



English Language Testing REOI Questions and Answers HOMEAFFAIRS/ELT01/22REOI

The following responses to written questions submitted by prospective Respondents about the REOI for the selection of English language tests for Australian visas are provided for information.

Item	Topic / REOI Clause Reference	Question	Response
1.	REOI Details and Requirement Clause 16	What is the duration of the proposed Deed of Agreement with successful English Language Testing providers	<p>The duration of initial Deeds of Agreement between the Department and English language providers has typically been three years.</p> <p>Whether a three-year duration would apply to Deeds of Agreement between the Department and test providers successful under this REOI is subject to confirmation. But the duration is unlikely to vary significantly.</p>
2.	REOI Details and Requirement Clause 10	Will there be a Register for Addendums or Amendments to the REOI?	There will be no Register for Addendums or amendments. Respondents need to monitor the Department's website.
3.	Attachment A Criterion 6: Accessibility	Can an English language test that is currently undergoing revision and refresh, which is yet to be completed in the next 18 months, be submitted under this REOI process (HOMEAFFAIRS/ELT01/22REOI)	<p>No. The Department will evaluate tests submitted as part of a Response to this REOI as being complete at the point of submission.</p> <p>Please refer to item 25.</p>
4.	Attachment A Criterion 6: Accessibility	Are there any minimum requirements to testing frequency or number/distribution of test locations? Can testing providers include plans for new testing location in addition to details of any existing operation?	<p>There are no minimum requirements with respect to testing frequency or number/distribution of test locations.</p> <p>Responses to the REOI may include plans for new testing location, in addition to existing locations.</p>

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5.	Attachment A Criterion 4: Defensible standards and robust Score equivalencies	<p>How do I proceed with concordance if my English language test is not in direct concordance to the current approved English language tests?</p> <p>How would we proceed with concordance to provide sufficient evidence for consideration of next steps?</p>	<p>Responses to the REOI must respond to current English language requirements in migration legislation (see sub-criterion 4.1 in ATTACHMENT A: RESPONSE FORMS AND EVALUATION CRITERIA for the REOI) including the Student (Subclass 500) visa.</p> <p>Please refer to item 37 in this document in regards to the concordance study guidelines and ensure all the Best Practice Criteria as specified in clause 5 of Part 3 (<u>ATTACHMENT A: RESPONSE FORMS AND EVALUATION CRITERIA</u>) are addressed in your submission. The Department will assist you with any further clarification you may require.</p>
6.	REOI process on Department of Home Affairs' webpage	<p>Do English language tests already specified in migration legislation have to submit an EOI?</p> <p>Will English language test providers who have existing tests already specified in migration legislation only have to submit an EOI for additional tests, or to dispute/correct any score equivalencies?</p>	<p>Current English language test providers prescribed in Australian migration legislation must submit an EOI if they wish to be considered under this process. This advice features on the Department's webpage for the Request for Expression of Interest for the selection of English language tests for Australian visas.</p> <p>To satisfy criteria 4.1 and 4.2, Respondents must either provide a concordancing study, or a plan for a new or updated concordancing study to be submitted to the Department by 31 January 2024.</p>
7.	Tests currently under development	What is the timeline for implementing new tests into Australian migration legislation i.e. if a product was currently in development by which date would it need to go to market?	<p>The indicative timetable for the REOI (p3 of the Details and Requirement) advises that Respondents will be notified of the assessment outcome of their Response from November 2022.</p> <p>Subject to satisfying all REOI requirements, a test assessed as successful under the REOI may be prescribed in Australian migration legislation from mid-2024.</p>
8.	Student visa eligibility criteria	<p>Do Student (Subclass 500) visa (School Sector) applicants under 18 years of age have the option of submitting English language testing (especially those from high-risk countries)?</p> <p>Can the results of an English language test be submitted and considered by the Department for visa purposes, such as students from high risk countries where a test score is not required?</p>	<p>Specific queries about visa eligibility criteria for the Student visa program, or any other visa program, are outside the scope of this REOI.</p> <p>Enquiries relating to Student visa policy should be sent to Student.visa.help.desk@homeaffairs.gov.au</p>

