

Frequently asked questions (FAQs) regarding the ISA testing; for additional inquiries please email to Academic Office (academics@utschools.ca) at for any additional queries.

1. What does ACER stand for?

ACER stands for the [Australian Council for Education Research](http://www.acer.org), a not-for-profit research organization to promote research-based services for improving learning outcomes.

2. What is the ISA assessment?

The ISA stands for [International Schools' Assessment](http://www.utschools.ca/isa) is based on reading mathematical literacy and scientific literacy frameworks aligned to the [OECD's PISA](http://www.oecd.org/pisa) surveys which evaluate educational systems worldwide

3. Why are we writing the ISA assessment?

UTS has a rigorous and enriched program. Students in F1 are writing the ISA test to develop a baseline score of their achievement during their first year at UTS with respect to their peers at other schools globally. At M3, students are in their first year of high school, and the grade 9 class contains both students who have been at UTS since F1 as well as many new students. The ISA assessment gives the school a chance to use an internationally valid tool to understand UTS students' achievement and skills with regard to their peers around the world. The information from ISA testing will be used to help improve teaching and learning at UTS to ensure that we remain one of the best schools in the world.

4. Who else is writing the ISA assessments?

Nearly [60,000 students from across 60 countries](#) write the ISA each year. UTS is one of the first Canadian schools to join the ISA testing process.

5. How is the ISA scored?

The ISA is reported in "ISA Scale" score points. These are different to the "raw score" results that you would get by adding up the number of score points for correct answers for each test. A scale is constructed for each learning area or domain (for example, Reading) so that raw score results across different tests within that learning area can be standardized. The ISA scales for Mathematical Literacy, Reading and Scientific Literacy are based on those developed for the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's (OECD's) [Programme for International Student Assessment \(PISA\)](http://www.oecd.org/pisa). In the learning areas or "domains" surveyed in PISA, the average proficiency of 15-year-old students in OECD countries was initially set at 500, with a standard deviation of 100.

6. Will my grades be affected by how I do on this assessment?

No. The ISA assessments are benchmark tests. They allow UTS teachers, students and families to see how our students are doing in comparison to similar aged students around the world. The purpose of the assessment is to improve teaching and learning at UTS and to validate our practices as a school. The scores from this test will not be used when teachers determine grades for school report cards. There is no need to study or prepare in advance for the ISA test.

7. Who will see my grades?

Students' grades will be shared with families when they are available from ACER in June each year. Individual student grades will be available to UTS administration and guidance staff, and cohort data will be used for teaching/learning improvement. The following [Privacy Statement](#) from ACER further explains how

data are gathered and used. Here's an [example](#) of a student grade report from a prior ISA test UTS conducted to help families understand the information they will receive from the ISA testing.

8. Do I have to pay for the test?

UTS will pay the costs for the tests and families will not be billed for this testing.

9. When will I have to write this test?

All students will be writing the test over two days as scheduled each year. Dates change each year. See below for a sample schedule from past years.

February 3 (P1, P2, P3)	February 4 (P1, P2, P3)
Writing Task A Introduction & Discussion 10 minutes Test Questions 30 minutes	Scientific Literacy Practice Questions 10 minutes Test Questions 45 minutes
10-15 minute break	10-15 minute break
Mathematical Literacy Part One Practice Questions 10 minutes Test Questions 30 minutes	Reading Practice Questions 10 minutes Test Questions 45 minutes
10 minute break	10-15 minute break
Mathematical Literacy Part Two Test Questions 30 minutes	Writing Task B Test Questions 40 minutes

Following the ISA assessment, students will attend their afternoon classes (or be dismissed as necessary).

10. Where will I be writing this test?

Students are currently scheduled to write the test in their regularly scheduled classrooms. Tests will be proctored by their classroom teachers. All students will be writing the test online using their own computers. A few UTS computers will be available to support any students needing technical support.

11. What can I bring to the testing rooms?

Students should bring their own computer (battery charged for a minimum of 4 hours of power), water, tissues, pens and pencils for scratch work, a ruler and an eraser, and a calculator.

12. What kinds of questions will I be asked?

Students will be asked questions related to math, reading, writing and science that are grade appropriate and age appropriate. Some questions will involve selecting the right answer from a given set of choices (multiple choice), some will involve writing a word or a short phrase (fill in the blanks), some will involve longer pieces of writing, while others will involve interpreting graphs and tables. Here are some sample questions for [math](#), [reading](#) and [science](#).

13. Are there sample tests I can try?

Absolutely. Here's a [Math Sample Test](#) and a [Reading Sample Test](#) for you to try. This file also contains examples of the [Writing Sample Test](#) from ISA.

14. Where can I get more information?

You can get more information from the [ACER-ISA website](#). You can also email at academics@utschools.ca.