



English Assessment in Higher and Vocational Education

Raising international English language
standards across the world





Client: International Islamic University

Test takers: University students

Country: Malaysia

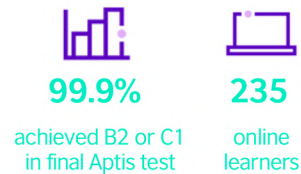
IIUM's needs

- **Workplace English communication skills**, increasing average levels from intermediate to upper-intermediate to enhance employability potential and early career success.
- **A partner with recognised, trusted learning and assessment solutions**, reliable progress tracking and proven expertise in delivering large-scale government-funded programmes.
- **Customised curriculum**, combining English and employability skills development, with relevant, engaging content and flexible, scalable online delivery for students in different locations.

Our tailored solution

- EnglishScore placement test
- English for Work online course
- Progress tracking: mid and end of course assessment
- Aptis test preparation
- Aptis assessment: to certify learners' English skills

Impact at a glance



'This programme has provided a transformative experience for students, equipping them with essential communication skills needed for both personal and professional development. The combination of online learning and mentorship seems to be particularly effective, giving students the flexibility of modern learning methods and the guidance of experienced tutors.'

Dr Siti Zubaidah Anuar, Special Officer to Deputy Rector (Academic and Internationalisation), IIUM.

Transforming Student Employability Prospects



Strengthening Language Certification Pathways in Higher and Vocational Education: The Case of Spain

Spain | Formal Recognition

English is the most widely spoken, taught and learnt foreign language in Spain, and as such, proficiency in English is highly valued. Formal assessment of level for many school age students begins at the end of primary and continues throughout secondary education.

English is generally the foreign language assessed for higher education admission and university students are also required to certify level with a recognised qualification in at least one foreign language, normally English, before graduating. Providing formal proof of English level is also important in public sector as well as private sector employment and recruitment.

Responsibility for formal recognition of language qualifications lies with the departments of education of the 17 autonomous regions of Spain, primarily for teachers and other local and regional public employees required to certify level. National ministries and entities oversee qualification recognition linked to central government employment.

In higher education, universities generally publish a list of recognised or accepted language qualifications for their students, primarily linked to the tables of recommended language qualifications published by CRUE Universidades Españolas, the association of Spanish university rectors which represents 77 of Spain's 96 public and private universities.

Two key developments in the formalisation of language qualification recognition in Spain:

- CRUE Universidades Españolas established standardised criteria for university students needing to certify level for study or graduation, with the British Council Spain playing a significant consultative role in this
- development.
- The adoption of formal recognition criteria by autonomous community departments of education, primarily for certification of level in higher education, teacher recruitment for bilingual education programmes, and public sector employment recruitment.

In this context, Aptis was initially recognised by the Education Department of one autonomous region, the Balearic Islands, for teachers needing to certify level, and by one university in the Madrid region, the University of Alcalá. Following the inclusion of Aptis in the CRUE list of recommended English language qualifications in 2014, successive recognition by universities and departments of education facilitated formal delivery agreements with more than 10 universities across the country to offer Aptis to their students. **Recognition was also key to early Aptis adoption for certifying the level of the long term unemployed on skills training programmes and public sector recruitment for entities such as the state postal service.**