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9.	Attachment A Criterion 4: Defensible standards and robust score equivalences	<p>Some of the English language tests specified for Australian visas have made changes to their exams. For example, introducing computer-delivered tests, short versions of test components, changes to score reporting and score calculation.</p> <p>Have restrictions to changes to the tests been recently introduced? Can you provide guidance about what is acceptable to change?</p>	<p>This Request for Expression of Interest (HOMEAFFAIRS/ELT01/22/REOI) is the Department of Home Affairs' process to select new English language tests/scores for Australian visas.</p> <p>Any changes to English language tests already prescribed in migration legislation is managed through processes facilitated by Deeds of Agreement between the Department and providers of the tests.</p>
10.	Attachment A Criterion 8: Security of test materials, test delivery and results	Please confirm if there is a requirement for in person human identity checks or if secure digital biometric software is permitted as part of a hybrid enhanced identity checking solution.	No minimum requirements apply to required evidence to satisfy sub-criterion 8.2.
11.	Attachment A Criterion 8: Security of test materials, test delivery and results	Please confirm if a paper-based results certificate is mandatory or if digital certification is acceptable.	Digital certification of a candidate's results is acceptable.
12.	Attachment A Criterion 8: Security of test materials, test delivery and results	Please clarify if digital delivery "in test centre" is an acceptable for selected or all test components.	The Department does not accept English language tests for Australian visas where all four test components are delivered remote-proctored online, regardless of where the test is conducted. The Department retains discretion to consider accepting an English language test that includes only one test component delivered remote-proctored online, noting this one component need not necessarily be conducted in a test centre.
13.	Attachment A Criterion 9: Communication to test users	<p>Please clarify expectations on how test pricing is derived.</p> <p>Will minimum/maximum test price be set by the Department for the duration of the Deed of Agreement or prescribed by test providers?</p>	Respondents need only advise the cost of the test to a test taker. The REOI requirements and criteria reflect that the Department is not involved in test content or delivery, including any setting of minimum/maximum cost levels.

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14.	REOI Response File Formats – REOI Details and Requirements	What is the maximum response length for each criterion?	<p>The Department has not set a minimum/maximum length for responses to the criteria. However, Respondents should be mindful of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • REOI Response File Format, Naming Conventions and Sizes’ in clause 4 of the Details and Requirement doc; and • clause 2 of PART 3, ATTACHMENT A: RESPONSE FORMS AND EVALUATION CRITERIA.
15.	REOI Response File Formats – REOI Details and Requirement Clause 4.9 Attachment A Clause 2.1	Please clarify these statements: ‘REOI Responses are required to be completely self-contained. No hyperlinked or other material may be incorporated by reference’; In relation to: For readability, Respondents must include a clickable table of contents at the beginning of the document, listing each criterion and sub-criterion and any attachments.	Reference to a ‘clickable table of contents’ in clause 2.1 of ATTACHMENT A: RESPONSE FORMS AND EVALUATION CRITERIA means including a facility to allow the Evaluation Committee to quickly access relevant information contained within (but not external to) each document. For example, this could be achieved by using the Table of Contents facility in Word for the document, but would not include hyperlinks.
16.	Questions and answers about the REOI	Will the Department be publishing responses to questions submitted by potential Respondents?	<p>A summary of the Department’s responses to certain REOI questions is available on the Department’s REOI webpage.</p> <p>This summary will only list questions and responses. A listed question may reflect a compilation of several questions, where the questions related to a common topic. The summary will not identify the entity asking the question, and will not including any detail that would allow the questioning entity to be identified.</p>
17.	Attachment A Criterion 8: Security of test materials, test delivery and results	Please confirm if there are any specific minimum requirements that must be met for Test Reports and Certificates that are issued to the Test Taker.	There are no minimum requirements that must be met for a candidate’s test report beyond what is prescribed in required evidence to satisfy sub-criterion 8.3, and sub-criterion 9.3.
18.	Personal information	What personal information would providers be required to share with Home Affairs?	Based on the assumption that the query relates to the personal information that a test provider must supply to the Department for the purposes of verification of test scores for Australian visa process, information provided in the test score report should be sufficient.

