

# Interim use of **TOEFL ITP® test scores** for admissions purposes: A guidance document from ETS

## Introduction

ETS is happy to announce the launch of the “TOEFL ITP® Plus for China” solution for mainland China, which combines the TOEFL ITP test and a Vericant® video speaking interview. The TOEFL ITP test (Institutional Testing Program) is an ETS research backed test of academic English with valid, reliable and accurate results. It shares the same rich heritage of the *TOEFL iBT®* test (internet-based test) — the world’s most widely accepted and respected English-language assessment.

The TOEFL ITP test is generally not intended as a replacement for the TOEFL iBT test because it is typically administered by institutions for their specific needs. However, as part of the TOEFL ITP Plus solution, it is provided as a suitable choice for evaluating applicants for admission purposes from China while the TOEFL iBT test is not available. During that period, this TOEFL ITP Plus version of the test will be administered temporarily in China as a paper-pencil test in official test centers under ETS-mandated protocols, procedures and proctors to provide security comparable to that of the TOEFL iBT test, as well as best-in-class procedures for high-stakes paper-based testing. The format, content and score scales for the TOEFL ITP Plus test is the same as the typical, institutionally administered version of the TOEFL ITP test.

Because the TOEFL ITP test assesses three language skill areas (Listening Comprehension, Reading Comprehension, and Structure and Written Expression), the “TOEFL ITP Plus for China” solution also features a short, unscored video speaking interview provided by Vericant. The interview is administered under secure conditions, so that institutions can obtain a comprehensive picture of the English-communication abilities of their applicants.

## Information about the TOEFL ITP test

The current TOEFL ITP FAQ page ([ets.org/toefl\\_itp/faq](https://ets.org/toefl_itp/faq)) provides a good introduction to the TOEFL ITP test and helps with general questions about the TOEFL ITP Assessment Series. Please note that some of the information provided there may be relevant to the institutionally administered version only. Please note also that the TOEFL ITP Plus test being offered in China during this time is the Level 1 version of the test (Intermediate to Advanced), NOT the Level 2 version (High Beginning to Intermediate).

## Information about TOEFL ITP test scoring

The current *TOEFL ITP® Test Taker Handbook* ([ets.org/toefl\\_itp/administration\\_scoring](https://ets.org/toefl_itp/administration_scoring)) provides information about the section and total score scales and notes that score requirements are set by institutions (p. 21).

### ETS baseline recommendation for score requirements for the TOEFL ITP Plus for China

- The TOEFL ITP test is designed to evaluate the ability to comprehend spoken and written English in an academic setting; thus, the design of the test makes it appropriate for decisions related to academic language proficiency.
- ETS recommends that institutions set their own score requirements to best serve their students' needs, because of various contextual characteristics, such as language demands of the courses at the institution, amount of language support offered, etc. At the same time, ETS recognizes the need to offer institutions guidance to set requirements for this interim use of TOEFL ITP test scores for admission purposes.
- Based on the rich experience of the TOEFL program working with score users and studies conducted in recent years to facilitate the interpretation and use of TOEFL ITP test scores (see [ets.org/toefl\\_itp/research](https://ets.org/toefl_itp/research)), ETS provides the following baseline recommendation for section and total score requirements:

Language demands of courses	Total Score	CEFR	Listening Comprehension Score	Structure and Written Expression Score	Reading Comprehension Score
High Language Demands	627	C1	64	64	63
Moderate Language Demands	543	B2	54	53	56

To facilitate score interpretations, TOEFL ITP test scores have been mapped onto the CEFR levels through a study by Tannenbaum and Baron (2011). Additional score level guidance is provided through the TOEFL ITP Overall Performance Descriptors ([ets.org/toefl\\_itp/research/performance-descriptors](https://ets.org/toefl_itp/research/performance-descriptors)) and the TOEFL ITP Section Score Descriptors ([ets.org/s/toefl\\_itp/pdf/test\\_score\\_descriptors.pdf](https://ets.org/s/toefl_itp/pdf/test_score_descriptors.pdf)) created through a separate study (Powers et al., 2017). Additional information about the research behind the TOEFL ITP test is available at [ets.org/toefl\\_itp/research](https://ets.org/toefl_itp/research).

The score requirement recommendation provided by ETS is only intended as a starting point; institutions wishing to apply TOEFL ITP test score requirements that are relevant and useful in their context should consider relevant factors such as:

- Experience with the TOEFL ITP test scores for institutional purposes (such as placement in an English-language support program for international students) can inform decisions for score requirements for admission.
- High requirements may limit the applicant pool, but those admitted are more likely to have the English-language skills to succeed.
- Lower score requirements may increase the applicant pool, but some admitted students may not have the English-language skills to succeed. However, offering opportunities for language support on campus might allow for lenient score requirements.
- Setting score requirements for the total score, as well as the section scores allows for a consideration of the students' language profile, which might not be possible when only total score requirements are set.
- In general, institutions require scores that map onto CEFR level B2 or higher (moderate language demands) or CEFR level C1 or higher (high language demands) when using the CEFR to set score requirements for admissions. Equivalent information for the TOEFL iBT test may be found at [ets.org/toefl/score-users/scores-admissions/compare](https://ets.org/toefl/score-users/scores-admissions/compare), under the section "Comparing TOEFL iBT Scores to the CEFR".

## References

Tannenbaum, R. J., & Baron, P.A. (2011). *Mapping TOEFL® ITP scores onto the Common European Framework of Reference*. (ETS Research Memorandum RM- 11-33). Princeton, NJ: Educational Testing Service.

Powers, D., Schedl, M., & Papageorgiou, S. (2017). Facilitating the interpretation of English language proficiency scores: Combining scale anchoring and test score mapping methodologies. *Language Testing*, 34(2), 175–195.