting admission wherever you wish to.
- Also keep in mind that having achieved high marks won't guarantee your admission alone, there are several other things that matter including your SOPs, letter of recommendations, C.V, TEST scores etc.

✚ TOEFL/IELTS GMAT GRE:

Almost all the universities (which teach courses in English) require that you have taken either the TOEFL or the IELTS test. Moreover, some embassies also have requirement of TOEFL for issuing VISA.

For MBA and other business related courses, GMAT is required.

For other requirements, e.g., GRE etc, see the university's website.

If your courses are not in English (but are in the native language), then there is no requirement of TOEFL or IELTS, however in that case there is a requirement that you have

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proficiency in that language and the university might require you to show some certificate or proof etc.

A few **general points** about these tests are mentioned below:

- These Tests (TOEFL, IELTS, GRE, GMAT) are **GENERAL** and the questions in these tests are not related to any particular field. These TESTS test the knowledge that has been acquired over a certain period of time and not relating to any specific field of study.
- Keep in mind that although for every type of test, there are **minimum score requirements** which you must clear, you should get as high scores as possible. This'll not only increase your chances of admission but would also help you in other things too e.g., applying for a scholarship, funding or TA ship etc.
- In order to register for any of these tests, you should have a **valid passport** (this is a special requirement for test takers from the sub-continent), so if you haven't got one yet you should get yours as soon as possible. In Pakistan, in order to get your passport, you would have to go to your regional passport office and fill up the form along with the fee (PK Rs.1500) and required documents. You will get your passport after 14 days from the date of submission of forms.
- You would have to take your passport to the test centre on the test day as proof of your identity.
- For registering for any of these tests, you would have to pay the registration fee, which you can either pay by credit card or bank draft (for making a foreign currency bank draft, contact your bank or a money changer). For other modes of payment, see the official website or the appropriate brochure of the test.
- For taking the TOEFL/GRE/GMAT tests, you would have to register with ETS (Educational Testing Service: <http://www.ets.org>).
 - ETS has started online registration, so now you can register online using a credit card.
 - Or you can also download the form (International Test Scheduling Form) from their website, fill it and fax it to the RRC (Regional Registration Centre), which for test-takers from Pakistan is in Malaysia.
 - Or you can also schedule the test appointment via telephone, for which you would have to call the RRC in Malaysia.
 - For exact details of how to register for a particular test, see the official website or the appropriate brochure of that test.
- You can take these tests only once per month i.e., if you have taken any of the tests (TOEFL/GRE/GMAT) in a particular month, then you can't take the **same** test again in that month.
- On the test day, after you have taken the test, you would have the option of sending your test (TOELF/GRE/GMAT) scores directly to up to 4-5 universities of your choice free of cost. For this you would need to know their TOEFL/GRE/GMAT codes, which you can get from the university websites, and if these are not mentioned there, email the universities to get them. For sending scores to other universities or sending scores later, you would have to pay extra fees (app 15\$ per university), so ensure that when you go to take any of these tests, you have the names and TOEFL/GRE/GMAT codes of the universities where you want your test scores to be sent.

- The test scores for any of these tests is valid for only a certain number of years (e.g., in case of TOEFL, the test scores are valid for only two years). When you apply to a university, they require that you have a **valid** test score i.e., you have taken that test in the previous 2 (in case of TOEFL) or 5 years (in case of GRE/GMAT) and not earlier than that.
- The admission procedure of most of the European universities start from January, so ensure that you have taken the required test and have your official score report (which takes app. 5-6 weeks after you have taken the test) with you by the end of December or January. Although you can also send the score report later (after applying), yet it is recommended that when you send your documents for admission, they are complete in all respect.
- In Pakistan, the test centers are located in Islamabad, Lahore and Karachi.

Some portions of these tests are computer adaptive.

What is meant by a Computer Adaptive Test?

In each of these tests, one or more sections contain multiple choice questions. For each multiple-choice section of the test, there is a large pool of potential questions ranging from a low to high level of difficulty. Each section of the test starts with a question of moderate difficulty. If you answer the first question correctly, the computer will give you a harder question next. If you answer the first question incorrectly, your next question will be easier i.e., the level of difficulty of the next question varies with whether the current question has been answered correctly or not. This process will continue until you complete the section, at which point the computer will have an accurate assessment of your ability level in that section of the test i.e., a computer adaptive test automatically adjusts to your skill level.