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19.	Attachment A – Part 1 – REOI Response tables Clause 6.1: Subcontractor details	How much detail about the commercial hierarchy should Respondents provide, in relation to subcontractor information? For example, in the case with the use of test delivery partners and secure printers and scanner sites.	Respondents can determine whether they consider their Subcontractors to supply major elements of the Requirement. As prescribed in clause 11 of the Details and Requirement document, the Department may seek clarification on this (or any other issue) as required. Test Delivery Partners, Secure Printers and scanner sites are likely to constitute major elements of the Requirement.
20.	Attachment A – Part 1 – REOI Response tables Clause 8.1: Conflicts of Interest	What types of conflicts of interest should be declared in the Submission?	Factors to be considered when responding to the Conflict of Interest Requirement clause 8 of ATTACHMENT A: RESONSE FORMS AND EVALUATION CRITERIA is provided in clause 21 of the Details and Requirement document.
21.	Attachment A - Response form Part 4 – Responses to Evaluation Criteria	If a Respondent wishes to have considered under this REOI, two or more English language tests that have a testing system with a common framework, are separate response submission required for each test?	Individual responses are required for each English test proposed to be considered under this REOI. This is because specific English language tests and scores accepted by the Department for Australian visas are prescribed in legislative instruments. See example: Migration Regulations 1994 - Specification of Language Tests, Score and Passports 2015 - IMMI 15/005 (legislation.gov.au)
22.	Deed of Agreement	Where can I find a template of a Deed of Agreement?	The REOI documentation does not include a template for a Deed of Agreement. The Department's process to enter into a Deed of Agreement with providers of English language tests assessed as successful under this REOI is a separate process. No draft documents relevant to a possible Deed of Agreement will be provided to Respondents under this REOI.

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23.	Attachment A – Part 3 REOI Evaluation Criteria	Are Respondents expected to provide their responses directly into the document on the REOI website or should responses be provided in a separate single document, with a clickable table of contents?	<p>Responses to Part 1 and Part 3 of Attachment A (Response Forms and Evaluation Criteria document) may be provided by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • writing directly into the document and saving a copy in PDF form submission once complete. If the allocated text boxes are not sufficient, additional responses can be provided onto another document as an attachment, which should include the reference to the relevant paragraph and page. • completing a separate document (submitted in a PDF format) with the relevant criterion, sub-criterion and references to paragraph and page number. <p>Responses must comply with the REOI contents and format requirements in Clause 4 of the Details and Requirements document:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • REOI Response File Format, Naming Conventions and Sizes' in clause 4 of the Details and Requirement doc • clause 2 of PART 3, ATTACHMENT A: RESPONSE FORMS AND EVALUATION CRITERIA.
24.	Attachment A Part 3 - REOI Evaluation Criteria Criterion 3.4; Criterion 8.3; Part 4: Responses to Evaluation Criteria Criterion 3.4	What types of records and information are required to be stored for a minimum of seven years after termination of any agreement? Does this include test centre CCTV recordings?	Test records must be retained for a minimum of seven years after termination of any Deed of Agreement with the Department of Home Affairs, which may be required for performance reviews, audit, appeals and integrity purposes include all relevant documentation and records however stored, in the service provider's possession or control.

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25.	Attachment A Criterion 6: Accessibility	Please provide further information on the process for requesting consideration with the Department at points where test revisions have taken place?	<p>A later, revised version of any English language test submitted under this REOI process (HOMEAFFAIRS/ELT01/22REOI) would need to be considered separately as part of a subsequent and new REOI process for the selection of English language tests for Australian visas unless otherwise advised by the Department, for example, the further opportunity to submit revised REOI response informed by the Department on 20 June 2023.</p> <p>Responses submitted by the closing date must be complete, and concordancing studies in relation to each test submitted must comply with the latest guidelines (item 37) and the Best Practice Criteria for Concordancing Studies in clause 5 of Part 3, ATTACHMENT A:RESPONSE FORMS AND EVALUATION CRITERIA.</p>
26.	Attachment A Sub-criterion 8.4	Does the Department accept digital English language tests with live in-centre proctoring/invigilation?	Under the REOI, the Department may consider accepting remote-proctored online delivery of one (only) test component taken in a secure test centre with appropriate integrity and security features.
27.	Subcontractors	Please provide a clear definition of 'subcontractors' whose details are to be provided with the response. Does this only relate to subcontracting of the delivery of the test?	Respondents can determine whether they consider their Subcontractors to supply major elements of the Requirement. As prescribed in clause 11 of the Details and Requirement document, the Department may seek clarification on this (or any other issue) as required.
28.	Attachment A Clause 2 – Respondent Details	Will the Department accept additional content relating to Respondent Details as an attachment or in a Word document?	<p>Responses must be submitted in a Portable Document Format (PDF) only. Responses must include a clickable table of contents at the beginning of the document, listing each criterion and sub-criterion and references to the relevant paragraph and page number.</p> <p>Information on REOI Content and format can be found in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clause 4 (REOI Response Lodgement of the REOI Details and Requirements document; • Clause 2 (References to attachments) of Attachment A (Response forms and Evaluation Criteria).

