

What is a good ESAT score?

The 1.0–9.0 scale, the data that really exists, and the number nobody can honestly promise you.

THE SHORT ANSWER

For the October 2024 cohort, **4.5 was the median and 7.0 the 90th percentile in every module**. Across October and January together, module medians were 4.2–4.5 and 90th percentiles were 6.7–7.0. There is no pass mark, no total score, and no published Cambridge or Imperial offer-holder average.

Checked against the sources named in this guide, August 2026. British English. Free to share.

1 First, bin the idea of an ESAT total

You receive a separate scaled score from 1.0 to 9.0, reported to one decimal place, for every module you sit. The modules are equated and scaled separately. A 5.8 in Physics and a 5.8 in Biology are not interchangeable measurements, and adding three module scores produces a number the test itself does not recognise.

The score is not simply “marks out of 27, stretched to nine”. UAT-UK first estimates ability while allowing for small differences between test forms, then transforms that estimate onto the 1.0–9.0 scale. The published technical report does not print the raw-mark conversion table. Any exact web calculator that says “17/27 always equals 6.2” is claiming data UAT-UK has not released.

1 The tell

Ask a score claim two questions: *which module?* and *which sitting?* If it cannot answer both, it is probably repeating the scale anchors as though they were a universal conversion table.

2 The published distribution

The first technical report covers 11,919 candidates applying for 2025 entry. UAT-UK fixed the October ability median to 4.5 and the October 90th percentile to 7.0, module by module. January used the same scaling constants, so its lower results pulled some combined figures down.

Module	N	25th	Median	75th	90th percentile
Mathematics 1	11,919	3.3	4.2	5.4	6.7
Mathematics 2	10,040	3.4	4.5	5.5	6.8
Physics	9,237	3.4	4.4	5.6	6.8
Chemistry	2,821	3.4	4.5	5.7	6.8
Biology	1,429	3.6	4.5	5.9	7.0

These are the combined October 2024 and January 2025 figures from Table 5. They support useful statements, not magic thresholds:

- **Around 4.5 is the middle**, with Mathematics 1 slightly lower at 4.2 across both sittings.
- **Roughly 5.4–5.9 reaches the top quarter**, depending on the module.
- **Roughly 6.7–7.0 reaches the top tenth**. In October alone, 7.0 was the 90th percentile in all five modules.

A percentile describes the cohort, not an admissions decision. “Top 10% of test takers” and “10% chance of an offer” are completely different sentences.

3 So what should you call good?

Use three labels, and keep them modest.

1. **Above the median:** evidence that you outperformed more than half of an already self-selecting admissions-test cohort.
2. **Top quarter:** a clearly strong module result, around the mid-to-high fives in the published cycle.
3. **Top tenth:** an exceptional cohort position, around 7.0 in the published cycle.

That still does not tell you what a particular course wants. UAT-UK states there are no grade boundaries or pass mark. Universities read the result alongside the rest of the application. A score can strengthen an application without guaranteeing an interview; a weaker score can hurt without acting as an automatic rejection switch.

Scaled scores also have measurement error. The report gives module-level standard errors of roughly 0.67 to 0.97 scaled points, depending on module and sitting. That is a reason to treat 5.9 versus 6.1 as nearby evidence, not as two different species of applicant.

2 Try it

Write a target as a *band* and a *module*: “top-quarter Physics”, not “I need 6.3 overall”. The first statement maps to published data and a trainable paper. The second invents an aggregate score.

4 What do Cambridge and Imperial offer-holders score?

The honest answer is that the sources this guide cites do not publish an offer-holder distribution or average for either university. They also do not publish course cut-offs. That means there is no defensible sentence of the form “Cambridge Engineering offer-holders typically get X” yet.

What is published is narrower:

- Cambridge applicants must use the October sitting. The 2024 October cohort had a 4.5 median and 7.0 90th percentile in each module, but that cohort includes applicants to several universities and outcomes. It is not an offer-holder table.
- Imperial says it considers ESAT and TMUA scores alongside the UCAS application when deciding interviews and offers. It does not turn that statement into a public pass mark or offer-holder average.

You can still reason sensibly. A result above the module median is positive cohort evidence. A top-quarter result is stronger evidence. A top-tenth result is rarer evidence. Stop there. Calling 6.5 “the Cambridge average” would turn an inference into a fake statistic.

5 Worked ESAT maths: one mark is not one score step

Worked example A parameter trap from Mathematics 2

The equation

$$x^2 + (k - 3)x + k = 0$$

has no real roots. Which values of k work?

No real roots means the discriminant is strictly negative:

$$(k - 3)^2 - 4k < 0.$$

Expand and factorise:

$$k^2 - 10k + 9 < 0 \iff (k - 1)(k - 9) < 0.$$

An upward-opening quadratic is below zero between its roots, so

$$1 < k < 9.$$

Correct: The endpoints are excluded because a zero discriminant gives one repeated real root.

Trap: $1 \leq k \leq 9$ remembers the interval but silently changes “no real roots” into “at most one root”.

That question earns one raw mark. Its scaled value is not fixed in advance as, say, 0.3 points. It depends on your complete response pattern, the difficulty of the form and the post-test equating. Train for marks; interpret the final scaled score with percentiles.

6 A target that survives contact with reality

Pick the band above your current timed median, then work backwards.

- If you are below the cohort median, chase reliable first-pass marks and remove blanks.
- If you are around the median, identify the three question types consuming two minutes each.
- If you are already near the top quarter, review errors by cause: missing knowledge, slow execution, misread wording, or a distractor you failed to test.

Do not make a 7.0 target mean “I must get every hard question”. A top-tenth score still belongs to a paper designed to challenge extremely able candidates. The practical target is a clean first pass, disciplined banking and zero avoidable blanks.

7 Sources

UAT-UK ESAT Technical Report 2024–25

Scaling method and anchors, pages 6–7; module and sitting distributions, Table 5 on page 9; score reliability and standard error, Table 18 on page 34. [Read the report.](#)

UAT-UK, Test Results

The 1.0–9.0 scale, one result per module, UCAS matching, and the statement that UAT-UK provides no grade boundaries or pass mark. [Read the official page.](#)

Imperial College London, understanding ESAT and TMUA scores

How Imperial says it considers scores alongside the application, without publishing a pass mark or offer-holder average. [Read Imperial's guidance.](#)

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