

Press Release

Common English Proficiency Assessment Scheme (CEPAS) –
2003/04 Results

The University Grants Committee (UGC) announced today results of the International English Language Testing System (IELTS) taken by final year students of UGC-funded undergraduate degree programmes in 2003/04 under CEPAS.

For 2003/04, over 8,700 final year undergraduate students participated in the scheme, compared with 7,300 in 2002/03. This represents a 19% increase. The number of students taking the test represents 57% of all the full-time and part-time undergraduate final year students. The average overall score is 6.51 on a nine-point scale, compared with 6.46 in 2002/03. 85% of the students obtained a score in the 6.0 – 7.5 range, which means they are ‘competent’ or ‘good’ users. Among the four modules of IELTS, students, on average, did better in reading and listening, scoring overall 7.00 and 6.61 respectively.

Breakdowns of candidates’ average scores by broad discipline and by institution are attached at Annexes A and B. Comparisons of the overall average scores in 2002/03 and 2003/04, broken down by institution and by broad academic discipline, are attached at Annexes C and D.

Briefly commenting on this round’s results, Dr Alice Lam, Chairman of UGC said, “We are encouraged to note that an increasing number of students are participating in the scheme. We believe that CEPAS can provide a common frame allowing us to see a rather comprehensive picture

of the English proficiency of university graduates. The higher participation rate implies that the scheme is attracting more recognition, and indeed we have received positive comments from professional and employer bodies. The Civil Service Bureau also accepts IELTS results for recruitment purpose. We have increasing confidence in IELTS as an accepted indicator of university graduates' English proficiency.”

“The results show that the majority of the university graduates who took the IELTS test can be regarded as ‘competent’ or ‘good’ users, which is the level required by many employers and overseas academic institutions. This reflects the efforts of the community and the institutions in ensuring the language proficiency of graduates,” Dr Lam said.

“Different institutions have different entry standards with regard to language proficiency but all the institutions are keen to enhance the language standards of their students”, Dr Lam supplemented. “CEPAS is one of the indications of the success of these efforts. We have thus shared the statistics with the eight UGC-funded institutions to facilitate them in formulating their language enhancement strategies and programmes.”

38 testing sessions were held from November 2003 to May 2004. The UGC will continue to organize CEPAS in the 2004/05 academic year. The registration period for the third round CEPAS is tentatively scheduled to begin in mid-September and last until mid-October. All final year undergraduate students of UGC-funded degree programmes are encouraged to participate. Test fees will continue to be reimbursed if students agree to reflect their participation in CEPAS in their transcript. Details will be announced nearer the time.

CEPAS is a voluntary assessment scheme intended to encourage

students to be more aware of the importance of proficiency in English and to provide a common framework for assessing and documenting graduating students' English proficiency. IELTS has been adopted by UGC as the Common English Proficiency Assessment. Through the assessment, the UGC aim to benchmark the English proficiency of local university graduates against a reliable, internationally validated instrument which will serve as useful reference for students when they enter the workforce after they graduate or when they pursue further studies.

IELTS is an internationally validated English testing instrument, and is jointly managed by the University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate, the British Council and the IDP Education Australia. Its results are reported on a band scale from 0 to 9. Overall band scores, listening and reading scores are reported in whole and half bands; writing and speaking scores are reported in whole bands only. Candidates scoring Band 6 are considered competent users who have generally effective command of the language despite some inaccuracies, while those scoring Band 7 are considered good users who generally handle complex language well.

An overall band of 6.5 or above with no subtest score below band 6 obtained in one sitting in IELTS are accepted as equivalent to a pass in the Use of English paper of the Hong Kong Government's Common Recruitment Examination within 2 years from the date of the IELTS test.