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29.	Details and Requirements Clause 7 - Content and Format requirements for REOI Responses	Can Respondents submit a URL address for the listening component of an English language test as audio zipped files may be large files?	Response files and formats must be submitted as a zipped (compressed) file. Please refer to the specific requirements for content format under Clause 4 of the REOI Details and Requirements document.
30.	Attachment A Criterion 1 – Fitness for purpose	Is it acceptable to provide a URL to the public-facing reports as evidence of validation research?	As set out in clause 2.1 of Part 3 – REOI EVALUATION CRITERIA (ATTACHMENT A: RESPONSE FORMS AND EVALUATION CRITERIA), supporting evidence must be summarised in the body of the document. If Respondents wish to include attachments to support their response to an Evaluation Criteria or sub-criterion, the summary document must refer to specific page/paragraphs in the relevant attachment(s).
31.	Attachment A Criterion 3 – Consistency and Fairness	What information should Respondents provide about 'key groups in the applicant population' when responding to sub-criterion 3.2?	Key groups may include (but are not limited to) ethnicity, gender, age, nationality.
32.	Attachment A Criterion 5 – Quality of test development and monitoring	Sub-criterion 5.5 is for 'appropriate analyses conducted to monitor performance'. However, the evidence in sub-criterion 5.5 asks 'test providers specify the quality assurance processes'. Is this the correct evidence for sub-criterion 5.5?	Yes, the evidence required for sub-criterion 5.5 is correctly listed. Respondents are required to provide evidence of quality assurance processes used to monitor the performance of test items and tasks.
33.	Attachment A Criterion 6 – Accessibility	Does the evidence required for sub-criterion 6.6 'measures to ensure delays are minimised for test candidates', refer to delays in booking a test (ie, unavailability of immediate test time/date, or delay in starting the test at a testing centre)?	Respondents may include a range of evidence to satisfy this sub-criterion, including (but not limited to) details of how delays between booking a test and the first available appointment are minimised, the physical footprint of testing centres/frequency of test delivery to minimise delays.

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34.	<p>Details and Requirements</p> <p>Clause 4 - REOI Response File Formats, Naming Conventions and Sizes</p>	<p>Do papers such as citations and links to academic papers, which are generally accepted to be widely accessible public domain materials need to be fully downloaded and attached as evidence in the submission?</p>	<p>As set out in clause 2.1 of Part 3 – REOI EVALUATION CRITERIA (ATTACHMENT A: RESPONSE FORMS AND EVALUATION CRITERIA), supporting evidence must be summarised in the body of the document. If Respondents wish to include attachments to support their response to an Evaluation Criteria or sub-criterion, the summary document must refer to specific page/paragraphs in the relevant attachment(s). Response files and formats must be submitted as a zipped (compressed) file. Please refer to the specific requirements for content format under Clause 4 of the REOI Details and Requirements document.</p> <p>Responses must comply with the REOI contents and format requirements in Clause 4 of the Details and Requirements document:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • REOI Response File Format, Naming Conventions and Sizes' in clause 4 of the Details and Requirement doc • clause 2 of PART 3 – Reference to attachments (ATTACHMENT A: RESPONSE FORMS AND EVALUATION CRITERIA).
35.	<p>English language proficiency levels</p>	<p>Does the Department have a correlation study of its English language proficiency levels (Functional, Vocational, Competent, Proficient, and Superior) with the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR).</p>	<p>The Department does not have studies to correlate English language proficiency levels prescribed in Australian migration legislation (as listed on pages 18 – 19 of ATTACHMENT A: RESPONSE FORMS AND EVALUATION CRITERIA) against the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR).</p>
36.	<p>Visa statistics</p>	<p>What are the countries of origin and/or first languages of people applying for student or work visas?</p>	<p>Statistical information about study and work visas is available on the Department of Home Affairs' website Visa statistics (homeaffairs.gov.au)</p> <p>The scope of the REOI is not limited to specific countries of origin or first languages of people applying for student or work visas.</p>

