

Why must we take IELTS exams?

A national exam council can resolve English certification issues



VISUAL: AFIA JAHIN

It is widely acknowledged that proficiency in English opens up many opportunities around the world. This skill enhances one's ability to connect with others, access resources, and navigate a globalised and interconnected world. Perhaps it is considering all these aspects that English is widely taught as a foreign or secondary language and is a compulsory subject from Classes 1 to 12 under the national curriculum.

However, even after studying and learning this language for 12 years, a large section of our students are not proficient enough in English to pursue higher studies abroad. Most unfortunately, even those who earn a bachelor's or master's degree in English at home often face the same fate when they decide to work or study abroad.



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One contributing factor is that the quality of English teaching in our schools and colleges is lacking when considered against the global standard. And consequently, students aspiring to pursue further education abroad have to incur additional expenses by taking English proficiency tests such as TOEFL or IELTS, and accordingly, take private lessons to do well. Meanwhile, many international

institutions are reluctant to accept our school and college certificates as evidence of proficiency, as the exams are not managed by a central authority.

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While improving the quality of English lessons is a structural issue, the certification process need not be as it is. In many countries, national examination councils or similar bodies exist to oversee and administer national-level examinations for educational certifications, and these certificates act as proof of proficiency.

For example, in Nigeria, the National Examinations Council is responsible for conducting examinations and award certificates for completing both primary and secondary education. In our neighbouring country India, students passing the Indian Standard XII English Language on the first attempt under certain boards are not required to take a proficiency test when pursuing higher studies.

Regrettably, Bangladesh currently lacks a dedicated national examination council or an equivalent organisation to manage school and college qualifications. In lieu of a centralised council, various examination boards and educational authorities within the country manage and administer exams at different levels. These entities collectively contribute to maintaining the integrity and standardisation of the national education system. This fragmented system makes it difficult for international institutions and employers to assess the academic credentials of individuals accurately. This ultimately leads to further challenges for Bangladeshi students who want to study abroad.

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In this era of intense global competition, having a reliable and transparent examination system is vital. A national council can help align national educational standards with international benchmarks, ensuring that our students are well-prepared to compete globally.

Considering all these issues, the establishment of such a council in Bangladesh is not just a demand of the time, but a critical step in ensuring the integrity, consistency, and quality of examinations, which will ultimately contribute to the improvement of Bangladesh's education system as a whole.

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