Relating LanguageCert Academic to IELTS Academic

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Concordance study summary

LanguageCert Academic (B1-C2) - IELTS Academic (A1-C2)

To support candidates and score users interpret LanguageCert Academic test scores, LanguageCert runs a program of research and validation which includes concordance studies. These studies relate our exams to benchmarking systems like the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), and to other tests used for high stakes admissions purposes. This summary focuses on a recent concordance study with IELTS Academic.

LanguageCert commissioned the **Centre for Research in English Language Learning and Assessment (CRELLA)** in the UK, to oversee the study. We also invited a team of leading academics (from Australia, Canada, the UK and the USA), to form a Concordance Studies Review Panel.
The panel's main objective is to review the concordance studies as they progress and advise on the processes and subsequent findings.

The concordance study includes comparisons between a) the content of LanguageCert Academic and IELTS Academic, and b) the collection of test score data from test takers who have taken both LanguageCert Academic and IELTS Academic.

Key highlights

The concordance study is already **one of the largest studies of its kind.**
To date we have collected results from over 650 test takers across 29 nationalities who have, within a period of three months, taken both tests in a counterbalanced order.

Although empirical concordance work is ongoing, data collected so far shows that performance on LanguageCert Academic is highly predictive of performance on IELTS Academic with **very strong correlations** between the results: **r =.87**

The study has been conducted following **best practice**, with input and review from a panel of external experts, overseen by CRELLA, the world-leading authority on research in English language assessment.

The study required submission of **official IELTS Academic test reports** – not self-reported scores - resulting in more reliable data for comparison.

The **role play task** in the LanguageCert Academic Speaking part, is a unique feature to our test. Compared to IELTS Academic, we also use academic-based scenarios more appropriate to testing skills for use in an academic setting, across all four skills.

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Preliminary findings

Phase 1

June-August 2023
Sample: 654 participants
Gender split: 60% F, 40% M
Age: M = 24.2, SD = 6.2 (~18-30 years old) -
This reflects a typical range expected for undergraduate and postgraduate study (House, 2010).
29 nationalities represented: Largest nationality groups incl. Chinese (50%), Indian (33%), Greek (5%), Thai (3%) and Turkish (3%)

Phase 2

September-December 2023 (expected completion) with a sample size ~1000 test takers.
All participants need to submit their IELTS test report forms. No self-reported scores are accepted.

Methodology

Contents comparisons (see further below for a brief summary per skill)

Counterbalanced approach with half test takers taking LanguageCert Academic first and IELTS Academic second, and the other half taking IELTS Academic first and LanguageCert Academic second.

Correlations: A strong, positive correlation between tests (i.e., above .7) suggests that performing well on one test would translate to performing well on the other, while performing poorly on one test would tend to mean performing poorly on the other.

Correlations

	Overall r	Reading r	Writing r	Listening r	Speaking r
Academic (n=654)	.87	.79	.69	.70	.73
Note: r= correlation. All correlations were statistically significant at the p < .001 level					

Conclusion

Analyses herein suggest a **strong relationship between LanguageCert Academic and IELTS Academic.** Correlational data indicates that LanguageCert Academic performs in accordance with industry standards, meeting and slightly outperforming correlations between alternative tests. LanguageCert Academic appears moderately more difficult than IELTS Academic based on the present sample of participants. A preliminary linking table has been provided; however, it must be noted that data collection is in progress and the analysis is consequently ongoing. Further analysis will be conducted to help support or refine the understanding of the relationships between LanguageCert Academic and IELTS Academic.

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LanguageCert Academic alignment to the CEFR and IELTS

LanguageCert	LanguageCert Academic	IELTS	
CEFR			
C2	100 — — — 95 — — — 90	9.0 — 8.5	
C1	85 — — — 80 — — — 75	8.0 — 7.5 — 7.0	LanguageCert Academic 85-90 = IELTS 8.0 — LanguageCert Academic 80-84 = IELTS 7.5 — LanguageCert Academic 75-79 = IELTS 7.0
B2	70 — — — 65 — — — 60	6.5 — 6.0 — 5.5	LanguageCert Academic 70-74 = IELTS 6.5 — LanguageCert Academic 65-69 = IELTS 6.0 — LanguageCert Academic 60-64 = IELTS 5.5
B1	55 — — 50 — 45 — 40	5.0 — 4.5 — 4.0	LanguageCert Academic 54-59 = IELTS 5.0 — LanguageCert Academic 47-53 = IELTS 4.5 — LanguageCert Academic 40-46 = IELTS 4.0

The established scoring arrangements between LanguageCert Academic and the CEFR are verified by ongoing analysis of test performance as well as by the LanguageCert Research and Validation programmes. Concordancing evidence with other tests (such as that provided with IELTS in the table), are an illustration of the equivalencies as verified both internally and externally by our external partners. For more information about our concordance research visit www.languagecert.org/research

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LanguageCert Academic (LCA) and IELTS Academic (IELTS): Content comparison per skill

Speaking

Duration: similar; one-to-one interview

Similar cognitive processes

Unique to LCA:
- Speaking specifically designed for the academic domain vs. IELTS used for both the Academic and General modules.
- Part 2 role play > interactional competence
- Part 4 graph > academic competencies
- Split marking between two examiners

Listening

Duration: LCA 40 mins including double play vs. IELTS 30 mins single play

Similar cognitive processes and interaction types

Unique to LCA:
Listening specifically designed for the Academic domain vs. IELTS used for both the Academic and General modules.

Writing

Duration: LCA 50 mins vs. IELTS 60 mins

Same domain: Academic

Similar response formats and genres; two tasks: one based on a visual and one essay.

Similar expected length of response

Similar weighting

Double marked responses for both tests

Unique to LCA:
Both tests report a holistic (total) score, but LCA provides additional feedback based on performance on individual marking criteria.

Reading

Duration: similar

Same domain: Academic

Different format and weighting of the items / tasks (seven texts for LCA vs. three for IELTS)

Similar levels of cognitive processing

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Its **recognition by Ofqual** underpins LanguageCert's rigorous high standards and processes deployed in the development, delivery and award of qualifications that aim to enhance the lives and careers of its candidates.

LanguageCert tests are accepted as proof of English language proficiency by more than **2,300 educational institutions, government departments, corporations and professional associations** in more than **90 countries**

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