In a computer-adaptive test, only one question at a time is presented. Because the computer scores each question before selecting the next one, you may not skip, return to, or change your responses to previous questions.

In a computer adaptive test, your score is determined by:

- the number of questions you answer
- whether you answer the questions correctly or incorrectly
- the level of difficulty and other statistical characteristics of each question; difficult questions carry more marks

The questions in an adaptive test are weighted according to their difficulty and other statistical properties, not according to their position in the test.

Tips and other useful points to be kept in mind for any of these tests are given later in the section titled **“Useful Points to be kept in mind for any of these tests”**.

Details about TOEFL, IELTS, GRE and GMAT are given below.



TOEFL (Test of English as Foreign Language)

TOEFL measures the English proficiency of non-native speakers of English. Most people who take the TOEFL test are planning to study at colleges and universities where instruction is in English.

For TOEFL, the normal minimum score requirement of most universities is **213**, while for some others it is **237** (out of 300, this is for Computer Based TOEFL).

TOEFL is easy and with the preparation of 3-4 weeks, you should be able to score in excess of 250. I prepared for a couple of weeks and my score was 280.

- The fee for taking the TOEFL test is 130\$.

For details and how to register, visit the TOEFL website <http://www.toefl.org> and download the TOEFL bulletin, which contains all the necessary information.

Sections of the TOEFL Test

Currently, the TOEFL test has the following four sections:-

Section	Questions	Time	Marks
<i>Tutorials</i>	<i>7 Tutorials</i>	<i>Untimed</i>	-----
Listening	30-50 Questions	40-60 mins	0-30 (scaled to 100)
Structure	20-25 Questions	15-20 mins	0-15 (scaled to 50)
5 minute Break			
Reading	44-55 Questions	70-90 mins	0-30 (scaled to 100)
Writing	1 prompt	30 mins	0-15 (scaled to 50)

When you have taken the TOEFL Test, you can view your unofficial **Listening & Reading** scores at the test center; however, because of the essay scoring process, you will not be able to view your **Writing** scores at that time. Instead you would be given a range (e.g., 230-280) in which your final total score would lie.

The various sections of the TOEFL test are described below:

- **Listening** (Multiple Choice Questions)

This section measures the ability to understand spoken English. This section tests comprehension of main ideas, supporting ideas, important details and inferences. You will both see and hear the questions before the answer choices appear. In this section, you would listen to short conversations, longer conversations & class discussions, lectures & talks and then you would have to answer the questions about what you have listened. Since this section is Computer Adaptive, so once you have confirmed your answer, you can't go back and change your answers.

- **Structure** (Multiple Choice Questions)

This section measures the ability to recognize language that is appropriate for standard written English. The language tested is formal, rather than conversational. In this section, there are two types of questions; namely *incomplete sentences* and *sentences with*

underlined words and phrases. They are presented in random order. Since this section is also Computer Adaptive, so once you have confirmed your answer, you can't go back and change your answers. The score in this section is combined with the score on the essay that you compose in the writing section.

- **Reading** (Multiple Choice Questions)

This section measures the ability to understand short passages similar in topic and style to academic texts used in colleges and universities. In this section, there would be 3-6 passages with an average of 6-10 questions after each passage. You would read the passages and then answer the questions related to them. This section is not Computer Adaptive, so you can go back (to questions related to the same passage that you are reading currently) and change your answers.

- **Writing** (No Choice)

The essay writing section demonstrates the ability to generate and organize ideas, to support those ideas with examples or evidence, and to compose in standard written English in response to an assigned topic.

For this section, you would be given a topic on which you would have to compose an essay of 3-5 paragraphs or 300-500 words. The writing topics are provided on the TOEFL website which you should download from there. The essay in the actual test comes strictly from these topics. You should discuss these topics with your friends or siblings etc. Make points in your mind on each of these topics and prepare what you would write. Most of the topics ask you to agree or disagree with a statement or to express an opinion, hence it is useful to make an opinion in advance and prepare points in favor of that opinion.

