

VCS FAQs (Canada)

General Introductory Questions

What is VCS?

Video Call Speaking (VCS) is a system which enables the delivery of IELTS Speaking Tests through a secure video connection over the Internet. This allows for Test takers to interact remotely with the Examiner. The actual speaking test remains the same, but the mode of delivery is online.

Why are we introducing VCS?

This change is a natural evolution to take advantage of technology available to modernise the business. As a result of this modernisation we need to change the way we work. We have confidence in the solution we have developed as it is secure, reliable, and will deliver operational benefits for the British Council and for our test centres. It is also in line with the strategic direction of the IELTS product and has been developed alongside our partners, Cambridge Assessment English and IDP: IELTS Australia. It will enable the delivery of Speaking tests to Test takers who may not have had the opportunity to take the test and for countries and regions to deliver more tests with the help of Examiners working remotely.

What is going to change at the test centre?

The Speaking test is still delivered in the same way. There is no change to the actual content or the construct of the Speaking test. The main change for the Examiner and Test taker is that both will interact with each other through a video link but they will continue to use the same material as is used in the in-person test. Minor changes to the script have been incorporated to account for delivery over the internet.

How will this affect our pay and work structure?

Active examiners in Canada will now have the opportunity to apply to examine for the VCS Global Hub of Examiners. This Hub will be responsible for delivering the online VCS tests worldwide. For the time being, there will be no changes to the delivery of in-person tests in centres around the world.

What is the timescale for the roll out?

The roll out of VCS will vary from country to country and region to region. We are now looking for expressions of interest from active Examiners based in Canada.

Is the VCS system secure and proven?

The Video Call System has been developed in-house by the British Council after many years of research into various delivery models. The entire system will enable Examiners to link securely with Test takers from around the world but it will also provide a user-friendly and secure interface through which Examiners will have access to all necessary materials to deliver the test.

Will Examiners working from home have any impact on the security of the test?

No.

Examiners will be able to access materials on the test day through the secure password-protected system.

There are no paper-based materials for Examiners.

In addition, only Examiners who have been scheduled to work in a given test session can access materials. Any Examiners not scheduled cannot access the marking system.

Extensive reporting and monitoring functionality enables the central operations team to observe Examiner activity in real time. Current codes of practice and confidentiality undertakings will be amended to support the security of the test.

How is the reliability of Speaking marking ensured?

The VCS system and the global management of Examiners will allow for regular monitoring and support for both ratings and procedures. Specific support will be provided on how to deliver video-call speaking tests, including specific training in this mode of delivery.

Examiners will also be provided with regular feedback on their ratings.

Questions about applying to deliver tests for the Global Hub

When should I apply?

The recruitment process will begin in certain selected countries but this will also depend on the overall roll out of VCS in your region. Currently we are looking for expressions of interest from active examiners in Canada.

Will I be conducting VCS tests from home or do I need to go into the test centre to examine for the Global Hub?

VCS Global Hub Examiners will examine from home and will have secure access to all the materials required to deliver the test.

What is required from me to examine from home?

You will be required to complete a home working pack to specify your IT set up and environment. You will need a quiet work environment and a neutral background. You will be responsible for ensuring you have stable internet access and a computer (desktop or laptop), additional screen, video camera and microphone enabled.

What technical skills do I need to have?

You will need to be able to download software on your own computer and also you will need to be familiar with ZOOM. You will need to operate two screens and be IT literate as communications with the operational support teams are also digital.

Can I stay on as a Speaking Examiner with my current home centre if I become a VCS Global Hub Examiner?

Absolutely! We strongly encourage our VCS Global Hub Examiners to remain attached to their current centres for in-person Speaking examining. You will be allocated Shared Examiner status with the Global Hub GB500.

Do I have to be resident in the UK to be a VCS Global Hub Speaking Examiner?

No. We will be rolling out the application process to a number of countries across the globe in order to meet Test taker volume across time zones. The requirements for home-working are summarised in the job specification. Examiners deliver tests from a single home base which must be registered with the Global team.

Can I apply to be a VCS Global Hub Speaking Examiner if I am not a current IELTS Speaking Examiner?

We are initially recruiting only Examiners who are certified and active for Speaking. We may, in future, recruit new Speaking Examiners.

Do I have to be self-employed to be a VCS Global Hub Speaking Examiner?

You will apply for the VCS position via a local agency contracted by Carbon60 who will act as your payroll provider. They will engage with you once your application is approved. The employment contract will follow local laws and regulations and this might require additional clearance process to take place.

Once work commences, you will be submitting timesheets to the Global Marking team for approval.

Payment will be made through your payroll provider in sterling (GB£).

Will there be work available at weekends?

Speaking Tests will be arranged across the entire week, so interviews will be scheduled both on weekdays and at weekends.

How many Tests do I need to complete daily?

Depending on your availability, you may complete up to 20 Speaking tests per day. However, there will be flexible options for availability and scheduling.

Will there be guaranteed hours?

No, but the schedule will be agreed in advance with the examiner.

What is the minimum commitment?

We expect examiners to commit to at least 20 speaking interviews a week.. You will be able to submit your availability and receive provisional schedule four weeks before the test day. Confirmed speaking slots will be sent 48 hours prior to the tests. This will only be the case whilst we roll out VCS and will be changed once roll out is complete.

How much will I be paid?

Payment will be made in sterling (The amount is **GB£10** per Speaking test).

How can I contact you?

You can contact us by emailing globalhubexaminers@britishcouncil.org