English Language Testing

password

Password Skills Plus

The secure at-home test for high stakes university admission

Why accept Password Skills Plus?

Since launching in 2008, Password online tests have proven to be highly reliable and are now accepted and used by hundreds of universities, colleges and schools in over 130 countries around the world.

Our first secure at-home English language test, Password Skills Plus, has received widespread industry recognition for its robust security measures, in-depth reporting and reliable results.

Password Skills Plus is trusted by universities and colleges for high stakes admissions testing and has been welcomed by students for its ease of access and affordability.

Start accepting Password Skills Plus and benefit from:

1

Academic integrity
Designed and developed by world leading experts in English language testing and assessment, the Centre for Research in English Language Learning and Assessment (CRELLA).

2

Secure at-home delivery
Live invigilation followed by full video review by Password's highly skilled compliance team ensure robust and stringent oversight of each and every test taken.

3

Rapid and reliable results
Results accessible from Password's online validation portal within five working days.

Test Format

Password Skills Plus assesses academic English and takes three hours and five minutes. All four test modules (reading, writing, listening and speaking) are delivered online.

Results are available on Password's online validation portal within five working days after undergoing a rigorous quality assurance process.

Uniquely, we grant partner institutions direct access to audio files from the speaking test and essays submitted by test takers as well as a photograph taken during the testing session. This affords admissions teams more detailed information than they would traditionally have access to.

Test Modules

Module	Details
Reading	**75 minutes** Consists of five tasks which increase in difficulty as the module progresses. Whilst the tasks are designed to assess academic English, they require no subject specific matter knowledge.
Writing	**30 minutes** Offers test takers a choice of two "open ended" questions, one of which they choose as the subject of an essay. Test takers are instructed to write at least 200 words.
Listening	**60 minutes** Consists of five sections with one or more tasks per section which increase in difficulty as the test module progresses. Most of the recordings are short lectures or snippets of lectures.
Speaking	**20 minutes** Consists of five tasks which are displayed on screen. The responses expected increase in length and complexity as the test module progresses. Responses are captured by a microphone.

Design, development and reliability

Academic management

All Password English tests have been designed and developed by CRELLA, a research group of world leading experts in English language testing and assessment. Founded by Professor Cyril Weir OBE and now directed by Professor Tony Green, CRELLA are responsible for the design and validation of many globally renowned English language exams. In the most recent 2021 Research Excellence Framework (REF), 72% of the research CRELLA submitted was assessed as 4* (the highest category), placing CRELLA above Cambridge, Oxford and UCL for research conducted in their field.

Password English tests are based on Weir's highly influential socio-cognitive framework, which is now widely used to inform language test development, research and validation. The tests are formally aligned to the CEFR and designed to match closely the descriptors for language competence between levels A2 to C1.

Members of the research team at CRELLA developed each of the available Password test modules, combining their expert knowledge of the CEFR with their understanding of the latest research into the areas of reading, listening, writing and speaking assessment.

Alignment to the CEFR

The CEFR levels and descriptors were at the forefront of the design, development and production of all Password English tests which have been formally aligned to the CEFR following the procedures laid out in "*Relating Language Examinations to the 'Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment' (CEFR). A Manual.*" The CEFR was designed to bring together the best of a wide range of schemes for describing language learning, is internationally recognised as an important framework of reference for language proficiency, and has been translated into 40 languages.

The procedures were undertaken in the following ways:

Test specification:
Relating Password English tests to the CEFR required identification of areas of overlap between the two. This included a 'horizontal' comparison between the test content and the CEFR descriptive scheme (coverage), and a 'vertical' comparison to evaluate which score level on Password might correspond to which level on the CEFR. The aim of this was to establish a clear overview of the relationship between Password English test content and the CEFR.

Alignment Panels:
The tests then underwent a process of linking to the CEFR managed by panels of experts. Panellists were all well-qualified English language educators within the higher education sector with more than 10 years of experience in English language teaching. The process involved familiarisation (or re-familiarisation) training, followed by training in assessing performance in relation to the CEFR levels, followed by rating Password performance or items in relation to CEFR levels.

