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# Registrations resume in Iran for Toe• tests

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**write**

REGISTRATIONS FOR the Toefl test of English proficiency for university admission have resumed in Iran after being briefly suspended owing to a tightening of trade sanctions.

UN sanctions against Iran increased in early July, after which both the EU and US announced additional measures to enhance their own sanctions regimes. US sanctions in particular target financial services, aiming at the increasing list of assets believed to have fallen under the control of the Revolutionary Guards.

Restrictions by the UN Security Council or the US on financial transactions originating from Iran made payments to the US non-profit organisation Educational Testing Service (ETS) impossible. Tom Ewing, director for government and external relations at ETS, told the Gazette he suspected the suspension was due to the international bank used by the partner organisation representing ETS in Iran being unable to process transactions out of the country and into ETS's US bank account.

A 29 July update from ETS said students can now register to take Toefl through Iran's National Organization of Educational Testing, or by using credit cards issued by banks not specifically prohibited by UN or US sanctions. Toefl tutor and university lecturer Hesam Shahriari said this news was 'bound to make a lot of people happy', adding that one of his students seeking admission to a US college was 'devastated' when he heard Toefl and GRE tests were unavailable. Mr Shahriari said that the suspension demonstrated how 'sanctions dubbed "intelligent" by the UN' affect Iran's academic community, not just its controlling elite. Since the British Council's January 2009 suspension of its Tehran operations in the face of 'threats' to its Iranian staff, the UK-based Sussex Downs College has run three IELTS testing centres in Iran. Sussex Downs' international manager Mark Allen told the Gazette the college's work in Iran was 'at a sensitive stage', so he could not discuss details.

See page 9 for our look at the IELTS testing scene in Iran from the perspective of an IELTS tutor working in the country