



2021 Research call

Purpose

This Research Call is published by the Global Scale of English and the PTE Academic units of Pearson English, a division of Pearson PLC. One of our driving goals is to ensure that our teaching and testing materials comply with the highest standards and quality. At Pearson, research is carried out as part of our on-going validation programme, with the aim of obtaining independent assessment of our assessments and products by experts in the areas of language testing, second/foreign language education, linguistics, applied linguistics, and other related fields. The purpose of the 2021 Research Call is to contribute to the validation of the:

- The Pearson Test of English Academic (PTE Academic)
- Pearson Proficiency Tests
- Global Scale of English (GSE - a Pearson metric of English language proficiency, aligned to the CEFR)

Who can apply

We invite faculty members, doctoral students and qualified freelance researchers to submit proposals of relevance to the research areas outlined below.

Research areas

The purpose of the call is to promote independent research on the following topics:

1. Content validity

Proposals investigating the correspondence between the test content and the inferred Target Language Use (TLU) domains and/or the appropriateness of different item types to elicit test-takers' skills in the inferred domain. This area may also include comparative analyses of tests from different language test providers

2. Automated assessment of speaking and writing

Proposals investigating any aspect related to the automated assessment of spoken and written skills. This work may include quantitative and/or qualitative data analyses.

3. Washback and impact studies

Proposals focusing on test preparation and test user/stakeholder perceptions are particularly welcome

4. Contexts of test use

Proposals investigating whether tests are fit-for-purpose in different contexts of use, e.g., for migration, university entrance, profession, and citizenship. Comparative analyses with tests from other test providers are also welcome.

5. Concordance studies

Proposals carried out as part of institutional test use or benchmarking activities with the purpose to investigate the extent to which Pearson assessment relates to a criterion-related measure.

Data, funding, and duration of projects

- Pearson will provide researchers with PTE Academic test data (e.g., test taker responses, demographic data, scores) or test vouchers.
- Available funding range from £2,000, £5,000, £10,000, up to £30,000 for large-scale projects.
- The maximum duration of projects is 1 year.

How to apply

Applicants are requested to send their curriculum vitae and a well-structured research proposal to sarah.hughes1@pearson.com.

The deadline for receipt of applications has been extended to 30 September 2021.

The proposal should clearly indicate:

- Title of research proposal
- Name/s of researcher/s
- Research goal
- Theoretical background
- Required data and sample size

- Methodology and instruments
- Anticipated outcomes
- Contribution to the field of second/foreign language testing
- Project schedule and timeline
- Required budget

(Please provide a detailed cost breakdown: e.g., institutional overhead, travel expenses, researchers' time, printing materials, student incentives, and anything which is needed to successfully complete the project).

Please note the desirable length of the proposal is of 5-10 pages. For any additional queries regarding the application process, please contact us at the above email address before submission.

Vetting process

Each proposal will be rated internally according to the following criteria:

- Match with the Research Call
- Sound theoretical foundation
- Clear methodology
- Feasibility of the research, given the budget and timeline
- Contribution to the validation of the Global Scale of English, The Pearson Test of English Academic and Pearson Proficiency tests
- Compliance with data protection & ethics standards

The shortlisted applicants will be notified and may be contacted to provide further details about their proposal. Applicants will be notified if there are any delays to the timetable for the vetting process.

Notification to Applicants

Pearson will notify all applicants - successful and unsuccessful - by 01 November 2021.

Accepted Proposals

Following the signature of an agreement between the researcher/s and Pearson, the researcher will commit to send Pearson regular reports on the project and to submit a paper for publication in a peer-reviewed journal at the end of the project.

Timetable

- 30 September 2021: Last date for receipt of all applications
- October 2021: Vetting and selection
- 01 November 2021: Notification of acceptance or non-acceptance to all applicants

For successful applicants, an onboarding process will take place between November and December 2021 to finalise contracts and data requirements. Research activity will begin from January 2022.