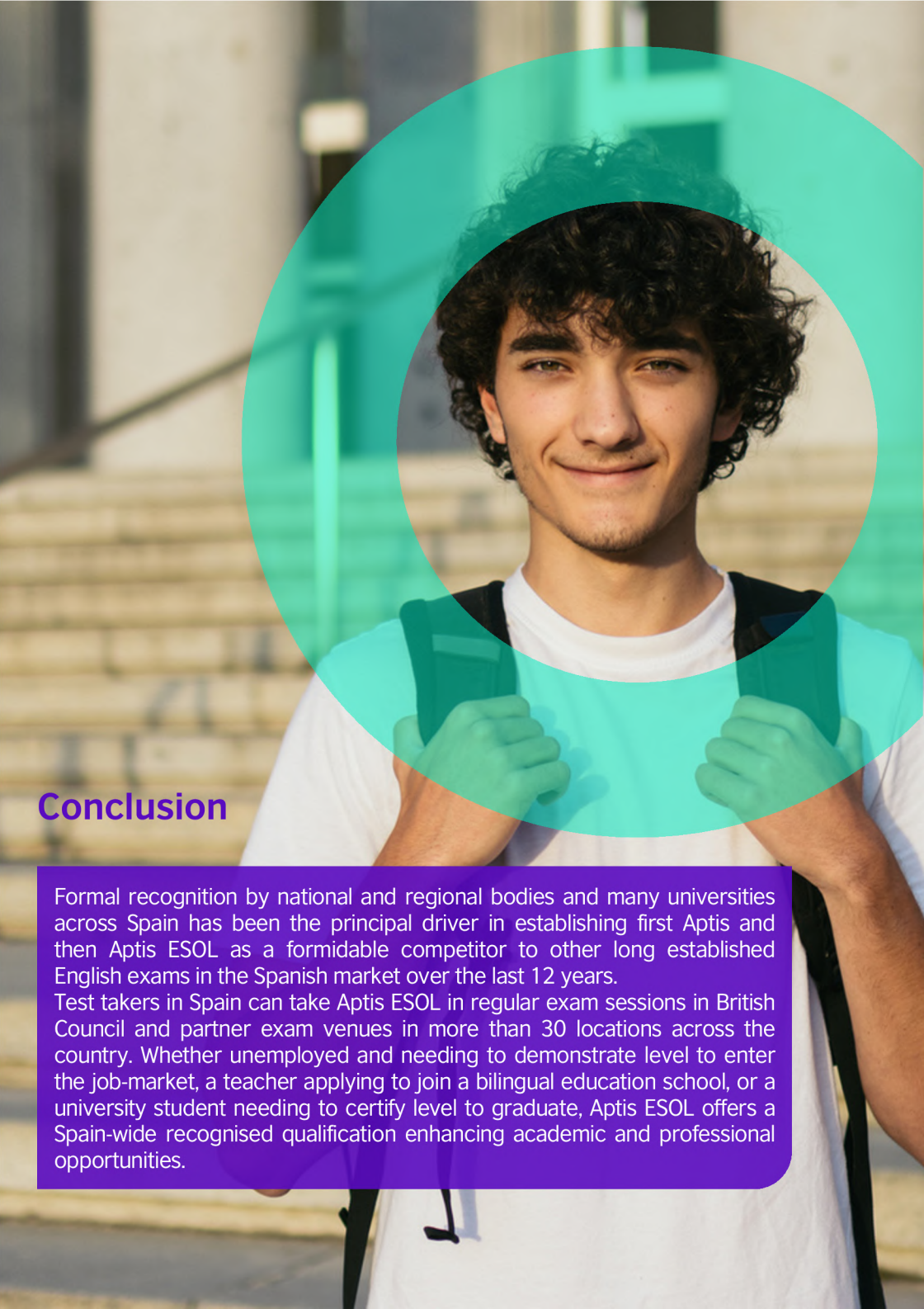
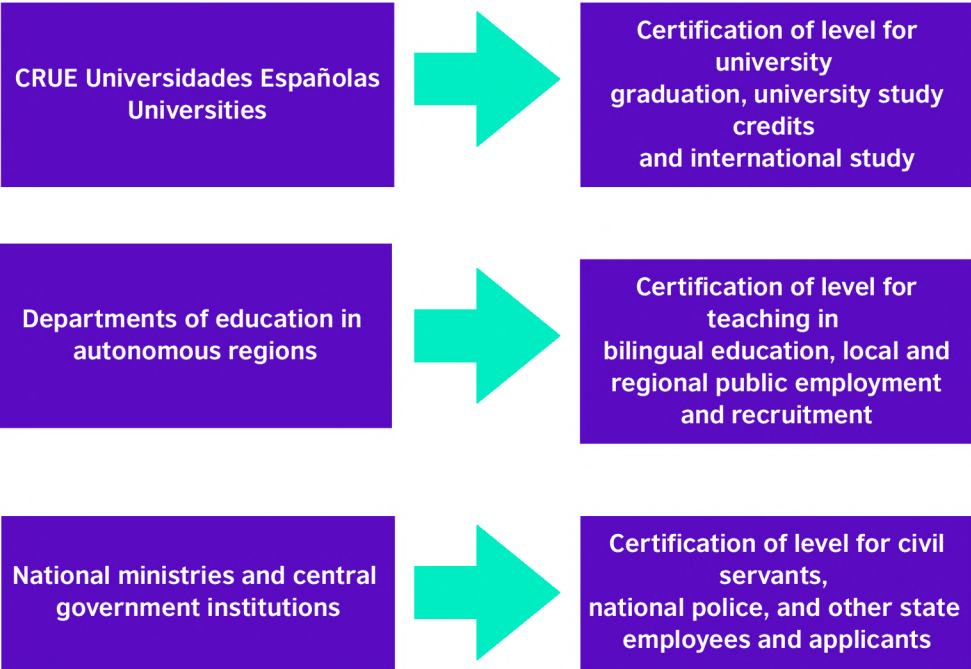
Transitioning to Aptis ESOL Recognition