On the test day, you would have the option of either to type your essay (using computer) or to hand-write it. In case you choose to hand-write the essay, the scoring and result would take approximately 2 weeks more than in case when you type it.

A good essay must have a **good beginning** (introduction), **good comments** to support your opinion (the body) and a **good ending** that summarizes the essay.

The essay is scored on a scale of 1-6 in half point increments.

Preparing for TOEFL:

- For preparation of TOEFL, you should buy some TOEFL CDs; popular ones are Longman TOEFL, Barron's TOEFL and Kaplan's TOEFL.
- You should also download **PowerPrep TOEFL** from TOEFL's website or get it from some CD. It's the official test-preparation software.
- During preparation, you should take at least 3 or 4 **full-length timed** TOEFL tests; this would help you to evaluate yourself and would help you to pace properly.
- For the grammar section, practice various things e.g., the agreement of the Verb with the subject etc.
- You can also join some academy or institute for preparing for the Test.

Useful points to be kept in mind for taking the TOEFL Test

1. DO NEVER use blind guessing in Listening & Structure sections, as these two sections are computer adaptive and blind guessing can seriously lower your score. If, however time is very short, you may use it in the Reading section.
2. Do not try to skip questions in Listening and Structure sections, as you can't skip them and trying to do so will only result in wastage of time.

For more tips and useful points, see the section “**Useful Points to be kept in mind for any of these tests**” later.

Sending TOEFL Test Scores directly to Universities:

On the test day, you can send your official TOEFL test scores to up to four universities of your choice free of cost.

Validity of TOEFL scores:

The TOEFL scores are valid for only two years.

Next Generation TOEFL

ETS will launch **Next Generation TOEFL** from September 2005, in which the four sections would be: Listening, Reading, Speaking and Writing.

You need to take either the TOEFL or the IELTS Test, not both.



IELTS (International English Language Testing System)

- For IELTS, the normal minimum score requirement of most universities is **6.0** or in some cases **6.5** (out of a score band of 1-9). Scores in IELTS are reported as half or full band.
- IELTS is owned, developed and delivered through the partnership of the British Council (<http://www.britishcouncil.org>), IDP Education Australia (<http://www.idp.com/>) and the University of Cambridge ESOL Examinations (<http://www.cambridgeesol.org/>).
- For detailed information about IELTS, visit <http://www.ielts.org> and download the IELTS handbook, which contains all the necessary information.
- For admissions, you would normally have to take the Academic IELTS test.
- In Pakistan, IELTS is conducted by The British Council (<http://www.britishcouncil.org>). The fee for taking the IELTS (in Pakistan) is PK Rs. 7000.

Sections of the IELTS Test

The IELTS test has the following four sections:-

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Section	Questions	Time
Listening	40 Questions	30 mins
Reading	40 Questions	60 mins
<i>Break</i>		
Writing	2 Tasks	60 mins
Speaking	3 parts	11-14 mins

These sections are described below:

- **Listening**

The Listening Module takes around 30 minutes, there are 40 questions.

In this section, the candidates listen to a number of recorded texts, which increase in difficulty as the text progresses. These include a mixture of conversations and dialogues and feature a variety of English accents and dialects.

The recording is heard only once, but candidates are given time to read the questions and record their answers.

There are a total of four sections; the first two sections are concerned with social needs, while the last two sections are concerned with situations related more closely to educational or training contexts.

- **Reading**

The Academic Reading Module takes 60 minutes, there are 40 questions.

There are three reading passages with tasks. Texts are taken from books, magazines, journals and newspapers, all written for a non-specialist audience. At least one of the texts contains a detailed logical argument. One text may contain non-verbal materials such as diagrams, graphs or illustrations. Text and tasks become increasingly difficult through the paper.

- **Writing**

The Academic Writing Module takes 60 minutes. There are two tasks to complete. For the first task; candidates write a *report of around 150 words* based on material found in a table or diagram, demonstrating their ability to describe and explain data. It is suggested that about 20 minutes be spent on task 1.

