

ESAT Preparation

1. What is the ESAT?

The Engineering and Science Admissions Test (ESAT) is a computer-based university admissions test for applicants to selected undergraduate science, engineering and related programmes in the UK. It evaluates how effectively students can apply their mathematics and science knowledge to unfamiliar problems.

The ESAT is currently used by the University of Cambridge, the University of Oxford, Imperial College London and University College London for specified courses. Applicants must always check the requirements of their chosen course. [Official ESAT information](#)

2. Which students need to take the ESAT?

You may need the ESAT if you are applying for selected courses in areas such as:

- Engineering
- Chemical Engineering and Biotechnology
- Natural Sciences
- Physics
- Veterinary Medicine
- Biological Sciences
- Other science-related programmes

Requirements differ between universities and courses. Taking the wrong modules—or failing to register for a required test—could make an application invalid.

3. Is the ESAT required for international students?

Yes. If the selected university and course require the ESAT, the requirement normally applies to both UK and international applicants. International students are not generally exempt simply because they study under a different national curriculum.

4. Which universities use the ESAT?

For the 2027 entry cycle, the ESAT is used for selected programmes at:

- University of Cambridge
- University of Oxford
- Imperial College London
- University College London (UCL)

Each institution decides which courses require the test and which modules applicants must take.

5. What is the format of the ESAT?

The ESAT consists of five possible subject modules:

Module	Questions	Duration
Mathematics 1	27 multiple-choice questions	40 minutes
Mathematics 2	27 multiple-choice questions	40 minutes
Physics	27 multiple-choice questions	40 minutes
Chemistry	27 multiple-choice questions	40 minutes
Biology	27 multiple-choice questions	40 minutes

All applicants take Mathematics 1. Most candidates take two additional modules, making the usual total testing time 120 minutes. The modules are completed consecutively, without a scheduled break. [ESAT test format](#)

6. Which ESAT modules should I choose?

Your modules depend on the university course or courses to which you are applying. Mathematics 1 is compulsory for every candidate, while the university normally specifies the other two modules.

Check the official course pages carefully before booking. Module choices cannot be changed at the test centre. Changing them after booking may require cancellation and rebooking, subject to availability.

7. Is the ESAT taken online from home?

No. Although it is a computer-based examination, candidates must take it at an authorised Pearson VUE test centre. It cannot normally be taken at home or at the student's school.

International test-centre availability varies, so early booking is strongly recommended.

8. Can I use a calculator in the ESAT?

No. Calculators and dictionaries are not permitted. Candidates must therefore become confident with:

- Mental arithmetic
- Fractions, ratios and percentages
- Algebraic manipulation
- Estimation and approximation
- Scientific notation
- Interpreting graphs and data
- Multi-stage calculations under time pressure

9. Is there negative marking?

No. ESAT scores are based on the number of correct answers, and marks are not deducted for incorrect answers. Candidates should therefore attempt every question, including questions they are initially unsure about.

10. How is the ESAT scored?

Each module receives a separate score from 1.0 to 9.0, reported to one decimal place. There is no single combined ESAT score and no official pass or fail mark.

Universities consider the module scores alongside other parts of the application, which may include academic results, predicted grades, the UCAS application and an interview. [Official results information](#)

11. What is considered a good ESAT score?

There is no universal “good” score because universities do not use a single fixed pass mark. The competitiveness of a score depends on:

- The university and selected course
- The performance of other applicants
- The relevant module combination
- The strength of the complete application

Students applying to highly competitive programmes should aim for the strongest possible performance in every required module rather than preparing merely to reach a minimum score.

12. When should I begin preparing for the ESAT?

Most international students should begin structured preparation approximately four to six months before the test. Students who have curriculum gaps, limited experience with admissions tests or weaker mental-mathematics skills may benefit from starting earlier.

A strong preparation programme should include:

1. An initial diagnostic assessment
2. Complete review of the official specification
3. Topic-by-topic revision
4. Training in non-calculator methods
5. Timed question practice
6. Full computer-based mock examinations
7. Detailed analysis of errors and weak topics

13. Is school-level mathematics and science sufficient?

The content is based mainly on mathematics and science that students are likely to have encountered at school. However, the questions test application, reasoning, accuracy and speed rather than simple recall.

International applicants should compare their national curriculum with the official ESAT specification. Certain topics may not have been covered—or may have been taught differently—in their school system.

14. What are the main challenges for international candidates?

International students commonly experience difficulties with:

- Differences between their curriculum and the ESAT specification
- Unfamiliar scientific terminology in English
- Completing calculations without a calculator
- Interpreting complex questions quickly
- Managing 27 questions in only 40 minutes
- Moving between three modules without a scheduled break
- Applying familiar knowledge to unfamiliar situations

Early diagnostic testing can identify these gaps before intensive preparation begins.

15. How important is English for the ESAT?

The ESAT is not an English-language test, but strong reading comprehension is essential. Candidates must understand technical instructions and identify relevant information quickly.

