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Published February 2010

In this issue:

- [International Student Admissions Test moves to computer-based testing](#)
- [ACER UPDATE](#)

International Student Admissions Test moves to computer-based testing

This article was taken from the February 2010 edition of ACER's Higher Education Update - a newsletter outlining ACER's work in the higher education sector. To read the full newsletter visit <http://www.acer.edu.au/highed/>

A move from paper to computer-based testing for the [International Student Admissions Test \(ISAT\)](#) will improve access to Australian degrees for international students. ISAT provides universities with the opportunity to use a reliable and efficient way of testing students' potential to cope academically with Australian tertiary courses. It complements existing English-language competency tests.

The test is independently administered by the ACER. ISAT is currently used by a range of Australian universities to assist in selection of international candidates to medical, dentistry, health sciences and veterinary science courses. Most of these courses require domestic applicants to sit a relevant aptitude test, such as the [Undergraduate Medical Admissions Test](#). ISAT allows universities to apply the same rigorous admissions standards to international applicants through a test developed specifically for a culturally and linguistically diverse candidature.

The move to computer-based testing from 2010 will allow international students to take the test in locations and at dates and times that suit them. Candidates will pay to sit the test at secure, accredited Prometric test centres. Prometric has more than 4,000 test centres globally. Candidates may still have to travel to a test centre to sit the test, but there will be a greater number of centres in many countries, and more flexibility in test availability. Previously ISAT had been administered on fixed dates, often in examination rooms with a large cohort of candidates taking the test. There will no longer be mass sittings of the test. Instead, the computer-based system will allow individuals to attend a secure test centre, undergo an identity check, sit the test on a video-monitored computer, with the answers transmitted back to ACER through secure channels for marking.

ISAT will continue to be a useful predictor of student ability for use in the university selection process for international applicants, but with greater ease of use for candidates and universities, according to ACER's ISAT Project Director Susan Nankervis.

"Computer-based administration of ISAT will be considerably more flexible for candidates in the choice of test dates and locations. This will improve equity in many countries by reducing the need for candidates to travel to take the test and allowing a wider exposure of candidates to the test," she says.

Published February 2010

"It will ensure the security of data, the confidentiality of the test and of candidates' results, and it will reduce the carbon footprint of the test by eliminating the need to print test papers and to send them around the world."

Candidates receive an electronic copy of their respective results, and results are also listed on a secure ACER database to be independently verified by Australian universities.

ISAT requires students to answer 100 multiple-choice questions in three hours. The questions measure critical reasoning drawing on material in the humanities and social sciences, and quantitative reasoning using material from science and mathematics. ISAT aims to test abilities that are considered important for coping with the intellectual demands of most tertiary courses. The emphasis is on thinking skills rather than curriculum specific knowledge and English-language proficiency.

Registrations for ISAT 2010 will open in March 2010. For more information, visit <http://isat.acer.edu.au>

Published February 2010

ACER UPDATE

Australasian Education Directory 2010

The 2010 edition of the Australasian Education Directory (AED) is now available. The 2010 edition contains information for over 1000 educational organisations in Australia and New Zealand. A new category – Non Self-Accrediting institutions in Higher Education – is included in the Australian section. Additional information about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Support Services at TAFE Colleges and Polytechnics throughout Australia has also been included. The AED provides access to:

names, addresses, telephone and fax numbers, email addresses, websites and position titles of key personnel in Australian and New Zealand education

ministries, departments and education authorities, including state, federal, government and non-government authorities

- universities / higher education institutions
- vocational education and training institutions
- professional, curriculum, research and special interest groups and associations
- indexes to organisations, acronyms, names and subjects

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