Statistical Analysis:
Password English tests questions have all been through thorough statistical analysis. Initial questions, which themselves underwent both statistical analysis and alignment, are used as anchors. These questions and their alignment to the CEFR, plus their correlation to existing test-takers' levels, mean that it is possible to have a very high confidence in their difficulty level, and can thus be used to compare with and link to further items.

Password scoring

The broad CEFR bands are broken down into more precise Password English test scores as shown in the table below.

"Password 7.0 or above" indicates that the score is at least Password 7.0, but may be higher. "Pre-Password" indicates that the score is below Password 3.0. Percentage scores are also available for the reading and listening modules and these can be used to see how close a test taker is to a particular score boundary.

Password scores	CEFR levels
Password 7.0 or above	CEFR C1 or above
Password 6.5	CEFR B2
Password 6.0	CEFR B2
Password 5.5	CEFR B2
Password 5.0	CEFR B1
Password 4.5	CEFR B1
Password 4.0	CEFR B1
Password 3.5	CEFR A2
Password 3.0	CEFR A2
Pre-Password	CEFR A1 or below

Test Security

Our unique holistic approach to at-home test security

Innovative test design, delivery, and review procedures ensure academic misconduct is systematically identified and reported by our academic and compliance teams.

Whilst automation has its place, our experience shows us that humans are still much better at holistically interpreting and evaluating test taker output and behaviour, which means you will find human elements throughout all of our test security measures.

Invigilation is undertaken by our specialist online proctoring partner, Meazure Learning, who provide live human invigilation. They are the market leader for scalable online invigilation with exams accessible 24 hours a day, 365 days a year to test takers anywhere in the world. In addition, the test taker to invigilator ratio of 4:1 compares well with a typical test centre ratio of 25:1.

A multitude of security features are embedded in the test itself, the invigilation process before and during the test, and the review procedure after the test.

Security and compliance measures before and during test

Proctoring	Live human proctoring for the duration of the test session, backed by AI monitoring (for example for eye-tracking and keystroke analysis)
ID checks	Proctors conduct passport checks to check identity documentation is valid and matches the test taker
Environment checks	Proctors conduct thorough room scans, software and hardware checks to secure the at-home test environment
Test content randomisation	Large data bank of questions ensures each test is unique. Items are regularly refreshed and question performance is constantly reviewed.
Video recording	Video recording of complete test session including pre-test checks

Security and compliance measures after test session

First Audit	Full academic and compliance review of results and video recording
Second Audit	In-depth review of identity, test profile and individual test modules
Marking	Marking of speaking and writing modules, including plagiarism checks and assistive software detection
Final Review	Compliance team conduct final review prior to releasing results

Quality assurance provided by our experts

Our mission as a test provider is to ensure that each and every test result is a true reflection of the test taker's ability on the day they were assessed so that Password Skills Plus test results always meet the stringent requirements of high stakes university admissions whilst being fair to test takers.

Academic review

- Conducted by experts in English for Academic Purposes (EAP)

- Look for inconsistent and spiky test profiles

- Identify academic misconduct including use of assistive software and plagiarism

Compliance review

- Conducted by experts in online test security and test taker behaviour

- Analyse test taker interactions with proctor

- Analyse test taker conduct and cognitive engagement with the test itself

"Each test is securely invigilated and cases of suspected malpractice follow a well designed process of investigation by their highly trained staff. Excellent service and easily verified results!"
Eleni Kalli, Director of Administration
City Unity College, Cyprus

Recognition

Recognise and accept the Password Skills Plus at-home test

Join our ever-growing global community of education institutions benefitting from our accurate, reliable and secure online test. New partners can be up and running quickly with a no fuss and simple adoption process:

- ✓ Email us to confirm recognition of the Password Skills Plus test.

- ✓ Receive login codes for the validation portal along with instructions for your student applicants within 2 working days.

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