

BRITISH COUNCIL AND LANGUAGE ASSESSMENT

British Council and Assessment

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The British Council has been actively involved in language test development since 1941. In the years that followed, a lot of important and innovative work was done in this area. We’ll come back to this work later, but in the meantime let’s look at what the British Council currently does across the world in the area of assessment.

For many years now, we’ve been working with some of the UK’s best known examination boards such as Cambridge, City and Guilds and Pearson to deliver tests both of English language proficiency and of other academic and vocational subjects in 90 countries around the world. We also work with a large number of UK Higher Education institutions, including the Universities of London, Leicester, Liverpool and Lancaster and Heriot Watt University in Edinburgh, to help them deliver their exams.

In addition to these educational institutions, we work with over forty professional bodies such as the Association of Chartered Certified Accountants, the Chartered Institute of Procurement and Supply and the General Medical Council to help them deliver their professional qualifications internationally.

In order to successfully work with all of these organisations and institutions, we’ve had to develop specific expertise to ensure quality and compliance of the whole assessment process, so we can deliver educational and professional exams to the high standards required by UK awarding bodies. When combined with our global reach and the trust placed in our organisation by people internationally, we’ve developed a reputation as the world’s leading experts in the area.

The world’s leading English language test, the International English Language Testing System, known as IELTS, is also the world’s most popular English language test for higher education and migration. It’s co-owned by the British Council, Cambridge English Language Assessment and IDP: IELTS Australia. While the original version of the test, called the English Language Testing System, or ELTS, was developed in-house in the British Council in the late 1970s, these days we take responsibility for over two million IELTS tests a year, delivered at over 500 test centres around the world. IELTS scores are accepted by more than 9,000 organisations in 135 countries worldwide, including universities, immigration departments, government agencies, professional bodies and multinational companies.

In recent years, in addition to test delivery, the British Council has moved back into the area of research and development of language tests. The Assessment Research Group came into being in early 2012 and later that year the first test to emerge from this initiative was launched. This was the Aptis language assessment service.

Aptis is a new kind of test. It is **flexible**, in that it can be adapted for use in different contexts such as, for example, business, travel and tourism, and clients can decide which skills they want to test. It is **accessible** on multiple platforms such as computer, tablet, and phone as well as with traditional pen-and-paper. It is **affordable** in that the pricing is deliberately kept low to allow users across a broad-spectrum to have access to a high quality international test service.

The design of Aptis allows us to create variants from the original test, which is a test of general proficiency. The first variants to be developed were Aptis for Teachers and Aptis for Teens, while others are in the pipeline.

Following on from the success of Aptis, we've also developed a computer-based placement test, which again pushes the boundaries with an innovative two stage design that allows us to accurately place learners right across the spectrum of ability levels.

These developments are taking place against the backdrop of our commitment to world leading research through our Assessment Research Group. Members of the Group work closely with local and international university-based colleagues on a wide range of test validation and test development projects. Visit the research section of the Aptis website at <https://www.britishcouncil.org/exam/aptis/research/assessment-group> to find out more about our team, our Assessment Advisory Board and our research projects, publications and test development activities.