UGC Secretariat
23 July 2004

**Distribution of Average Overall Scores and Sub-scores
of Final Year Undergraduate Students in 2003/04 by Broad Academic Discipline**

Broad Academic Discipline	No. of final year students participated in CEPAS[#]	Average Reading Sub-score	Average Listening Sub-score	Average Writing Sub-score	Average Speaking Sub-score	Average Overall Score
Arts & Humanities	834	7.03	6.76	6.26	6.39	6.67
Business & Management	2,692	7.01	6.62	6.13	6.14	6.53
Education	292	6.66	6.37	5.88	6.02	6.30
Engineering & Technology	1,796	6.96	6.49	5.98	5.92	6.40
Medicine, Dentistry & Health	244	7.26	6.76	6.24	6.27	6.68
Physical Sciences	1,590	6.88	6.43	5.95	5.91	6.35
Social Sciences	1,271	7.19	6.89	6.32	6.37	6.75
Total:	8,719	7.00	6.61	6.10	6.11	6.51

[#] Both part-time and full-time students are eligible to participate.

**Distribution of Average Overall Scores and Sub-scores
of Final Year Undergraduate Students in 2003/04 by Institution**

Institution	Number and % of final year students participated in CEPAS[#]		Average Reading Sub-score	Average Listening Sub-score	Average Writing Sub-score	Average Speaking Sub-score	Average Overall Score
CityU	1,459	53%	6.67	6.32	5.90	5.91	6.26
HKBU	719	50%	6.73	6.37	5.99	5.95	6.32
LU	515	72%	6.48	6.29	5.86	5.91	6.18
CUHK	1,626	56%	7.30	6.66	6.25	6.25	6.66
HKIED*	190		6.38	6.16	5.69	5.73	6.05
	Full-time	Total					
	53%	27%					
PolyU	1,021	46%	6.92	6.53	6.02	6.05	6.44
HKUST	1,447	79%	7.01	6.63	6.04	6.01	6.48
HKU	1,742	62%	7.37	7.05	6.39	6.42	6.87
Total:	8,719	57%	7.00	6.61	6.10	6.11	6.51

[#] Except for HKIED, the participation rate is calculated based on total number of projected graduates, including full-time and part-time.

* Candidates from HKIED are all full-time students, accounting for 53% of projected graduates from full-time programmes in 2003/04.

**Comparison of Average Overall Scores
of Final Year Undergraduate Students in 2002/03 and 2003/04
by Broad Academic Discipline**

Broad Academic Discipline	2002/03		2003/04	
	No. of final year students participated in CEPAS[#]	Average Overall Score	No. of final year students participated in CEPAS	Average Overall Score
Arts & Humanities	807	6.58	834	6.67
Business & Management	2,255	6.50	2,692	6.53
Education	132	6.34	292	6.30
Engineering & Technology	1,569	6.34	1,796	6.40
Medicine, Dentistry & Health	197	6.56	244	6.68
Physical Sciences	1,339	6.31	1,590	6.35
Social Sciences	1,058	6.61	1,271	6.75
Total:	7,357	6.46	8,719	6.51

[#] Both part-time and full-time students are eligible to participate.

**Comparison of Average Overall Scores and Participation
of Final Year Undergraduate Students in 2002/03 and 2003/04 by Institution**

Institution	2002/03		2003/04		Average Overall Score	
	Number and % of final year students participated in CEPAS [#]		Number and % of final year students participated in CEPAS			
CityU	1,198 51%		6.29	1,459 53%	6.26	
HKBU	633 51%		6.11	719 50%	6.32	
LU	387 55%		6.06	515 72%	6.18	
CUHK	1,313 45%		6.65	1,626 56%	6.66	
HKIEd [*]	92		6.16	190		6.05
	Full-time 35%	Total 17%		Full-time 53%	Total 27%	
PolyU	962 43%		6.34	1,021 46%	6.44	
HKUST	1,271 70%		6.44	1,447 79%	6.48	
HKU	1,501 57%		6.78	1,742 62%	6.87	
Total:	7,357 51%		6.46	8,719 57%	6.51	

[#] Except for HKIEd, the participation rate is calculated based on total number of projected graduates, including full-time and part-time.

^{*} Applicants from HKIEd are all full-time students, accounting for 53% and 35% of projected graduates from full-time programmes in 2003/04 and 2002/03 respectively.