Students should practise mathematical and scientific terminology in English, especially if their previous education was delivered in another language.

16. What official preparation materials are available?

UAT-UK provides free materials, including:

- ESAT guides for all five modules
- Official specifications
- Practice or specimen materials
- Selected historic ENGAA questions
- Selected historic NSAA questions
- Answer keys

Some older ENGAA and NSAA questions fall outside the current ESAT specification, so candidates should follow the official guidance indicating which questions remain relevant.

[Official preparation materials](#)

17. Are past ENGAA and NSAA papers useful?

Yes. They can help candidates practise similar styles of mathematical and scientific problem-solving. However, they should not be treated as exact ESAT papers.

Students should first study the current ESAT specification and exclude questions that are no longer relevant.

18. How should I manage time during the test?

Candidates have an average of approximately 89 seconds per question. An effective approach is to:

- Complete straightforward questions first
- Avoid spending too long on one difficult problem
- Eliminate clearly incorrect options
- Use estimation where appropriate
- Make an informed selection for every unanswered question
- Practise each module under a strict 40-minute limit

Because there is no negative marking, leaving questions unanswered is generally not advisable.

19. When will the ESAT take place for 2027 university entry?

The announced testing windows are:

- **October sitting:** 12–16 October 2026
- **January sitting:** 4–8 January 2027

Most Cambridge and Oxford applicants must take the October sitting. Limited exceptions apply to certain Cambridge mature applicants and applicants to Oxford's Astrophoria Foundation Year. Registration dates and rules can change, so candidates should check the [official deadlines page](#).

20. How much does the ESAT cost?

For the 2027 entry cycle, the published fee is:

- **£78** when sitting in the UK or Republic of Ireland
- **£133** when sitting elsewhere

Applicants should confirm the current fee before booking. UK-based candidates who satisfy the relevant financial criteria may be eligible for a bursary, but they must apply before paying for the test.

21. How do I register for the ESAT?

Candidates must:

1. Create their own UAT-UK account.

2. Enter personal details that match their UCAS application.
3. Ensure their registered name exactly matches their photographic ID.
4. Request any access arrangements before booking.
5. Select the correct ESAT modules.
6. Choose an available Pearson VUE test centre and appointment.
7. Pay the applicable examination fee.

Schools and consultants can provide guidance, but candidates are responsible for completing their own registration. [Official registration guidance](#)

22. Can I take the ESAT more than once?

No. A candidate may take the ESAT only once during an admissions cycle. The October and January sittings belong to the same cycle, so students cannot take the examination in October and repeat it in January to improve their scores.

23. What identification should international students take?

Candidates must normally present an original, valid government-issued photographic ID that complies with the official policy. A passport is accepted at any test centre. The name on the booking must exactly match the name on the identification document.

Candidates should also take their Pearson appointment confirmation and plan to arrive approximately 30 minutes early. [Official test-day guidance](#)

24. Are access arrangements available?

Yes. Candidates with an eligible disability, health condition or other documented requirement may request reasonable adjustments. Supporting evidence may be required.

Access arrangements must be requested and approved before booking the test; they cannot normally be added upon arrival at the test centre.

25. When are ESAT results released?

Results are normally released through the candidate's UAT-UK account approximately four weeks after the test. Scores are also sent automatically to participating institutions when the candidate has applied to a course requiring the ESAT.

26. Can I prepare for the ESAT through self-study?

Yes, particularly if you already have excellent subject knowledge and disciplined study habits. However, structured tuition can be valuable for students who need:

- Curriculum-gap analysis
- Explanations of difficult concepts

- Non-calculator techniques
- Faster problem-solving strategies
- Personalised performance feedback
- Regular timed testing
- Accountability and progress monitoring

27. What should an effective ESAT preparation course include?

A strong programme should provide:

- Initial assessment in the required modules
- A personalised preparation plan
- Complete coverage of the official specification
- Mathematics and science concept revision
- Non-calculator problem-solving training
- Topic-based practice questions
- Timed module examinations
- Full mock tests under realistic conditions
- Individual performance reports
- Targeted support for weak areas
- Guidance on registration and test-day requirements

28. How can IEC Edu Consultancy help with ESAT preparation?

IEC Edu Consultancy can support international applicants through:

- Course and university requirement checks
- Selection of the correct ESAT modules
- Initial academic diagnostic assessment
- Personalised study planning
- Specialist mathematics and science tuition
- Timed practice and full mock examinations
- Detailed analysis of mistakes and performance
- Test-booking and deadline guidance
- Wider support with UCAS, admission and interview preparation

Our goal is not only to familiarise students with the ESAT, but to develop the knowledge, speed, accuracy and examination strategy required for a competitive application.

Start Your ESAT Preparation

Applying to a leading UK university for engineering or science? Begin your preparation early and receive a personalised assessment from IEC Edu Consultancy.

Contact IEC today to book your initial ESAT assessment and preparation consultation.

