

Using Clarity programs

Road to IELTS: a case study

Background

Sulaimani Polytechnic University is in Kurdistan, 180km from Erbil in the direction of the Iranian border. It supports the Sulaimani Governorate which has 19 districts, and also IELTS candidates from border towns in Iran. The region has a large student body (about 1m students). The British Council closed its teaching centre back in 2014 as a result of the ISIS insurgency but has, until recently, been running exams operations.



An interview with Sudipta Talapatra, British Council

ROAD TO IELTS

IELTS preparation and practice

Why did you look for an online IELTS prep solution?

When I took up my post there weren't too many IELTS candidates because the economy was in trouble and people weren't going overseas. My idea was to interact with the Ministry of Higher Education to convince them to adopt IELTS for master's courses for local universities — and soon we had upwards of 3,000 candidates, with two intakes per year. The problem was that there were no IELTS prep courses. The local language institutes just ran General English courses.

So we went to the institutes and said, "Why not enhance your teaching with Road to IELTS?" It needs minimum input from the teachers, and the students have this beautiful online program to help them. This turned out to be a very attractive argument, and Sulaimani Polytechnic became our first B2B client for IELTS, and for Road to IELTS.

What was the arrangement you offered?

We ordered 500 Road to IELTS licences from Clarity to provide to the school. The idea was that they would give us the venue, and we would enhance IELTS preparation for their candidates. This worked very well, and we are now finalising similar contracts with an English language institute in Erbil and an international school in Dohuk on the Turkish border.

The usage levels have been amazing. How did you achieve this?

There are three main factors. First of all, the teacher in charge was the Director of the Language Centre. He had studied overseas and had taken IELTS himself, so he really understood the test. Secondly, Road to IELTS was only given to students who were already at a minimum of B1 (and up to C2). That meant that those who used it were able to grasp it, so there were no disappointed users. It was successful because everyone who used it got results. Thirdly, I would get the monthly email with usage stats from Clarity and I would share this with the university. This was very positive feedback for them.

How was it used in the centre?

Probably in a fairly standard way. It was used mainly in the computer lab. Students would come into class and have a face to face lesson and then they would do supporting activities on the Road to IELTS online platform. Their course was typically pretty short — two to four weeks — so they would also practise with Road to IELTS at home.

Turn over for lessons learned...

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Lessons learned

Are there any lessons to be learned that could benefit other regions?

There are three things I would like to suggest:

- 1** Having that discussion with the language centres and taking them through Road to IELTS really works. You need to give a demo, not just talk. And the person who does the demo needs to believe in it.
- 2** The British Council discount for Road to IELTS is amazing, so we can give the product to the school, or make a minimal charge. We also allow them to pass that cost on to their students, or even make a little money. The key is to ask, "What is the benefit to the institution? What is the benefit to the end user?"
- 3** Finally, we had an issue that people were registering for four or five IELTS tests. We had a lot of repeaters. That was a real problem for us as we had a limited number of seats. So Road to IELTS was a way of telling them that with the support we are going to provide, they only need to do IELTS once. That is the real benefit to everyone of Road to IELTS.



For more information on Road to IELTS, email andrew.stokes@clarityenglish.com