Following Ofqual recognition of Aptis ESOL as an enhanced-security delivery variant of Aptis in 2021, Spain transitioned from Aptis ESOL in 2022.

Communication of the transition to Aptis ESOL, itself based on the delivery model already in place in Spain, was carefully managed by the Spain Exams team over a six-month period leading up to the change. This ensured that all recognising bodies were fully informed and given all necessary support documentation to facilitate understanding of the transition. Where required, formal applications for Aptis ESOL recognition were also submitted.

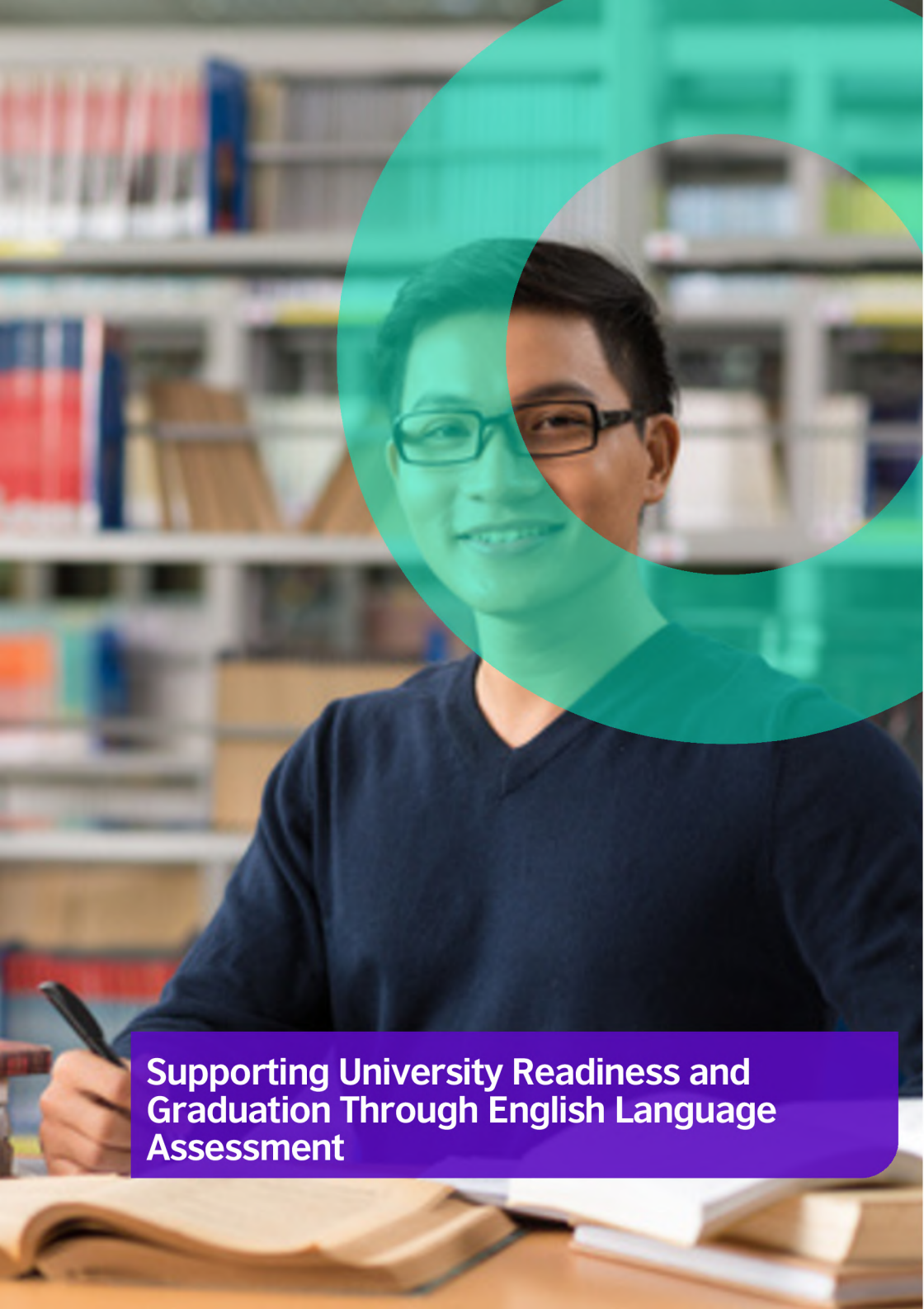
Aptis ESOL is now formally recognised across all 17 autonomous regions in Spain. It is also recognised by some 45 universities and accepted by a further 40 universities across the country for students to certify their English level. Nationally, Aptis ESOL is recognised by various entities, including the Interior Ministry, specifically for National Police recruitment and career advancement.

Recognition and Recognition Purpose



Conclusion

Formal recognition by national and regional bodies and many universities across Spain has been the principal driver in establishing first Aptis and then Aptis ESOL as a formidable competitor to other long established English exams in the Spanish market over the last 12 years. Test takers in Spain can take Aptis ESOL in regular exam sessions in British Council and partner exam venues in more than 30 locations across the country. Whether unemployed and needing to demonstrate level to enter the job-market, a teacher applying to join a bilingual education school, or a university student needing to certify level to graduate, Aptis ESOL offers a Spain-wide recognised qualification enhancing academic and professional opportunities.



Supporting University Readiness and Graduation Through English Language Assessment

Vietnam | Formal Recognition

The British Council was awarded a licence to deliver Aptis ESOL to university age students needing to certify English level for course admission or university studies by the Vietnamese Ministry of Education and Training (MOET) in late 2022. Subsequent approval has extended recognition to certification of level for university graduation and more recently to secondary education. This formal recognition of Aptis ESOL at different education stages has enabled some 140,000 learners to certify their English level for academic or professional purposes in Vietnam since 2022.

English is regarded as key to economic development in Vietnam, and the Ministry of Education and Training (MOET) is the principle governmental body responsible for driving educational reform in the country. MOET established the National Foreign Languages Project (NFLP) in 2008 to reform foreign language learning in the national education system. In 2024, following a review of the impact of the NFLP on education reform to date, further reform was decreed to embed English as a second language in Vietnam by 2035.