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37.	Attachment A Part 3 – REOI Evaluation Criteria Criteria 5 – Best Practice Criteria for Concordancing Studies	How do respondents select a suitable comparison test for the concordance study?	<p>The Language Services Advisory Panel has advised the following principles regarding the choice of test for the concordance study:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The comparison test should be designed to measure a similar construct. 2. The two tests should have similar reliability both overall and for the sub-tests. 3. Tests with automated scoring components should pair with tests using human raters. 4. Tests need to concordance to a test that measures the same score range.
38.	Resubmission timeframe	What are the expected changes to the REOI processes & timeframes?	<p>In the letters dated 20 June 2023, the Department granted all REOI respondents a further opportunity to provide material or submissions to the Department about their initial REOI response, or submit a further or varied REOI response. The letters provided a 28-day timeframe for respondents to submit their material to the Department. The timeframe currently expires on 18 July 2023. The Department may consider extension requests on a case-by-case basis.</p> <p>Timeframes related to outcomes of resubmission are subject to the volume of changes respondents provide to the Department.</p> <p>Concordance study submission has been extended to 31 January 2024.</p>
		If a test is assessed as successful under the current REOI, when will it be prescribed in Australian migration legislation?	<p>The Department would likely implement new deeds of agreement with successful test providers and update relevant legislative instruments in mid-2024. However, the final date will be confirmed later subject to the progression of the REOI and subsequent concordance study.</p>

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39.	Revision of responses	<p>In the letter of 20 June 2023, the Department mentions “consideration of new or changed testing products” since the original 2022 submission. What is meant by this statement, and how will it operate in the evaluation of REOI resubmissions?</p>	<p>The Department has decided to provide one further and final opportunity for all REOI respondents to submit revised REOI responses. This will allow for the Department to consider comments on adverse findings by the Evaluation Committee, and for consideration of new or changed testing products.</p> <p>The specific purpose of the further opportunity was to allow respondents to respond to the feedback from the Evaluation Committee – the form of that response will vary, and is a matter for the individual respondent. A respondent may be of the view that the only way they can respond adequately to the feedback identified by the Evaluation Committee, is to provide a substantially varied product. The nature of those variations may be that it is so changed that it is a ‘new test’.</p> <p>This means respondents may provide materials including (but not limited to):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. A submission or report addressing comments in the REOI Evaluation Panel’s report. b. A varied response to the REOI, which may include anything from minor to more consequential amendments to its response. c. In certain cases, a ‘new test’ or a ‘new product’.
		<p>There are instances where the overall evaluation is ‘satisfactory’, whilst a sub-criterion has been evaluated as ‘insufficient information provided’. What are the Department’s expectations in this circumstance?</p>	<p>Respondents are encouraged to respond to items where insufficient information was previously submitted, as the success of any response is based on the overall strength of the application across all criteria and sub-criteria.</p>
		<p>When a sub-criterion is updated, concepts in other closely-linked sub-criteria may also be impacted. Should test providers resubmit all impacted criteria so that the response reads coherently?</p>	<p>Yes. Respondents should update relevant linked sub-criteria that are going to be impacted by the changes. Please ensure all the updates are highlighted accordingly.</p>

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		Can conforming changes (particularly cross-links, for example, as pagination could change after updates) be made at a later date if a respondent becomes successful in their resubmission?	Yes. Conforming changes can be made after a respondent is deemed successful in their resubmission.
		Would the Department require a clickable Table of Contents for the revised submission, narrowed just to the re-submission areas?	Yes. This will help the Department navigate respondents' submissions more effectively.
40.	Resubmission communication	Respondents would like to request a meeting with the Department.	<p>The Department can facilitate meetings and address the questions respondents may have. Please provide detailed questions in writing in the first instance to allow for planning and coordination of responses.</p> <p>Please note the Department may disclose non-commercial advice and responses in a Q&A format to all respondents. This ensures compliance with the REOI procedural fairness.</p>
		If a matter arose in a meeting with a particular respondent that is relevant to clarifying the process as a whole, will that be communicated to all respondents?	Any matter arising in a meeting with a particular respondents that is relevant to clarifying the process as a whole will be communicated both directly to all respondents and on the REOI website.
		If questions raised by respondents are commercial, does that mean they will not be shared publicly? Would the Department advise if any of the questions will be considered non-commercial and shared?	<p>The Department is using a consistent method for fielding and answering REOI questions. Please refer to clause 5 of the REOI <u>Details and Requirement document</u> for information. This process is consistent for all respondents for procedural fairness.</p> <p>Respondents are entitled to raise questions of a confidential nature about their specific product, which is contemplated by the REOI <u>Details and Requirement document</u>, particularly clause 5 as mentioned above. The Department will not publish in its Q&A document information that may be commercially sensitive.</p>

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41.	Resubmission evaluation	Will the evaluation phase of the REOI include the opportunity for respondents to seek clarifications if aspects of their submission are unclear to the Department, similar to the previous submission process?	Yes. The Department will seek clarification from respondents of unclear aspects in their submission.