For the second task; candidates write a *short essay of around 250 words* in response to an opinion or a problem. They are expected to demonstrate an ability to discuss issues, construct an argument and use the appropriate tone and register. It is suggested that about 40 minutes be spent on task 2.

Candidates should note that scripts under the required minimum word limit are penalized.

- **Speaking**

The Speaking Module takes between 11 to 14 minutes. It consists of an oral interview between the candidates and an examiner. Candidates are assessed on their use of spoken English to answer short questions, speak at length on a familiar topic, and also to ask questions and interact with the examiner.

There are three parts:

In **Part 1**, the candidates answer general questions about themselves, their homes/families, their jobs/studies, their interests, and a range of similar familiar topic areas. This part lasts 4-5 minutes.

In **Part 2**, the candidate is given a verbal prompt on a card and is asked to talk on a particular topic. The candidate has one minute to prepare before speaking at length, for between one and two minutes. The examiner then asks one or two rounding-off questions.

In **Part 3**, the examiner and candidate engage in a discussion of more abstract issues and concepts which are thematically linked to the topic prompt in part 2. The discussion lasts 4-5 minutes.

Preparing for IELTS:

- Training material for the preparation of the IELTS test can be purchased from your nearest test centre or directly from Cambridge ESOL (<http://www.cambridgeesol.org/>) or IDP Education Australia (<http://www.idp.com/>).
- The IELTS Specimen Material pack, which includes two booklets, a CD and sample answers, is available from offices of [The British Council](http://www.britishcouncil.org/) at PK Rs 975 a pack. The British Council also offers a one-day introduction course and a 30-hour IELTS preparation workshop for students interested in familiarizing themselves with the IELTS exam and improving their IELTS band. For details, see the website of The British Council (<http://www.britishcouncil.org/>).
- For preparation of IELTS, you can buy some IELTS CDs or books along with cassettes; popular books are **Cambridge IELTS 1,2,3** and **Insight into IELTS The Cambridge Course**.
- The last section of the test is **Speaking**, for which you should be able to speak fluent English. For this, practice speaking English and interviewing with your friends or siblings. The more you speak, the more command you would be able to get.
- A useful website for information and preparation of IELTS is <http://www.infoielts.com/>
- During preparation, you should take at least 3 or 4 **full-length timed** IELTS tests; this would help you to evaluate yourself and would help you to pace properly.
- You can also join some academy or institute for preparing for the Test.

Useful points to be kept in mind for taking the IELTS Test

1. The listening part usually has audio transcripts of people from Australia and England, their accents might not be very familiar as we are normally used to American accent, so practice listening and apprehending all sorts of accents.
2. Face the interviewer in the Speaking section with confidence and speak

fluently.

For more tips and useful points, see the section “**Useful Points to be kept in mind for any of these tests**” given later.

Validity of IELTS scores:

The IELTS scores are valid for two years.



GRE (Graduate Record Examinations)

A few universities require that you have taken the GRE test. A few others although not require GRE explicitly, yet they prefer applicants who have taken the GRE test.

If you have already taken the GRE test, then it would be a great plus point for admission.

If you wish to apply to a university which requires GRE, make sure that you have taken or would take the GRE test in time.

- GRE is a general test required by universities for admission into Graduate programs.
- GRE Test is computer adaptive.
- The fee for taking the GRE test is 140\$ (175\$ for test takers from China).
- For more information on GRE, visit <http://www.gre.org> and download the GRE Information Bulletin.

Keep in mind, that right now only a few European universities require GRE, however this number is increasing every year, and it is quite possible that in a few years time quite a large number of universities would be requiring GRE.

Sections of the GRE Test

The GRE test has the following three sections:-

Section	Questions	Time	Scores
Analytical Writing	2 Tasks	75 mins	0-6
Verbal	30 Questions	30 mins	0-800
Quantitative	28 Questions	45 mins	0-800

If you take the computer-based Test, you can view your unofficial **Verbal** and **Quantitative** scores at the test center; however, because of the essay scoring process, you will not be able to view your **Analytical Writing** scores at that time.

The various sections of the GRE test are described below:

- **Analytical Writing**

The Analytical Writing section measures the following skills:

- articulate complex ideas clearly and effectively
- examine claims and accompanying evidence

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