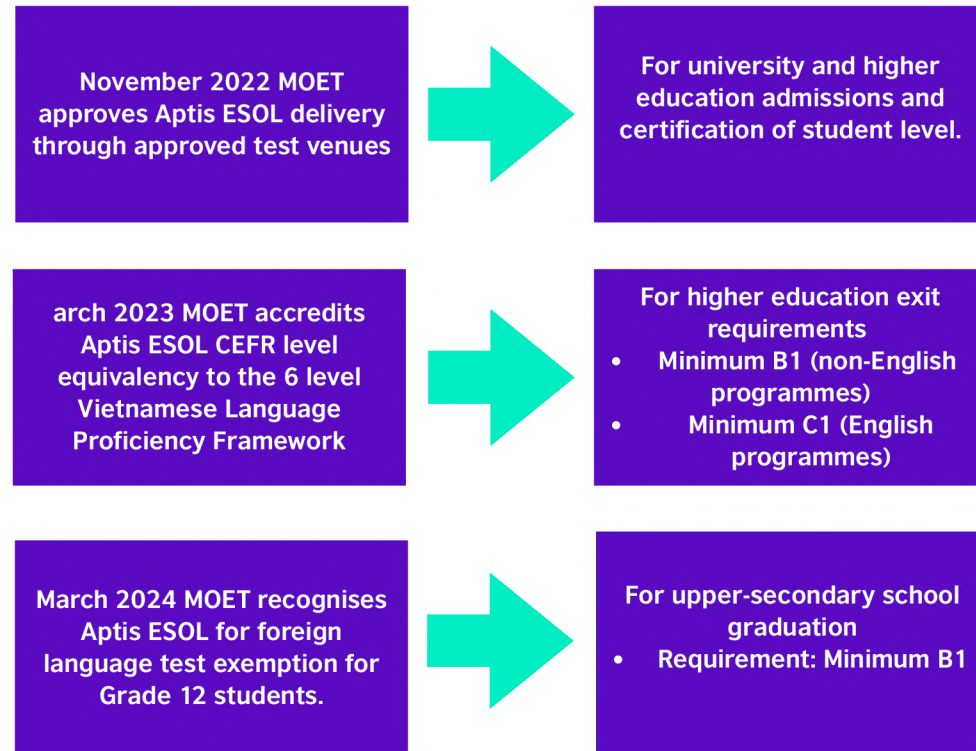
The importance of English in Vietnam has led to a growing demand for secure high-stakes qualifications to certify level. In this context the British Council decided to pursue formal recognition for Aptis ESOL in 2022. Aptis ESOL was approved by MOET in late 2022 for students needing to certify level for in-country university admission and university studies.

Key to MOET approval for Aptis ESOL in Vietnam was:

- **Ofqual (United Kingdom Government Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation) recognition and regulation.** Whilst Ofqual's scope as a recognition organisation extends to qualifications delivered in England, the impact of its regulatory role is global
- **close British Council links with Vietnam Government agencies and a track record** of collaboration on in-country learning programmes
- **partnership with local registration and delivery partners** with test centre capacity.

In March 2023 MOET accredited the Aptis ESOL Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) aligned level equivalency to the six level Vietnam Framework of Reference for Languages. The local framework is itself aligned to the CEFR as an international standard and permitted Aptis ESOL to extend its use to university students needing to certify level for degree graduation. In 2024 Aptis ESOL was included in the list of recognised English qualifications published by MOET for foreign language test exemption when completing secondary education. This has opened up opportunities for Aptis ESOL with secondary school age students who may need to assess level in their final year of upper secondary education, or before.

Meeting Learner needs



Recognition is a key enabler where the British Council aims to establish Aptis ESOL as a test of choice for those who need to provide evidence of their English level.

Ofqual recognition and regulation offers national recognising and approving bodies like MOET a guarantee that Aptis ESOL is a reliable, valid qualification, which has been designed, developed and delivered to the very highest standards by the British Council, as the awarding organisation.

National recognition offers the end user, the exam candidate taking Aptis ESOL, the assurance that Aptis ESOL will accurately evaluate and certify their level of English to meet their needs. Where national recognition is focused on certification of level for specific purposes, such as university admission or graduation, the needs of a test candidate taking Aptis ESOL can be very clearly met.

“Aptis ESOL is highly practical and relevant to our English Training programmes. It has allowed us to benchmark our students’ English skills quickly, affordably and by unquestionable international standards.”

- Tran Thi Nhi, Vice-Dean, School of Foreign Languages
Thai Nguyen University



Screening for Global Employment Opportunities

Nepal | Immigration Authorities



Client: Immigration authorities

Test takers: Migrant workers

Client need: Screening of candidates to assess English levels for employment abroad

Country: Nepal

Sector: Healthcare

The Department of Foreign Employment (DOFE), responsible for regulating foreign employment for Nepal's citizens, signed a memorandum of understanding with British Council Nepal in June 2024. This collaboration aimed to ensure that successful Nepali applicants for care giver positions abroad would have the appropriate level of English communication skills to perform their duties effectively. Foundation English Test was selected as the comprehensive proficiency test to assess all four skills (speaking, listening, reading and writing) and achieve a minimum competency level to be eligible to participate in the recruitment process.

The project was ambitious, with over 5,000 tests to be delivered without the clients' involvement. This meant that the team in Nepal and Global Assessments worked closely together to ensure that Nepal was able to become the first country to launch Foundation English Test as a B2C offer. Over 7,000 registrations were received within 2 weeks, and 5,088 candidates completed their tests and received results within less than a month.

The Right Assessment

By providing an accredited and certified level of English proficiency through Foundation English Test, migrant workers could have access to successful placements abroad and better job opportunities. The test has helped applicant migrant workers in Nepal demonstrate their English communication skills to support their eligibility for this governmental project. This was achieved by assessing real-world skills through simulated work-related scenarios and an accurate and thorough evaluation of the four skills.

Foundation English Test is a four-skills assessment that targets workplace language use for those who need basic to intermediate English skills for employment purposes, including migration. It provides a fairer, more suitable, assessment for entry-level English speakers by assessing communicative English skills at the CEFR levels of A1 to B1, which are suitable proficiency levels for several workplace environments commonly available to migrant workers.

Overcoming Delivery Challenges

One of the primary challenges was the stringent timeframes of the project to ensure timely registrations of candidates and operational readiness for a successful high-volume project of this nature. Verifying candidate's registrations, complicated by incorrect emails and payment issues, led to a significant increase in inquiries that overwhelmed the Customer Service team. To mitigate this, the Marketing team provided information in the local language to ensure clear communication to customers. The local country team efficiently designed a delivery plan and ensured it always supported safe delivery standards.

In addition to clerical issues, extreme weather conditions such as floods and landslides meant that 300 candidates were unable to attend their test session. Nevertheless, the British Council team in Nepal was able to successfully reschedule 250 of these tests.

The team conducted the impressive number of 5,088 tests within 19 days without any major issues. To ensure that test takers did not face any distractions, they used noise cancelling headphones and kept www.britishcouncil.org/foundationenglishtest 3 adequate distancing between computers. To further support both test takers and to mitigate the risk of malpractice, the team deployed extra venue staff at a ratio of 1:8.

In addition to these measures, they ran four test sessions a day, 25 sessions a week, with a maximum of 150 test takers per session to guarantee test security and full compliance with delivery standards. Thanks to the excellent work of the team, a fully compliant venue was found for the test sessions, venue staff were timely trained and venue readiness checks to test all equipment were completed before the project started.

Despite these challenges, including a 1700% surge in inquiries, the Nepal team successfully delivered the project, maintaining high service levels, demonstrating resilience under pressure, and preserving client satisfaction at all times.



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